

Healthbeat

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TARA BROWN!

Comedian Tara Brown will headline
the 2025 Stand Up for Kids fundraiser!



Benefitting Aspire's Kids Talk Child Advocacy Center



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Originally from Brooklyn, Tara spent 20 years in Charlotte, North Carolina, where she was working in public relations. And while she loved her job, Tara needed to find a hobby.

“So I Googled ‘Things to do in Charlotte,’ and a comedy class popped up. I knew people had said before that I was funny, so I thought I’d give it a go.”

What did Tara Brown learn from the seven-week class she took at the Comedy Zone in 2003?

“They taught me about joke structure,” she says. “There is the rule of three in the progression of how you set up a joke — from funny to funnier and funniest. Even the way you move a mic stand is something we learned that an audience member may not even realize. I thought the class was extremely valuable and helpful.”

Tara worked her full-time public relations job during the day and did comedy at night. Then, something amazing and unexpected happened.

“I started getting more opportunities as a comedian, and it was becoming almost a second full-time job, which is a good problem to have,” she says. “I began to wonder if I should begin focusing more on developing myself as a comedian, and I was encouraged to move to Nashville, Tennessee, because it’s a good city for clean comics. At first, I really didn’t want to leave my PR job because I loved it, but I ultimately decided to take a huge leap of faith and head to Nashville.”

Tara has been in Nashville since August 2023 and has worked her way from biker bars to cruise ships and now is making people laugh all over the world. But she says comedy is a marathon, not a sprint.

“I think that’s a hard thing for people to absorb. You want to do comedy on Wednesday and then have a Netflix special by Saturday, and it does not

The Laughter Assignment

TARA BROWN

is a celebrated comedian and entertainer who has become a favorite for her clean and family-friendly comedy. She’s the headliner for Aspire’s annual Stand Up for Kids event, taking place on February 21 at the Paramount Theatre Centre and Ballroom in Anderson.





it and posting it on social media. And depending on how people react to what I post helps me decide if it can be worked into a joke. Comedy has a way of finding you."

That means Tara is pretty much always workshopping material that could be used in her next show. And she's always adding new material and challenging herself to be better — desiring to connect with people and share joy in an accessible and inclusive way.

"Comedy brings you together," she says. "It makes you forget about what you're going through, and that's my guiding force in all of this. We all walk into a room with 'stuff,' things that are heavy on our hearts that we might not want to share with other people, and if I can help you forget about that for a little while, then that's what I want to do."

Tara has performed in many venues and for many different types of events and organizations, including the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and Shades of Pink Foundation, bringing awareness to many important and serious issues.

"I'm honored to be able to come to these events and help the audience members just laugh at themselves for a minute in the midst of the heavy work they are doing," she says. "Sometimes you have to just take a breath and remember it's OK to laugh."

Tara remembers as she was leaving Charlotte to head to Nashville, her pastor prayed for her and

work like that," she says with a laugh. "You just continue to get better and learn more about yourself as a comedian. I love to do things that challenge me to be a better comedian."

Her comedy is an authentic reflection of who she is and how she sees the world around her. According to Tara, her comedy plays well in all time zones. And the biggest compliment she has received is hearing from people that she is relatable.

