

# TURNING THE TIDE

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VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAM

2023 SPRING NEWSLETTER

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTORS

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MUSC's Turning the Tide Violence Intervention Program (TTVIP) has served patients and families, the community, and MUSC Health's care team members and trainees since July 2021. As we near completion of our second year of implementation, we want to take this moment to reflect on what we've learned, how we've grown, and where we're heading in our third year. Most importantly, we want to acknowledge the dedicated work of our TTVIP team members, who provide support and services to our patients and community members that experience violence. They are helping transform healthcare and recovery for our patients daily.

As the first and only hospital-based violence intervention program in South Carolina, we are changing what's possible here in the greater Charleston area. Through the development and implementation of TTVIP, we have changed the standard of care for victims of community violence treated in our trauma centers, from propagating trauma-informed care to improving coordination of post-discharge follow-up care. This higher standard of care extends beyond the bedside, offering patients a continuum of care for months after injury. TTVIP's violence intervention client advocates, Keith, Cat, and Donnie, have become experts in assisting patients and families as they navigate a network of healthcare and community-based resources that address risk factors for violence victimization and promote injury recovery.

In less than two years, we have responded to and supported nearly **300 patients, almost 100** of whom accepted intervention services post-discharge. It's estimated TTVIP has supported and/or provided services to an additional 600-900 family members and loved ones of those violently injured. Outside of direct patient care, we have also provided nearly 60 education and training opportunities to healthcare providers and students and participated in or hosted over 20 community outreach events.

As the daily toll of gun violence in our communities persists, so do we. We are motivated by the changes we are already seeing. For instance, preliminary data show that **patients that accept our services are less likely to be violently injured again compared to those that don't**. Perhaps more moving is what our patients have had to say about the impact of our client advocates in their lives:

*"If it weren't for **Donnie**, I'd probably be dead or in jail."*

*"**Cat** is amazing. She's helping me with everything."*

*"**Keith** helped us get services I didn't even know existed."*

*"There's not a lot of people out there like **Donnie**. Everybody needs an advocate."*

We are excited to continue this meaningful, evidence-based work. We thank our grantors and donors that make this work possible and hope to gain sustainable support to ensure that violence intervention and prevention can be an ongoing, integrated part of the care provided to MUSC patients and the greater community.

In peace and service,

Ashley Hink, M.D., MPH

Christa Green, MPH



**Ashley Hink, M.D., MPH**

Medical Director, Turning the Tide  
Violence Intervention Program  
Department of Surgery  
Medical University of South Carolina

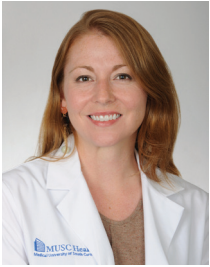


**Christa Green, MPH**

Program Director, Turning the Tide  
Violence Intervention Program  
Department of Surgery  
Medical University of South Carolina

# MEET THE TEAM

## PROGRAM DIRECTORS



**Ashley Hink, M.D. MPH** is a general, trauma and acute care surgeon and medical director of the Turning the Tide Violence Intervention Program. She is a nationally known researcher on injury and violence prevention, and recovery after trauma. She serves on the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma's Injury Prevention and Control Committee, working on research and advocacy efforts that aim to reduce violent injuries and suicides. Her work has been published in scientific journals, and she has won awards for her leadership in surgery and humanism in medicine.

Contact Info: [hink@musc.edu](mailto:hink@musc.edu)



**Christa Green, MPH** is the program director of the Turning the Tide Violence Intervention Program. She oversees the day-to-day operations of the program and leads a team of violence intervention client advocates. Prior to joining the MUSC TTVIP Program, Christa served as the Pediatric Trauma Injury Prevention Coordinator for MUSC Children's Health. She is a published researcher, advocate and organizer for community violence and firearm injury prevention.

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## CLIENT ADVOCATES



**Keith Smalls** works with victims of gun violence from the time they enter the MUSC Health emergency department through the course of their recovery and beyond. A native of North Charleston, Mr. Smalls is the founder and executive director of My Community's Keeper Mentor Group, whose mission is to improve and enhance the quality of life from one community to another through mentorship, life skills training and revitalization projects.

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**Donnie Singleton** works with victims of gun violence, with a special focus on high-risk youth, providing comprehensive wraparound services to address risk factors for violence and promote recovery. Mr. Singleton started the nonprofit organization North Charleston SC Youth Resistance, Inc. The mission of the organization is to build strong individuals, helping them become aware of their true identity and breaking beyond stereotypes.

