

Jeff Brown, Innovator Who Brought Supermarkets to Low-Income Inner-City “Food Deserts,” Joins PLSE Board of Directors

April 26, 2018. Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE) announced today that Jeffrey Brown, Founder, President & CEO of Brown's Super Stores, Inc., has joined the PLSE Board of Directors.

“On behalf of PLSE, I want to say how honored we are to have Jeff Brown join our leadership team,” said Stuart Davidson, a member of the PLSE Board and a partner in the law firm of Willig, Williams & Davidson. “Jeff is a very successful businessman whose positions are driven by social justice. He is the definition of what business leadership must become if our society is to reach its true potential.”

A fourth generation Philadelphia grocer, Brown owns and operates 11 ShopRite and 2 Fresh Grocer Supermarkets in the Philadelphia area. He has attracted national attention by hiring former prisoners and bringing healthy food to underserved neighborhoods, partnering with the Salvation Army, social service groups, and the City of Philadelphia’s reentry programs. He estimates that his company employs 500 returning citizens, often providing them with their first jobs. He began to hire people fresh out of prison in 2008, after being released from prison. His company employs more than 2,600 ShopRite associates who are committed to making a difference for their customers and the local communities they serve.

“With a criminal background,” Brown said, “people can’t get work, and they have these burdens that never go away for the rest of their lives. They often can’t get a mortgage or live in public housing. I know the damage that criminal records cause not just to families and communities, but to their opportunity to be a productive member of society; an overwhelming number of citizens become unable to support themselves. PLSE is at the forefront of assisting citizens in regaining their independence and pride. I am proud to join its Board and support its critical work.”

Last year, PLSE filed and prosecuted almost 2,500 criminal record expungement petitions on behalf of low-income Philadelphians – more than any other organization in the country. It is working closely with the Lieutenant Governor, the Secretary of the Board of Pardons, Community Legal Services, and others to make pardons from the Governor a realistic possibility for people who have demonstrably turned their lives around and are now making significant contributions to their communities.

In Philadelphia, 36,000 people pass through city jails each year, and another 4,032 return to Philadelphia each year from Pennsylvania’s state prisons. “Experts agree that employment is key to keeping people from returning to prison,” said Tobey Oxholm, PLSE’s Interim Executive Director. “Criminal records keep people from the good jobs they are clearly qualified for. It makes sense for society to support the employment of returning citizens, so they can remain crime-free and contribute to our economy and society. Jeff Brown has been walking this walk for over a decade. We are very lucky to have him on our Board.”

Among his many other service activities, Mr. Brown is chairman of the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board, and the Philadelphia Youth Network. He is the founder of [Uplift Solutions](#), a non-profit working to create sustainable access to healthy and affordable food, nutrition education, health care and workforce development for returning citizens, nationally. He was named 2014 Ernst and Young Social Entrepreneur of the Year for his innovative work of meeting the needs of impoverished communities through holistic supermarket hubs; and he was chosen to be a guest of First Lady Michelle Obama at President Obama’s first State of the Union address in 2010, in recognition of his leadership in solving the “food desert” crisis.



ABOUT PLSE: Founded in 2010, PLSE provides free legal representation to low-income residents of Philadelphia whose criminal records are holding them back from achieving their potential as productive, contributing citizens. The services include seeking expungements in criminal court and pardons from the Governor, education elected community leaders, and empowering under-resourced communities to seek a greater voice and needed legislative reforms. PLSE was twice recognized in 2017 as an exemplary non-profit, with both a 2018-19 Barra Award and the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation's Goffman Award. For more information about PLSE, visit <http://www.plsephilly.org> or contact info@plsephilly.org.