

SPIRIT OF MEMPHIS

# Parents' resource center 'a beacon of hope' for Hyde Park

By [King Jemison](#), Daily Memphian

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**The Brenda Rogers Resource Center opened Saturday, June 22 at 1637 Britton St. in the Hyde Park section of North Memphis. (Patrick Lantrip/The Daily Memphian)**

Sarah Carpenter was just days removed from brain surgery when she got a life-changing call.

Philanthropist MacKenzie Scott wanted to donate \$1.5 million to Carpenter's organization, The Memphis Lift, a nonprofit that helps underserved families navigate the education system. But first, Scott's representatives needed to know what Carpenter would do with the grant.

"I would build a new building, and I would help our employees make more money," Carpenter told them.

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She has fulfilled both promises. Having already raised employee pay, Memphis Lift unveiled the new Brenda Rogers Resource Center in Hyde Park Saturday. Memphis Mayor Paul Young, Memphis-Shelby County Schools Superintendent Marie Feagins, education advocate Emma Bloomberg and about 200 community members attended the celebration.

"Every room I go into, they ask me, 'How are we going to make Memphis safer?'" Young said at the ceremony. "This is how. We take care of our young people, and our city will be safer."

The building is named for former Hyde Park resident Brenda Rogers, aka Cake Lady, who was killed by gun violence 20 years ago. Many of her family members attended the ceremony Saturday. The new facility also includes a memorial wall to other victims of gun violence from the community, including Carpenter's grandson, Braylon Murray.

Residents believe this new development can transform their neighborhood.

“It actually gives (Hyde Park) hope,” said Wesley Whitmore, who grew up next door to Carpenter. “In my 30 years here, I’ve never seen nothing like this before.”



**Memphis-Shelby County Schools Superintendent Marie Feagins speaks at the Brenda Rogers Resource Center's grand opening in North Memphis June 22. (Patrick Lantrip/The Daily Memphian)**

It never would have happened without Carpenter's commitment.

Securing the Scott grant while recovering from her second brain surgery epitomizes her ability to press on through obstacles. She lost her grandson in 2021. Her youngest daughter, Dominique "Dede" Carpenter, died last month. Yet through it all, she's continued fighting for Memphis families.

"I can hear my daughter saying, "Mama, you gotta keep going," Carpenter said. "And in spite of what we go through, especially as Black women, we have to get up and show up. I don't mind showing up because at the end of the day, we work for families."

**“** *It actually gives (Hyde Park) hope. In my 30 years here, I’ve never seen nothing like this before.* **”**

**Wesley Whitmore**  
Hyde Park resident

Memphis Lift has been doing just that since its founding in 2015. The organization is “by and for parents,” according to its website, and aims to impart families with knowledge about the school system and how they can best advocate for their child.

With its network of more than 1,000 volunteers, Memphis Lift assists families with school choice, special education services and more. It also advocates for policy changes to the school board and other local leaders. While based in North Memphis, it serves families from across the city.



**Despite the heat, dozens of Memphians came out for the Brenda Rogers Resource Center's grand opening in North Memphis June 22.** (Patrick Lantrip/The Daily Memphian)

“Every child is different, and every child needs something different,” Carpenter said. “And that’s what we educate our parents on.”

The new resource center allows Memphis Lift to do even more. It will include a food pantry, library and community-gathering spaces.

“I think (Hyde Park is) the most overlooked community in the city,” Carpenter said. “If you go through this (neighborhood) and ask anybody, ‘What’s the best thing in this community?’ They’ll say this building. So it brings pride.”

Bloomberg called the resource center a “visual beacon of hope.” She and her organization Murmuration have worked with Memphis Lift for almost a

decade. Bloomberg Philanthropies has donated nearly \$1 million to the organization over the past three years.

“I’m so proud to be a partner (and) to be a friend of Sarah Carpenter,” Bloomberg said. “All the people in this community are working to make it better, and I can’t wait to see what they’re able to do.”

#### TOPICS

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#### **King Jemison**

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