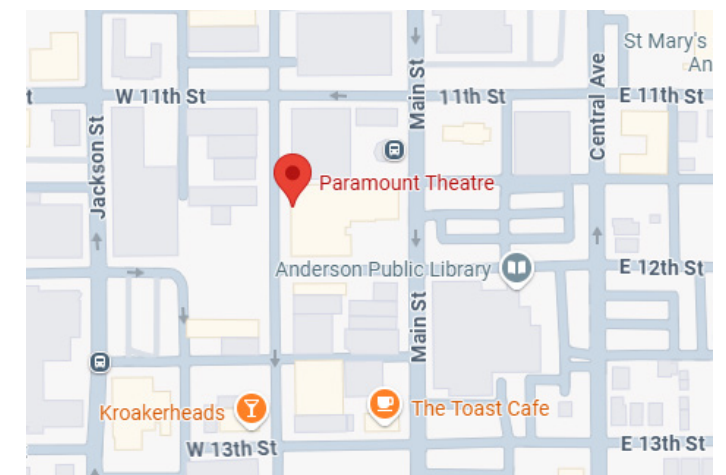
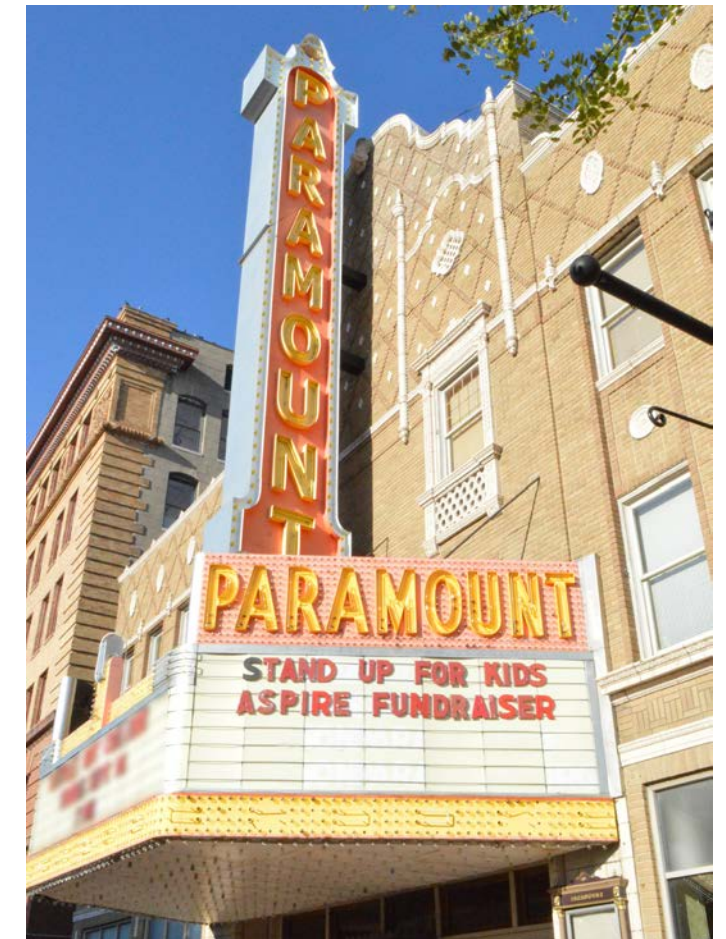
"We as people have so many things in common that we can laugh about," she says. That's why her humor resonates with a wide variety of audiences and delivers laughs appropriate for all ages. And everything has the potential to be her next joke.

"I travel a lot and spend a lot of time in airports, and I do something I like to call airport and airplane chronicles — which is basically me people watching and typing up funny stuff as I think about

said, "I'm sending you on assignment." And that has always stayed with her.

"There are people in the rooms that I do comedy in who need to feel this laughter, this relief, this joy," she says. "And it's my assignment to do that."

Make sure to come see Tara Brown at the Stand Up for Kids event on **Friday, February 21 at 7 p.m.** at the Paramount Theatre Centre and Ballroom in Anderson. Stand Up for Kids is Aspire's annual fundraiser to help support [Kids Talk](#), a program that assists children and adults in Madison County who have experienced or witnessed abuse and neglect. Kids Talk is funded through grants and donations, and Stand Up for Kids is a vital part of generating revenue. It's also a special event where Kids Talk and its many community partners can share some laughs while supporting a great cause. Get your tickets today: <https://e.givesmart.com/events/F8g/>



Friday, February 21 at 7 p.m.
Paramount Theatre, Meridian Street,
Anderson, IN

[Purchase tickets and browse for auction items!](#)



Meet Lead Psychologist Dr. Aarika White

Aspire's new lead psychologist Aarika White, Ph.D., HSPP, took on the role of peer mediator early in life.



Born and raised primarily in central Indiana, she was one of the first peer mediators in a pilot program at her middle school in Beech Grove.

"When I first started college, I was actually studying to be a physical therapist," she says. "But I ended up really liking the psychology classes I was taking. Learning more about Skinner and Pavlov and their work was so interesting. I was also surrounded by really good mentors in the psychology program and felt at home — like I was with my people."

After graduating from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) with her bachelor's degree in psychology, Dr. White received her master's degree in counseling and her doctorate in counseling psychology from Ball State University.

Having previously worked as a staff psychologist for Cummins Behavioral Health Systems, Dr. White sees herself as a lifelong learner with a curious mind and a heart for helping change lives.

"Who doesn't want to be in a field where you work with people who want to be supportive and empathic and talk through things that are hard," she says. "I think there's such a great culture within the psychology community, and I've always valued that."

Dr. White and her husband moved to central Florida in November 2021 — where they enjoy all

Meet Dr. White

things Disney and time with their two Australian Labradoodles, Winnie and Rue. Then in early 2024, she began to look for other remote opportunities that offered leadership roles.



"As I was researching Aspire, I was impressed with not only the number and types of services Aspire offers but also the depth and breadth of the leadership within the organization," she says. "And when I met with Dr. Sarah (Dross-Gonzalez) and Adrianna (Burgos), I felt really welcomed and encouraged by their focus on getting the right person in the position."

