



# reclaimclairton

Ambassador Program  
2016-2017







# reclaimclairton

GTECH initiated the ReClaim Clairton program after working with residents to survey each and every one of the Clairton's 1,326 vacant lots. This survey helped us to understand the character and impact of vacant land in the city and to learn what work is already being done.

Ultimately, GTECH learned that Clairton residents have a need for more outdoor community spaces and have hundreds of vacant lots in need of some love. Vacant lots are a wasted resource if left to become overgrown with weeds and strewn with litter. However, if we see neighbors work together to create flower gardens, gathering spaces, trails and, food gardens where there was once a vacant lot, then the community begins to transform.

In the fall of 2016, GTECH recruited 12 Clairton residents, known as Ambassadors, to lead the movement for reclaiming vacant lots. For eight months, the Ambassadors participated in classes to learn about the process of reclaiming vacant land. Throughout the classes they designed their own vacant lot projects and rallied their communities to bring the projects to life. Throughout the Spring and Summer of 2017, the Ambassadors turned vacant lots around Clairton into community assets for everyone to enjoy.



We would like to thank the Jefferson  
Regional Foundation and our partners at  
Economic Development South for making  
the ReClaim Clairton Ambassador program  
possible.

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# ReClaim Clairton Ambassadors



## Felix Fusco

Felix has been a resident of Clairton his whole life. He enjoys being able to walk anywhere in the community and how easy it is to engage with neighbors, business owners, and community leaders.

Felix joined the cohort to effect positive change in the community and to sustain that positive energy through working with youth on his project.



## Sue Vigliotti

Sue is another life-long member of the Clairton community. Her favorite thing about the city is its people, and she was inspired to join the program as a way to give back to them.

Sue wants to let people know that she and others care about their town by sprucing up the city. Her project helps beautify the passage between Clairton and the Montour Trail, and provides a way for residents to remember their loved ones.



## Corinne Brooks

Corinne loves her close-knit community. She was motivated to become an Ambassador by the desire to improve her community for her children. She wants to inspire passion and create safe spaces for young people.

“I didn’t choose Clairton... Clairton chose me, and now that I can help, I plan on being a voice for our community, not only to beautify Clairton but make Clairton feel loved again!”



# ReClaim Clairton Ambassadors



## Skylar Randolph

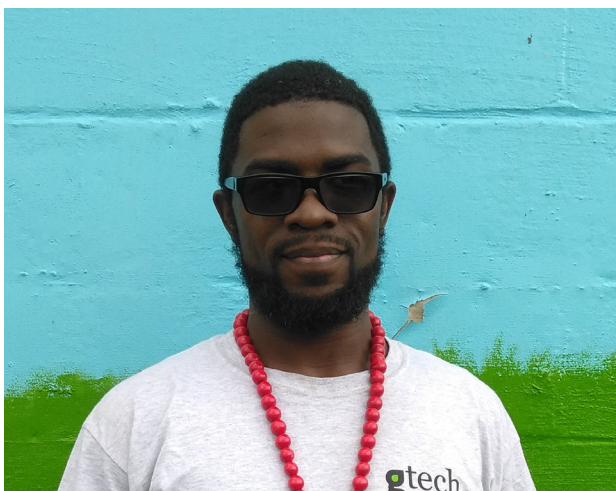
Skylar was inspired to be an Ambassador for the children. Growing up, Skylar was proud to be a Clairton Bear. She wants the same for today's youth.

“Outsiders see a struggling community with various vacant lots, Ambassadors see potential growth and opportunity. I want the Clairton community to know that this is OUR HOUSE – its time to seize it and make it amazing.”



## Donna Hudson

Donna Hudson knows the neighborhood kids well, and wanted to create a safe place near the school where they could gather and play.



## Anton Jackson

Anton recognizes the close community bonds in Clairton, and sees a lot of opportunity for residents to make great things happen.

Anton hopes to see more social outlets for the city's youth, and more beautification for residents and visitors.

# ReClaim Clairton Ambassadors



## Jawanna Warren

Jawanna sought to bring a little rest, reflection, and beauty into the community by improving an area that she and her neighbors pass by nearly every day.



## Janella Hamlin

The City of Prayer has always been Janella's home. She describes the city as a loving community with great potential.

She was inspired to become an Ambassador to give back to this community, and to see it strive again.



## Ty Allen

Ty has lived in the city for 18 years. The close-knit aspect of the community is her favorite thing. She loves that you never really meet a stranger. Her desire to be an agent of positive change is what brought her into the ReClaim program.

