



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Grove Park Foundation to Launch Shan Cooper Economic Mobility Fund at 2026 Grove Park Heroes Awards

Fourth annual celebration will honor Shan Cooper and Atlanta community leaders advancing economic mobility, education, and community transformation

ATLANTA (September 22, 2026) – Grove Park Foundation will host its fourth annual **Grove Park Heroes celebration on Thursday, October 1, 2026**, honoring leaders whose vision, service, and commitment are creating opportunities for families in Atlanta's historic Grove Park neighborhood and beyond.

Held at [The Foundry at Puritan Mill](#), the annual celebration brings together community members, business and civic leaders, partners, and supporters for an evening recognizing the people helping Atlanta communities thrive. Grove Park Foundation is pleased to welcome Fifth Third Bank, a partner in small business support, as the first Presenting Sponsor for this event.

At the heart of this year's celebration is the recognition of Shan Cooper, Founder and CEO of [Journey Forward Strategies](#) and Senior Advisor at [McKinsey & Company](#), has spent more than 30 years leading at the intersection of business, civic engagement, and community impact. Grove Park Foundation will recognize Cooper for her longstanding commitment to expanding economic opportunity for Atlanta's children and families.

"Few leaders have shaped Atlanta's business and civic landscape as profoundly as Shan Cooper," said Gavin McGuire, Executive Director of Grove Park Foundation. "Her leadership has consistently centered people and opportunity. Rather than simply celebrating her remarkable career, we are establishing the Shan Cooper Economic Mobility Fund as a lasting legacy that will expand economic opportunity for generations of Grove Park residents."

The Shan Cooper Economic Mobility Fund will extend that legacy by supporting opportunities that help Grove Park residents build economic stability and create pathways to greater prosperity.

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The celebration will also recognize three Grove Park leaders whose work demonstrates the power of community leadership:

- **Rev. Dr. Susan Hillary Buckson Ephraim, 2026 Community Champion**
Dr. Ephraim is pastor of [Allen Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church](#) and National Training Director for [The Oikos Institute for Social Impact](#). She made history as the first woman to pastor Atlanta's historic Allen Temple AME Church and has dedicated her life to faith, education, and transformational service. Grove Park Foundation is honoring Dr. Ephraim for her commitment to empowering generations through education, spiritual leadership, and community transformation.
- **Marlena Norris, 2026 Economic Mobility Hero**
Marlena Norris is Founder, CEO, and Managing Partner of [The Laundry Centers, LLC](#), as well as an entrepreneur and community leader in Grove Park. After a 30-year career in corporate finance, she turned her experience toward a new mission: creating opportunity along the Donald Lee Hollowell corridor. Grove Park Foundation is honoring Norris for her commitment to creating jobs, advancing financial empowerment, and helping women and families build lasting economic opportunity.
- **Torrie Watkins-Redding, 2026 Education Hero**
Torrie Watkins-Redding is Founder of Grove Park Art Collective and Co-Founder of The BikeBox Co. For more than two decades, she has created opportunities for young people to learn, lead, and thrive. Grove Park Foundation is honoring Watkins-Redding for her commitment to arts education, youth empowerment, environmental sustainability, and building a stronger, more connected Grove Park community.

In the days leading up to Grove Park Heroes, the Foundation will host a **Grove Park Heroes Mural Dedication on Thursday, September 24 at 4 p.m.** at the Grove Park Foundation office, 1566 Donald Lee Hollowell Pkwy NW in Atlanta. The special event will pay tribute to the neighborhood's enduring spirit, creativity, and community leadership.

Tickets and sponsorship opportunities are available at www.groveparkheroes.com, including a Community Sponsor Ticket that allows attendees to support a local resident's attendance alongside their own. Proceeds support programs benefiting current residents of the historic Grove Park neighborhood.

About Grove Park Foundation

Since 2017, Grove Park Foundation has worked alongside residents and partners in Atlanta's historic Grove Park neighborhood to mitigate displacement, build community wealth, and expand opportunity. Through a holistic, place-based approach, the Foundation supports cradle-to-college education, affordable housing, health and wellness, and economic mobility, creating the conditions for people and families to thrive. Learn more at www.groveparkfoundation.org.

Photos: [Grove Park Heroes Headshots](#)