As lead psychologist, a new role at Aspire, Dr. White's responsibilities include clinical supervision and oversight, program development and quality control.

"I want to help give our providers at Aspire the best chance for success, supporting them with the guidance and resources they need to ensure we are providing the best quality care we can to our clients," she says. "There is a contagious spark at Aspire, a feeling of genuine support and connection. As large as the organization is, it feels like a small community, and I look forward to my future here."



Aspire
Indiana Health
Antony Sheehan
President & Executive Officer

In last month's [Accent on Compassion](#) feature by Aspire Indiana Health President and CEO Antony Sheehan, he talks about medical leadership and the creation of a new Medical Director of Primary Care role.



Black History Month: Why Representation Matters

As we celebrate Black History Month, it's important to examine the history and the continued importance of representation in the medical field.



Generations of Black doctors have revolutionized modern medicine. Charles Drew, MD, is known as the Father of the Blood Bank as he developed the techniques and standards used to preserve blood donations.

Patricia Bath, MD, was a pioneer in ophthalmology. She was the first Black resident in ophthalmology at NYU's School of Medicine and went on to become the first Black female surgeon at UCLA's Medical Center. She revolutionized cataract

surgery after studying laser technology and developed the laserphaco probe, an instrument that removes cataracts and allows a new lens to be inserted.

Kizzmekia Corbett, Phd, is a lead vaccine developer, and is credited with saving millions of lives during the COVID-19 pandemic as she played an integral role in developing the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

Yet, despite the significant contribution these Black doctors and healthcare workers and many others have provided to modern medicine, only 5% of physicians and surgeons are Black in the United States (MultiCare Vitals, 2023).

While some may note the number of Black physicians has increased over the years, James E.K. Hildreth, MD, President/CEO of Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn., notes that statistic does not take into account the population changes of the United States. The numbers may be higher, but the percentages are still staggeringly low, considering Black Americans make up approximately 14% of the population (ACCC, 2024).

The significance of the lack of representation in healthcare lies in the patient experience. Studies have demonstrated that having a doctor of the same race promotes trust and confidence in one's medical care and provides an increasingly positive patient experience (MultiCare Vitals, 2023). A satisfied patient often leads to reduction in healthcare disparities, increased patient satisfaction, improved patient access, enhanced patient-provider communication and health literacy (ACCC, 2024).

Despite the surplus of research that indicates having a doctor of the same race can have a crucial impact on a patient's overall health, many Black patients across America lack access to a doctor who looks like them. While Black applicants are applying to medical schools, many Black medical students cite a lack of support, cheerleading, mentorship and opportunities as to why the number of practicing physicians has not increased. Further medical myths and misinformation still permeates many medical school textbooks and classrooms.

A study at the University of Virginia in 2016 found many medical textbooks still taught medical students that Black patients feel less pain than



white patients (AMA, 2022). Harriet A. Washington, author of "Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to Present" (2007), noted that when she presented a paper at a medical conference on racial mistreatment of Black Americans, more than 20 of her colleagues were adamant that the Tuskegee Syphilis Study was the only example of medical mistreatment.

Yet Dr. Sims, often regarded as the Father of Gynecology, openly experimented on enslaved Black women without consent or anesthesia (Forrest, 2024). Even as recent as the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Americans saw a higher rate of infection than white Americans. (Mayo Clinic, 2023)

For these reasons and countless others, mistrust looms over Black Americans like a shroud when it comes to healthcare. It is the reason representation remains of utmost importance. Black patients can more easily build rapport and trust with a physician and/or surgeon who looks like them. Representation allows Black patients to feel empowered in their own healthcare journey. Representation increases patient access and patient satisfaction. More importantly, though, representation increases overall patient health in Black Americans.



Getting to Know CéAira Waymon



requests through the marketing request form, photograph and edit videos.

What would you like others at Aspire to know about your job? The Marketing Team is looking to increase our photo inventory of Aspire locations, programs and services; this often requires traveling directly to those locations. Living in Southern Indiana, that means driving upwards of four hours in a day when a photo/video shoot is scheduled. I'm happy to do so, but it can definitely be tiring going into a full workday!

CéAira Waymon is Aspire's Marketing Creative Associate, and she has been with Aspire for nine months, having started just one week after her graduation from Indiana University! In fact, part of her onboarding included attending our all-Aspire event on May 14.

How would you describe your role? My role is a blend of graphic design and photography. I assist with the monthly Healthbeat Magazine, fulfill



What do you like most about working at Aspire? I appreciate how, although this is my first full-time position, my contribution to the team is not taken for granted but valued. I am able to continue developing my skills while participating in projects that are actively used.