"Clairton is truly a family"



# ReClaim Clairton Ambassadors



## Dr. Pauline Long

Pauline cares deeply about Clairton and its history. Through her work in the ReClaim program, she wanted to create a safe, exciting, and lasting place for the kids in the community.



## Toni Schley

“You cannot complain if you are not part of the solution. I want to be part of the solution to Clairton’s problems.”

Toni is an expert of Clairton’s history, and the legacy of the city is part of what inspired her to join the ReClaim program.



## Bikila Darden

At the start of the program, Bikila had recently relocated back to Clairton. This is the city where she was raised, and she feels a great sense of nostalgia and pride for her neighborhood.

Bikila wanted to help improve the city however she could, and hoped to bring more positivity back to the community.



GTECH works with people and the places where they live to identify opportunities to improve the social, economic, and environmental health of our communities from within.



**ReClaim Clairton Project Team**  
Ariam Ford, James Snow, Lydia Kramer, and Tom Mulholland



## Landforce

Landforce, a land management and workforce development organization, supported ReClaim Clairton with their professionally skilled crews.



## Mike Butler

Mike supported GTECH as a landscape contractor to lend a hand for the Ambassador projects.



# Project Locations

## City of Clairton



**1. Inspirational and Communication Park**

Felix Fusco

**2. The Revitalization of Nicholas Field**

Corinne Brooks

**3. Memorial Lane**

Sue Vigliotti

**4. Clairton Corner Corral**

Skylar Randolph, Donna Hudson, Anton Jackson

**5. Rest for the Weary**

Jawanna Warren, Janella Hamlin

**6. The Tot Spot**

Ty Allen, Dr. Pauline Long

**7. Clairton Community Garden**

Toni Schley, Bikila Darden



# Inspirational and Communication Park

## Felix Fusco

Felix Fusco has turned his lot into a place for community healing and expression. Here neighbors are able to walk along the path through colorful doorways, and appreciate the flowers and inspirational messages planted by Felix.

The center-piece of this project is a community chalkboard which visitors can use to share their own messages of inspiration on the site.







With the help of Landforce on May 25th, and Home Depot, US Steel, and community volunteers on June 22nd, Felix was able to create a pathway, planting beds, as well as paint and install colorful doors. In the end, he was able to turn this empty lot into an inspiring place for neighbors to share news and thoughts with each other.





# Corinne Brookes

**BEFORE**







Corinne held a volunteer day on June 16th. Volunteers from US Steel joined us to clean graffiti and grime from the playground equipment and cover it all with new paint. The GTECH team returned to install new swings, and patch the worn playground surfaces.





# Memorial Lane

## Sue Vigliotti

The Memorial Lane project beautified the path to the entrance of the Montour Trail, creating a more peaceful and beautiful transition between the city of Clairton and the trailhead.

A number of features were installed through this beautification project; new benches, birdhouses, scattered planting beds for flowers to brighten up the path, and finally trees coupled with name-plates to memorialize friends and family members of community members.







On April 28th, US Steel volunteers helped us bring the site to life by planting over 30 trees and a mix of other foliage, creating a hillside garden bed, and installing benches along the trail entrance. Sue has worked hard all summer to add more and more trees to the site.



AFTER



# Clairton Corner Corral

Skylar Randolph, Donna Hudson, Anton Jackson

The Clairton Corner Corral was a project by ReClaim Clairton Ambassadors, Skylar Randolph, Anton Jackson, and Donna Hudson. The playground was made with repurposed materials and several fun elements that are sure to be a big hit for youth in Clairton, and that will bring some much needed color and activity to the area.







On May 20th, community volunteers joined the Ambassadors for a day of tire painting. On May 26th, the team dug out the pathways and play spaces, adding gravel and mulch surfaces to create the groundwork for the site. 3 picnic tables and 2 benches were installed to provide seating on the site. All of this work was completed with the help of the Landforce crew. By the end of our June 18th volunteer workday, we planted a variety of flowers plus 3 dogwood trees on the site.

The Ambassadors and GTECH staff returned to the site throughout the summer (July 21st, August 26, and September 2nd) to finish the installation of new amenities including a tire pyramid, hopscotch course, tic tac toe board, rain barrel, and little free library.





# Rest for the Weary

Jawanna Warren, Janella Hamlin

To date, Clairton residents have used this space as a common footpath even though it is in complete disrepair. Jawanna and Janella's project brought life into the space by providing benches for resting and reading, a little free library, and beautiful planting beds.