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**Cat Yetman, BS** is a violence intervention client advocate and research specialist. She has many years of experience working with high-risk youth in the SC Department of Corrections in a youth offender re-entry program. Ms. Yetman also spent many years as a volunteer victim advocate with Tri-County S.P.E.A.K.S. and worked with unhoused community members at the City of Charleston's Hope Center.

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## INJURY PREVENTION COORDINATOR



**Adrianna Bellamy, BSPH** is the MUSC Health injury prevention coordinator for the adult trauma program and the Trauma Survivors Network (TSN) Coordinator for MUSC. She works closely with the TTVIP team supporting case management, evaluation, and community outreach activities.

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# WHO WE ARE

The MUSC Turning the Tide Violence Intervention Program is an evidence-based, multi-disciplinary program that supports youth and young adults that are at risk of or experience violent injury with the aims of reducing risk factors for violence, preventing injury and re-injury, and improving patient-centered outcomes.

## Core principles to this model include:

- A public health approach to address the social determinants of health and root causes of violence;
- Culturally competent, trauma-informed services to improve trust and communication;
- Community partnerships with community-based organizations and agencies that provide services to comprehensively support patients' needs.

## Who do we serve?

MUSC's Turning the Tide Violence Intervention Program aims to improve the care and recovery of violently injured patients to prevent future violence and improve quality of life. We currently serve patients 12-30 years

old that suffer gunshot injuries from community-based violence, and are treated at MUSC Health Charleston's Adult and Pediatric Trauma Centers.

Full wraparound services are offered to enrolled patients and families. Homicide survivor support services are also available to families and friends that experience the loss of a loved one at MUSC. A key component of this program is the long-term intensive follow-up provided up to a year post-injury.

## What are Wraparound Services?

Wraparound services are inclusive of whatever the patient and family need to address unmet needs and risk factors for violent injury, and will promote recovery, reduce repeat violence, and improve their health, social, and economic outcomes.

Services may include mentorship and encouragement, conflict mediation, and connecting patients to social services such as food, housing, education, employment, transportation, healthcare, mental health, substance abuse counseling, victims services, and community support.

## IN THE NEWS



- *TEDxCharleston, March 2023: [Treating More Than the Wound of Gun Violence](#)*

Dr. Ashley Hink's TEDxCharleston talk is a compelling narrative on why we should be treating more than the wounds of gun violence and explains that everyone can play a role in prevention.



- *ABC News 4, April 2023: ['Turning the Tide' program sees increase in younger patients with firearm injuries](#)*

Dr. Hink and Cat Yetman shared their perspectives on current youth firearm injury trends and how Turning the Tide responds and supports young victims of violence.



- *MUSC Catalyst News, April 2023: [New Values in Action monument unveiled, employees recognized](#)*

TTVIP's client advocates, Donnie Singleton and Keith Smalls, were honored again for their Values in Action award this spring and found their names engraved in bricks near the newly erected monument.

# YEAR 1 OF TTVIP IMPLEMENTATION: JULY '21 – JUNE '22

## PATIENTS WE'VE SERVED: All Bedside Responses

149

Patients

22.4

Average Age (Years)

93%

Non-Hispanic Black

84%

Males

Ineligible patients or patients that declined intervention services:

94

Patients

23.8

Average Age

91.6%

Non-Hispanic Black

83%

Males

Patients that accepted full or modified intervention services:

