

## **Blending Inspirations**

*Repurposed • Functional • Artistic  
Furnishings & Home Décor*

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I met Marcus almost 9 years ago when I worked as the director of the nationally acclaimed CHAMPS Afterschool program in the Erie School District. Over the span of several years I contracted him as a freelance youth program specialist and public speaker. Marcus worked with our middle and high school youth to teach them how to create, edit and publish videos on topics in which teens wanted their voice to be heard. Homelessness, drugs and violence, and teen pregnancy were just a few of their topics. While the finished product was nothing short of professional, the interactions and discussions that took place during the process helped the youth better understand their topics and feel valued as a citizen of Erie. Mr. Atkinson also addressed parents on the importance of diversity at special events and was soon considered a favorite amongst both youth and adults.

I watched as Marcus also turned the same program into a successful offering for teens at the YMCA where he eventually became the director of their Teen Center. During his time there the success of that facility and its programming was celebrated throughout the community. From there I watched as he became the Executive Director of ServErie and organized over six thousand volunteers to renovate four schools in the Erie School District in a 4-year timeframe. Again, his accomplishments repeatedly made the news and ServErie became one of the most trusted and valued nonprofits in the region.

Now, as I am self-employed, my husband and I have contracted with him for his media company and he has connected with me as a freelance grant writer with one of his consulting clients. His ability to strategize in the areas of business, community and youth makes Marcus Atkinson a vital resource in growing our city, bringing it from a state of surviving to thriving.

*Lorri Bland*