This space is for anyone who passes through this corridor. The space is right near a bus stop and grocery store, making it useful for everyone. People can simply enjoy the space as they pass through or even take a rest and stay.







On May 31st, Landforce joined Jawanna and Janella to create the large planting beds that cover the site. GTECH's contractor, Mike, built a shade structure to cover the newly installed bench and little free library. The site is now a beautiful place for weary travellers to rest and reflect.



AFTER





# The Tot Spot

## Ty Allen and Pauline Long

Ty Allen and Pauline Long enhanced the Reed Street Playground by building out a place for younger kids to play. They revitalized the existing playground, turning it into a safe and welcoming place for families to come together.







On May 9th, Ty and Pauline led US Steel volunteers in an exciting workday. They built a play tunnel, multiple tables for out-of-school program lunches, filled existing planters with bright splashes of flowers, and added a fresh coat of paint to the weathered playground components.



AFTER



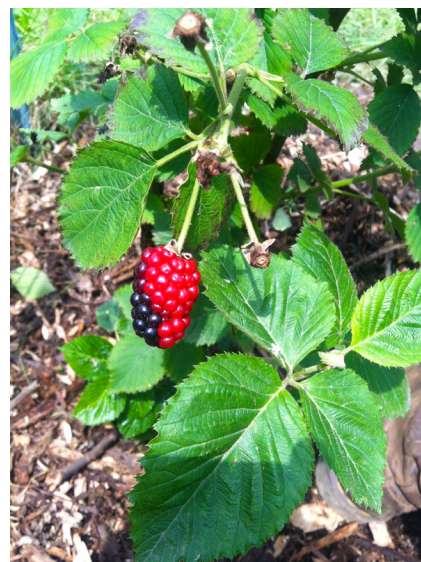
# Community Garden

## Toni Schley, Bakila Darden

Toni Schley and Bikila Darden tackled this existing community garden in Clairton. They revitalized this place so that local families can come together to grow their own food. This space has laid farrow for quite some time, but this team of Ambassadors worked hard to bring it back into operation.







On May 18th, Ambassador Toni Schley led the Landforce crew in the clean-out of the garden, the spread of 20 yards of mulch, and the preparation of all the garden beds for planting. GTECH's contractor, Mike, installed a new set of stairs to make the site more accessible.

On June 15th, and throughout the summer, GTECH and the Ambassadors returned to the site to plant trees, build an accessible raised garden bed, and create fun features for the children who come to the site.





# Education Sessions

October 2016-April 2017

## Class Topics

**Session 1:** Introduction

**Session 2:** Site Assessment

**Session 3:** Site Design

**Session 4:** Engagement

**Session 5:** Design Workshop

**Session 6:** Fundraising

**Session 7:** Presentations

**Session 8:** Practice

**Session 9:** Volunteers

**Session 10:** Final Meeting





# Education Sessions

October 2016-April 2017

ReClaiming a vacant lot takes a lot of imagination, time, and careful thought before you even break ground. That's why our Ambassadors attended 12 education sessions throughout the Fall and Winter. They've learned about how to transform vacant land into activated, green community spaces, the processes that come before and the partnerships that need to be forged to have a successful project.



After much listening and learning, Ambassadors got to the fun part – putting their ideas onto paper.

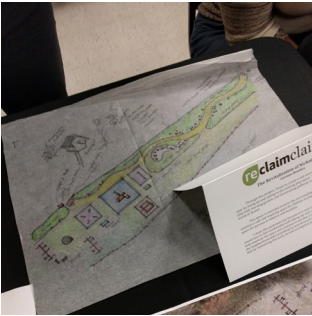
With pens and trace paper in hand, 8 designers, landscape architects and architects descended into Clairton to help our Ambassador cohort make their project ideas come to life.





# Crowdfunding Workshop

February 28, 2017 - Clairton City Hall



The ReClaim Clairton Ambassadors hosted nationwide nonprofit, ioby, to help residents launch their own campaigns at this free workshop.