55

Patients

20

Average Age

94.5%

Non-Hispanic Black

83.6%

Males

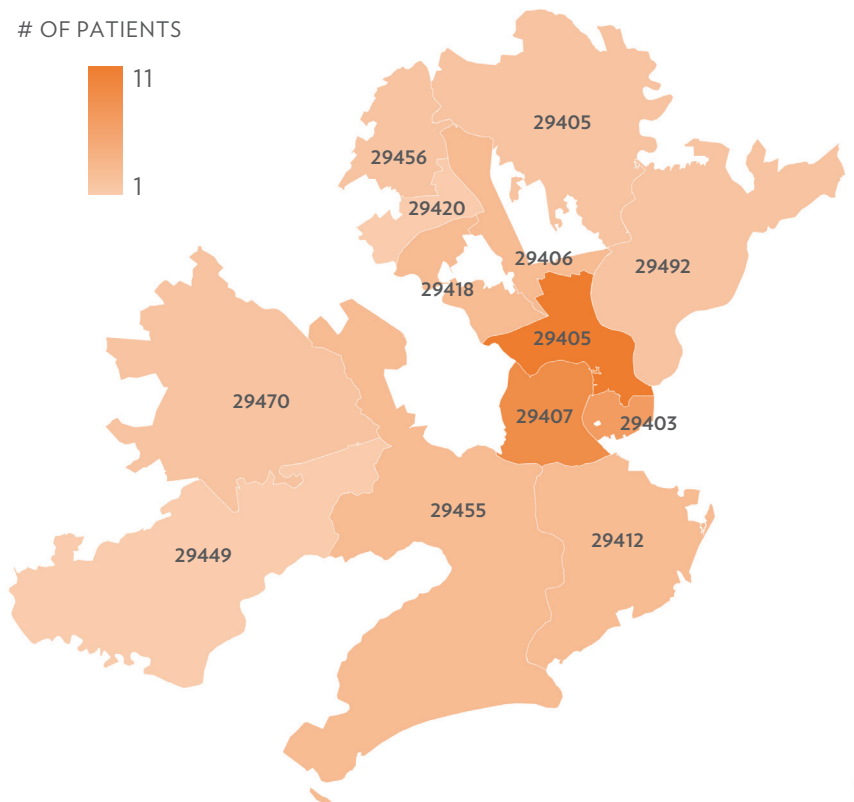
## Most Common Wraparound Services

- Mentorship
- Housing
- Mental Health
- Employment
- Retaliation Prevention
- Safety Planning

## Also of Note...

- About 93% of those receiving services had community violence-related firearm injuries. Hospitalizations ranged from 1-65 days, though most patients were discharged in 1 day.
- Client advocates averaged 3 patient responses per week, though April and May accounted for a third of all patients responded to all year (n=49).
- Evaluation of TTVIP's second year of implementation (July '22 – June '23) is currently underway.

## Residence Map of Patients Receiving Long-Term Follow-Up Services



Most patients that received intervention services lived in West Ashley (29407), the upper neck of the peninsula into North Charleston (29405), and downtown Charleston (29403), and more than 90% of all patients receiving services lived in the tri-county area.

# LEADING WITH EXCELLENCE

## CLIENT ADVOCATE SPOTLIGHT: CAT YETMAN

**Cat Yetman** joined TTVIP in August 2022. Previously, she worked with young adults released from prison. During her time working with that community, she noticed that many of the men were shot in their youth and then returned to the same communities without any additional support to prevent it from happening again. These experiences planted the seed for Cat's transition to Turning the Tide.

Cat has now been a client advocate with the program for over six months. When asked what the highlights have been, Cat stated that at Turning the Tide, "we work with people first, prioritize human connection at vulnerable moments, and show patients that they are more than their injuries."

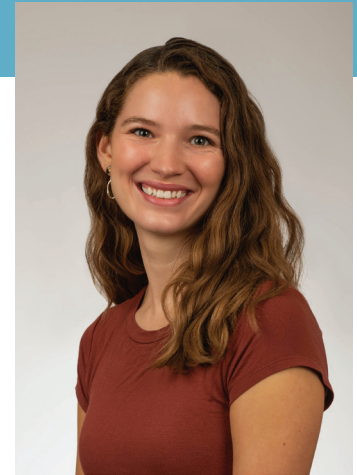
"When people have better choices, they make better choices. TTVIP gives patients the attention, care and resources that they should have had access to from

the start. Our actions make it clear that we do not accept gun violence as the norm for our children and young adults. I think often of a kid I worked with who was shot at age 16 and later incarcerated. He was so many things, including kind and capable. What could his life have looked like if TTVIP existed to intervene at a key moment in his life?"

In just a short period of time, Cat has supported dozens of patients by showing them that they matter.

Cat sums it up by saying, "Patients may not remember the name of the procedure they had, but they will remember how they felt in our care." Cat Yetman is a vital resource our patients now have access to.

She said she does this work for those impacted by community violence who deserve better care, opportunities, and outcomes.



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*"Our presence says to patients: You are more than your injuries."*  
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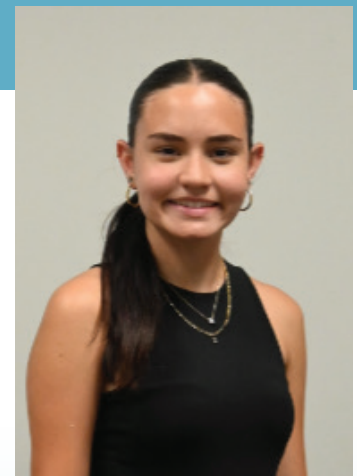
-Cat Yetman

## INTERN SPOTLIGHT: HALEY SCHONBERG

This spring, Turning the Tide welcomed their first intern, **Haley Schonberg**. She is a junior at the College of Charleston studying psychology with a double minor in crime law and society and medical humanities.

