Twitter Thread by Stephanie Farr



Stephanie Farr
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Adam McNeil, 34, rents out entire laundromats to allow Black Philly moms to do their family's clothes for free, and he gave away 25,000 diapers, 2 fridges and 2 sets of washers & dryers to Black Philly moms in the last six months alone (a thread):

Here’s the thing about about McNeil's program, SistaTalkPHL: It doesn’t have a fancy executive board or big donors — it’s just got McNeil, his unemployment checks, and donations from people who believe in his grassroots work.

McNeil himself has a hell of a story, having spent nearly a decade of his life in prison and having survived getting into a near-death car wreck.

"I have taken so much in my life," he told me. "Now, I just want to give."

Due to space constraints, I had to cut a section of McNeil's story out that I felt was very powerful. I'd like to share it here.

McNeil never got to meet his dad, who was imprisoned for most of his life.

While McNeil himself was serving time at the State Correctional Institution at Houtzdale he realized a guy he ran around in Philly with, who was in the same prison, was his half brother on his father’s side.

Through his half brother and prison officials, McNeil got the chance to talk on the phone for the first time with his dad, who was in a federal prison in Minnesota.

His dad was dying of AIDs when they first spoke. They both were in prison.

“It’s your fault that I’m here and I hate you,” McNeil told his dad. "I felt like I wasn’t appreciated. You couldn’t stop doing what you was doing long enough to care about me. You were an example, you were an example of everything I would become."

"I had rage against the world then," McNeil told me. "At the end of the day that was my position then. It was a learning experience. It was humbling & heartfelt."

In Dec 2014, when McNeil walked out of prison for the last time, "I walked out of the shadow of my father," he said

Now, he is a light in this city:

"Let me give back to all the moms who are not getting the right appreciation they deserve or desire because someone doesn't think enough of them to do something for them just because."

Many thanks go to reader Janice Tosto of @bebashi, who nominated McNeil for my We the People series after partnering with him on one of his community wash days.

If you'd like to nominate someone to be profiled, you can reach me here or via email at sfarr@inquirer.com.