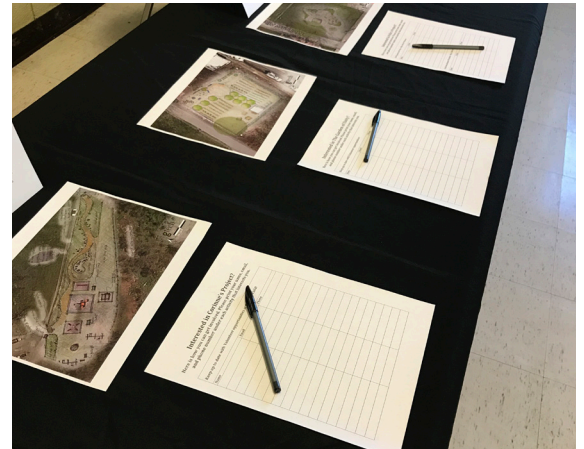
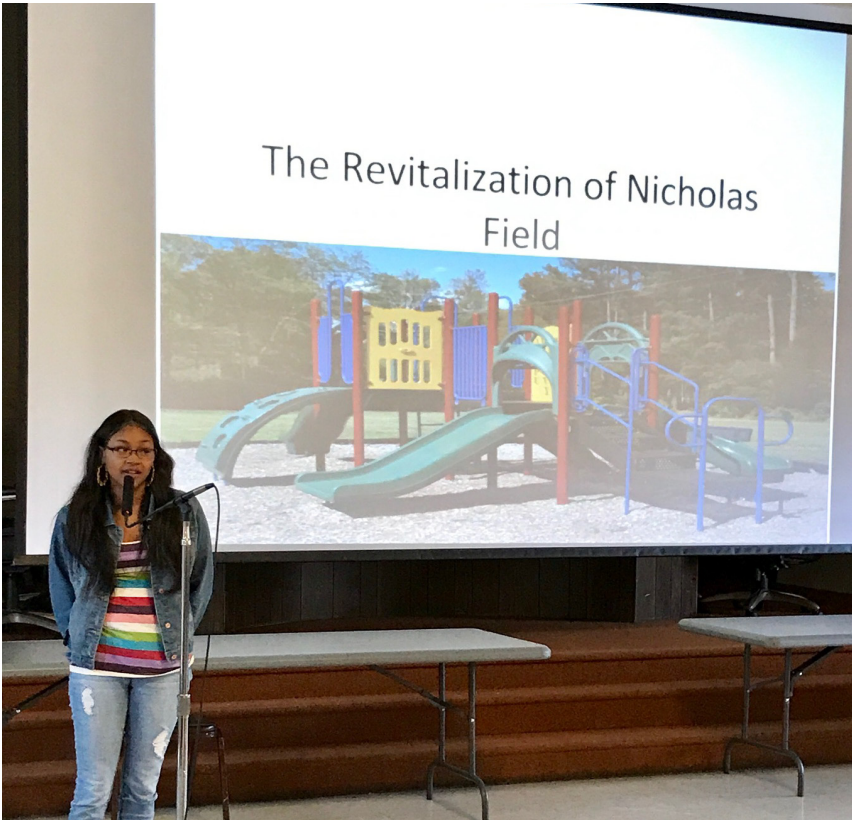
ioby helps neighbors grow and implement great ideas one block at a time. Their crowd-resourcing platform connects leaders with funding and support to make our neighborhoods safer, greener, more livable and more fun.





# Community Presentations

April 26, 2017- Clairton City Hall



The Ambassadors hosted a public presentation of their planned projects in order to share their ideas and gather input and support from the Clairton community.





# Acknowledgments

We would like to thank The Jefferson Regional Foundation and our partners at Economic Development South for making the ReClaim Clairton Ambassador program possible.

We appreciate the time and efforts of our partner organizations, including the City of Clairton, Community Economic Development Center of Clairton and each of the neighborhood groups that supported and continue to support the Ambassador projects.

We also want to thank the many volunteers that worked to clear, plant, and build the Ambassador projects from the ground up. Special thanks to the US Steel volunteers, for contributing their time and skill to these projects.

Last but not least, we want to recognize the ReClaim Clairton Ambassadors. The work of reclaiming vacant land is not easy. However, the Ambassadors have given their time, their creativity, and their drive to create beautiful spaces in their communities out of what was once forgotten. We can't thank them enough.

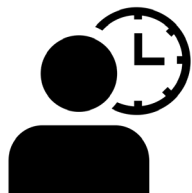
## Statistics



Number of Vacant Lots Activated: 8



Hours of Training: 350



Total Volunteer Hours: 554



Number of Volunteer Shifts: 102



# Autographs

## reclaimclairton Ambassador Graduation

6-8:30pm Tuesday, September 26th  
City Hall Council Chambers



Presenting the GTECH ReClaim Clairton Ambassadors and the completion of their 2016-2017 vacant lot projects! Our partnership with these Ambassadors began back in August 2016, and we cannot wait to share their amazing vacant lot activation projects to the Clairton community.

Dinner and refreshments will be provided!



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