Enhancing Health Equity on the Southwest Side

Through a $75,000 Racial Equity and Community Partnership Grant, a soon-to-open community wellness facility on Chicago’s Southwest Side has greatly benefited from a partnership with the Osher Center for Integrative Health in Northwestern’s Feinberg School of Medicine. The Cultivate Collective/Academy for Global Citizenship site (pictured above and on back page) will include teaching kitchens, healthcare and fitness centers, and a produce marketplace.

“We have found the Osher team to be incredibly engaged with their time, interest, and passion,” says Sarah Elizabeth Ippel, Cultivate Collective’s executive director. “This grant has allowed us to mobilize more quickly and efficiently to assess the needs of our community and to ensure that community voice remains at the center of driving programmatic offerings.”

In addition to offering needs assessments, advice on program implementation, and help in exploring grant opportunities, the Osher Center facilitated focus groups and monthly community meetings as plans for the new wellness hub were developed. “In essence, our role is to act as a supportive collaborator,” says Osher Center director Melinda Ring, “using our resources and expertise to help Cultivate Collective strengthen its community health initiatives.”

“Having a direct line of access to the Osher team has been invaluable,” says Ippel. “They (continued on back page)
Compared with white populations, Black communities have traditionally had significantly less access to palliative care. Through a $50,000 Racial Equity and Community Partnership Grant, the palliative care team in the Feinberg School of Medicine’s Department of Medicine has helped the Bronzeville neighborhood’s Bright Star Community Outreach address that disparity.

“As a partner, our palliative medicine section has provided palliative care education to the Bronzeville community in the form of multiple focus groups, presentations, and community health fairs,” says associate professor of medicine Joshua Hauser. “We helped design surveys and focus groups to gather data about Bronzeville residents’ experience with palliative care and hospice. In addition, we are working with Bright Star to create a standing community advisory board to advise us about Bronzeville residents’ palliative care needs.”

Bright Star’s Erron Williams says that because of these community outreach efforts, “not only have our Greater Bronzeville residents learned the distinction between palliative care and hospice, but through a myriad of events and support, we have been able to bring comfort to family members who had no idea these resources existed or were available to our community.”

Williams says that by enabling Bright Star to advance awareness of palliative care, the grant has helped the organization work toward its goal of “self-sufficient, livable communities, strong and thriving in positive thought and behavior.” He adds, “This funding support for our efforts to reduce social determinants of health through awareness has made a difference.”

“We have a strategic goal to better understand the needs and experiences of African American patients and their families . . . meeting this goal fundamentally involves incorporating the voices of the communities we serve.”

The grant has strengthened Bright Star’s almost decade-long relationship with Northwestern Medicine, a collaboration that has previously promoted violence prevention, mental health, and chronic disease management. In extending that connection, this latest partnership furthers the objectives of Northwestern Medicine’s palliative care group. “We have a strategic goal to better understand the needs and experiences of African American patients and their families and to better serve those needs,” Hauser explains. “We believe that meeting this goal fundamentally involves incorporating the voices of the communities we serve.”

TO LEARN MORE about Bright Star, visit brightstarcommunityoutreach.com.
Preserving Black Legacies

Housed within the University of Chicago, the Black Metropolis Research Consortium is committed to increasing capacity at Chicago-area Black archives and to supporting projects that preserve and amplify Black histories and legacies. Those goals proved to be a perfect fit for a partnership with Northwestern’s Center for Civic Engagement.

“BMRC is interested in preserving the legacies of African Americans and ensuring that archives are building collections reflective of the communities they serve,” says board chair Stephen M. Adams. “But there are more artifacts and documents that need preserving than there are archives to hold them.” He adds that even when archives acquire these materials, they often lack the resources to organize and catalog them.

Fortuitously, Adams is also a librarian for graduate and postdoctoral initiatives at Northwestern’s Seeley G. Mudd Library. His campus conversations with Ruth Curry—a postdoctoral scholar who directs the Center for Civic Engagement’s graduate-student programming—led to an idea that would benefit both BMRC and Northwestern grad students. The resulting $36,000 Racial Equity and Community Partnership Grant placed doctoral students with BMRC-affiliated Black archives, providing the archives with much-needed assistance and the students with valuable experience.

“Through nine-month graduate assistantships at BMRC-affiliated museums, libraries, archives, and community arts organizations, doctoral students preserve, interpret, and activate Black historical collections while developing new competencies,” Curry says. “By creating opportunities for students to do work of intellectual and public value—side by side with archivists, artists, and community members—this program helps them develop essential civic and professional capacities, inspires new forms of scholarship, and supports career exploration. Meanwhile, by maintaining capacity-building, equity-minded partnerships with local organizations, the program supports the urgent, ongoing work of addressing the structural racism embedded in our institutions and repositories of knowledge.”

As Adams explains, “these graduate assistants get access to archivists across BMRC institutions who help them develop the skill sets needed to preserve African American cultural legacies and make them accessible. As BMRC board chair, I have enjoyed working on projects like this one that provide legacies with the preservation and amplification they deserve.”

TO LEARN MORE about BMRC, visit bmrc.lib.uchicago.edu.

Graduate assistant Olabanke Goriola worked to archive the history of Black dance companies.
Staff Profile: EL Da’ Sheon Nix

EL Da’ Sheon Nix returned to his alma mater in April as Northwestern’s director of Evanston neighborhood and community relations. Since earning a BS in human development and psychological services from the School of Education and Social Policy in 2004, Nix has worked in the nonprofit sector, including stints in Evanston with the Rice Child and Family Center, Youth and Opportunity United, and the James B. Moran Center for Youth Advocacy (formerly the Evanston Community Defender Office).

Nix has worked across the Chicago area with families and communities facing economic and social barriers. “The primary effort in my career has been to help improve overall quality of life, connect people to resources, push for better educational opportunities, and enhance the economic trajectory for individuals and families as a whole,” he says.

A Wildcat football player until sidelined by a career-ending injury, Nix has remained involved as a mentor for the team. He has also returned to campus as a guest speaker and panelist for Northwestern Athletics and SESP events and has been active in the Black ‘Cats for Black ‘Cats initiative.