What is something you enjoy outside of work? I enjoy watercolor painting on a weekly basis when wanting to decompress, but I also like traveling. In 2023, I went to Czechia, and in 2024, I went to D.C.! I'm looking forward to where I am able to go this year.

What is your favorite movie or TV show? What do you love about it? I really enjoy "The Equalizer" movie series starring Denzel Washington. His character is retired, and he uses his time and energy to help vulnerable community members. I like this movie series because it shows how giving back to the community makes it safer and more prosperous for everyone.





Employee Spotlight: Michael Burke, MACY Driver

For the past year, Michael Burke has dedicated his career to Aspire Indiana Health as a Community Health Worker and primary driver of MACY, Aspire's mobile clinic unit — Mobile Access Care for You.

A smile spreads across his face as he talks about his job, transporting patients to their appointments or to other various Aspire services. Prior to joining the Aspire team, he drove for RCA (Recovery Centers of America); however, when MACY became operational, no one was better fit for the job than Michael Burke.

In fact, his journey with Aspire began long before he started driving MACY.

Michael Burke has been sober for five years. Sobriety was a long and tumultuous journey for him — in and out of Progress House multiple times, even including some unhoused days, living primarily on Monument Circle. "I go back once a month to my spot to remember," he says.

Michael had his first drink at 17. The alcohol took hold of him. "I lived for alcohol," Michael somberly recalls. For years he operated as a functional alcoholic, got married, and had a career. Eventually though, he and his wife divorced, and he lost his job. Soon enough, he found himself unhoused and permanently on Monument Circle.

Eventually, a member of the PourHouse helped Michael reserve a spot in Progress House to work toward sobriety. Michael went to Progress House

but quickly resumed drinking and found himself back at Monument Circle. Michael repeated this process two more times. In 2020 when COVID-19 was raging through the United States, Michael found himself back at Progress House. The staff announced that if the residents stayed, they had to really commit to the program with the dangers of COVID lurking every six feet.

Michael made a decision that would impact the rest of his life: to commit. After 10 months of sobriety, he awoke one day with a sudden epiphany — "I'm the problem." In that moment, Michael was able to grasp firmly onto his sobriety and find solid ground.

Once Michael completed the program, he found a new purpose in life. He committed to helping others, as he knew all too well their experiences.

Michael's passion beams as he talks about his work on MACY. One story in particular that he shared involved two people outside the library who wanted to get sober. He talked to them



about their options, and while they initially wanted to go together, they ultimately decided to take different paths — one going to Mockingbird Hill and then to Progress House.

Now Michael awakes each day with service at the forefront of his mind: "How can I help?" He specifically finds gratitude in helping other unhoused individuals, understanding fundamentally what they need.

Michael has found other passions as well. He enjoys cheering on the Butler Bulldogs. He jokes, "I tried running for four minutes once, and then thought I'd better work on my personality instead." Michael's lighthearted nature makes his story that much more impactful. The work he has done and continues to do for Aspire is powerful.

Thank you, Michael!



Aspire News



ASPIRE WELCOMES DR. HOLLY OH

We are excited to welcome Dr. Holly Oh as our new Chief Medical Officer. She has held many executive leadership roles in healthcare and been a persistent voice for the underserved.

As a pediatrician and community health advocate, Dr. Oh will be our chief navigator as we pursue ambitious goals to expand the scope of medical services we offer. And she will be our partner in guiding the individual growth of our clinical providers. She earned her medical degree at the University of Michigan after obtaining an undergraduate degree in psychology from Brown University. She completed her residency at Children’s Hospital of Boston and Boston Medical Center.

Dr. Oh is a preeminent figure in developing innovative models of healthcare delivery to the people who need them most. Please join us in welcoming her!

ANDERSON AWARDS \$900K FOR HOMELESS INITIATIVE

Aspire has been awarded \$900,000 in American Rescue Plan funding by the City of Anderson to provide services to persons who are homeless in

the community, including addressing housing, mental health issues and substance use.