Haley's internship activities focused on community outreach. She presented to classes at the College of Charleston

to increase the visibility and awareness of the program and hosted a clothing drive to support TTVIP patients during discharge. Haley also played a key role in planning Wear Orange Day 2023. She created flyers, planned tables, and developed care team member education materials. Lastly, a special thank you to Haley for her help creating this newsletter!





## BREAKING THE CYCLE: BECOMING THE ROLE MODEL HE NEEDED

“Everything about the day felt normal” until Erseon was injured from a gunshot wound to his jaw. He was shot on a Tuesday, but the next thing he knew it was Saturday and he was lying in a bed at MUSC’s level 1 trauma center with his jaw wired shut. Before discharging home, he met **Keith Smalls**, a violence intervention client advocate with Turning the Tide. Keith has been by Erseon’s side ever since.

Erseon was in his early twenties when he was assaulted just outside his family home. A reserved person, he did not expect things to escalate the way they did. Erseon led a relatively low risk lifestyle, but due to his family connections, he was at a higher risk for violence than he thought.

When he was discharged from the hospital, Erseon faced many life changes between the physical and mental impacts of the violence he experienced. Erseon’s jaw was completely broken, and he had to be on a liquid diet for months which he describes as one of the most difficult parts of recovery beyond the traumatic event itself. However, having Keith there during recovery made all the difference. Keith, who Erseon fondly refers to as “Mr. K,” “will be all over the state, all over the country, and still makes the time” to support him.

With Keith by his side, Erseon found himself doing things he’d never done before, like celebrating Kwanzaa and attending community events. Erseon has always wanted to inspire others, in part because of the positive example his granddad had set for him. Erseon describes him as genuine person with a loving soul, something he’s always admired. Working with Keith naturally

allowed Erseon to explore how he might emulate his granddad. When Keith isn’t working at MUSC, he’s serving his community in another role as the founder and executive director of a local non-profit organization, *My Community’s Keeper Mentor Group*. Within months of his assault, Erseon began serving as a junior mentor to teenage youth who weren’t much different than he was at that age. Erseon shared that being a mentor has filled a gap in his life. Now, he has broken the cycle he found himself in as a kid. Erseon grew up without many positive role models until Keith entered his life and now, he has the chance to impact the next generation. Erseon hopes in the future that he has more time to pursue youth mentorship opportunities further. Keith has made Erseon think differently about many things and Erseon says he continues to learn from him every day. “So many blessings came out of me getting shot,” Erseon stated. One of the biggest was meeting Keith.

The demand for providing lifesaving care to thousands of patients annually leaves clinical providers little time to provide this level of support for violently injured patients. Keith and the other client advocates at Turning the Tide fill this gap in our clinical teams at MUSC Health - Charleston. Beyond the hospital walls, this lifesaving work continues into the communities and homes of the patients we serve. In Erseon’s words, “Us young black men specifically find ourselves in these situations where we feel we only have so many options.” After receiving services from Turning the Tide, he realized that there are more options than he knew existed. For Erseon, “what Mr. K does and continues to do is a way out,” not just for him, but for everyone in the program.

# Gratitude

Your generous support is changing what's possible.

We'd like to give recognition and thanks to recent contributors to the MUSC TTVIP. Their support will help ongoing efforts for violence intervention and victim support in 2023 and beyond:

- Department of Justice Comprehensive Youth Violence Prevention and Reduction Program Grant. This is a 3-year grant that supports a TTVIP client advocate role and a community partner, Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. to provide violence intervention and interruption services in the community.
- Everytown Community Safety Fund
- Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation
- And, to all of our individual donors for their support which allows TTVIP to care for our patients and families!

*Thank you.  
Because of you, the tides are turning!*

If you'd like to join our efforts and support the TTVIP that is creating positive change in our community, please visit [connect2.musc.edu/surgery](https://connect2.musc.edu/surgery) and select "MUSC Violence Prevention Program."

Learn more about how you can support the Turning the Tide Violence Intervention Program by contacting Vera Ford, MUSC Development Director in the Department of Surgery at 843-792-1840 or [fordva@musc.edu](mailto:fordva@musc.edu).

Learn more at Turning the Tide Violence Intervention Program  
[muschealth.org/TTVIP](https://muschealth.org/TTVIP)

**[Join Us! Support the MUSC Health TTVIP Program!](#)**