Terms of the two-year agreement with Aspire include the city providing a house from the Community Development Department at 718 W. 17th St. for transitional housing for a family with children. [Read more here.](#)



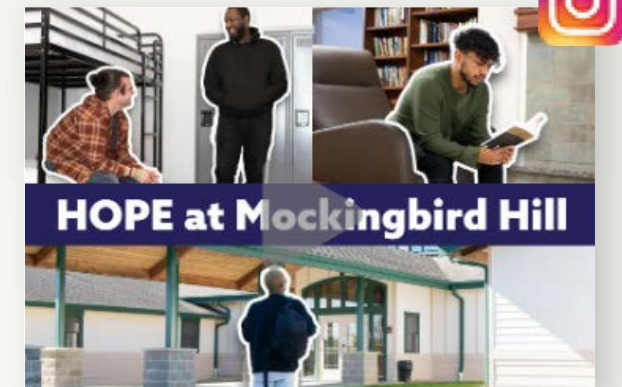
DONATE TO FAMILIES IN NEED THIS WINTER

Accumulating snow and blasts of frigid air and below-freezing temperatures have already made for an active winter. Please [consider donating](#) to families in need who are turning to the Winter Contingency Shelter for safety from the harsh cold. Now through March 31, unhoused families can go to the Susan Ross Leach School 68 on North Riley Avenue for shelter, along with additional resources such as case management and on-site medical care, including Aspire’s MACY (Mobile Access Care for You). [Check out this wish list of necessities](#), and make a donation today!



Social Media Hits

A look back at our top social media hits in January!



DARRELL MITCHELL

Support services in recovery housing



A MISSION TO SERVE



Welcome New Employees

ANDERSON

Michael Carroll

Care Coordinator/Life Skills Instructor - Home & Community Based
Chase Street

Samuel Goble

Care Coordinator/Life Skills Instructor - Home & Community Based Services
Chase Street

Anna Overman

Victim Advocate/Forensic Interviewer
KidsTalky

Celeste Segura

Infectious Disease Case Manager
Hoak

CARMEL

Justine Carlson

Recovery Coach - Outpatient
Carmel

Dashana Johnson

Certified Medical Assistant
Carmel

INDIANAPOLIS

Jhazmyne Best

Assessment Clinician
Indianapolis

Sherry Erinfolami

Certified Medical Assistant
Indianapolis

Sirisha Gara

Team Lead - Certified Medical Assistant
Indianapolis

Danyell Kennedy

Certified Recovery Specialist - Adult Home & Community Based Services
Indianapolis

LEBANON

Michael Schrettenbrunner

Behavioral Health Consultant
Lebanon

Kadyn Thomerson

Certified Medical Assistant
Lebanon

NOBLESVILLE

Carrington Kaiser

License Eligible Therapist
Noblesville

Natalie Mitchell

CC/LSI Youth & Family - Home & Community Based
Noblesville

Haleigh Nightenhelser

Patient Access Specialist
Noblesville

Lori Polk

HR Systems Support Specialist
Administration



At Aspire, we want to recognize our employees for the "Great Job" they are doing! We have re-imagined our Recognition and Way to Go programs – our new Great Job recognition focuses on our people, patients and/or partners and incorporates one or more of the Aspire values of impact, innovation and inclusion!



Erica Glenn, Training Specialist-Noblesville Admin, did a great job making sure multiple new hires felt cared for and able to get all the information they needed when the snow storm caused them to have issues getting to orientation. Erica truly makes new hires feel at home and excited to start their new positions here at Aspire. So thankful for her being quick on her feet and helping with the coordination of orientation when things need to change to accommodate needs.



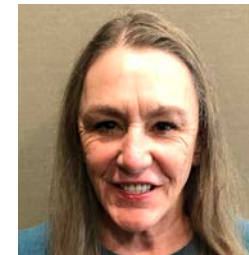
Mary Wilham, Administrative Assistant Training/PEACE Team-Noblesville Admin, was able to help with the coordination of making accommodations when the weather caused several new hires to have conflicts with getting to orientation. Mary always makes sure the new hires have welcoming lunches and snacks throughout orientation and helps tremendously with making the environment of orientation a great experience. Thank you, Mary!



Cyera Young, Office Coordinator-DeHaven, is always so helpful and willing to step in where there is a need – from sitting in groups, to coordinating office needs, gathering needed supplies, and so much more. Cyera makes an impact on her team and clients daily and uses her innovation to find solutions as quickly as possible!



Rich Trotman, Multimedia Content Producer-Noblesville Admin, has brought an incredible level of skill and professionalism to his role as the chief creator of audio-visual content since joining the Aspire marketing team in late 2024. His projects have impressed and informed, stoking our passion to continue doing all the good works Aspire makes happen every day. Thanks, Rich!



Donita Covington, Recovery Coach-Elwood Outpatient, has been incredibly impactful with her team and clients by covering multiple groups for other providers over the holidays or for illness. This helped support our clients mental health as well as allowing clinicians much needed time off for self care. She always tries to be helpful and willing to do what she can for those in need. We appreciate you so much, Donita!

To nominate an Aspire employee for doing a "Great Job," [please click here.](#)