

OUR neighborhood

Evanston-Northwestern
Community News
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NEWS



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)

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS PROMOTE RACIAL EQUITY

Northwestern's Office of Neighborhood and Community Relations annually awards Racial Equity and Community Partnership Grants to advance racial equity in the University's home communities of Evanston and Chicago. Initiated in 2020, the grant program fosters mutually beneficial partnerships between community-based organizations and University participants to address the root causes of racial inequities and work toward structural changes. Since it began in 2021, the program has awarded 32 grants totaling over \$1.4 million dollars. Guidelines for the 2024–25 grant cycle will be available in November at northwestern.edu/communityrelations.

Grants are awarded to organizations working on projects or programs that advance racial equity in one or more of the department's three strategic focus areas: economic and social empowerment; health equity; and education. This issue of *Our Neighborhood News* spotlights three recent recipient organizations.



Expanding Access to Palliative Care

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.

“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.”

“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.”

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.”

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.”

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

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



Graduate assistant Olananke Goriola worked to archive the history of Black dance companies.

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

structural racism embedded in our institutions and repositories of knowledge.”

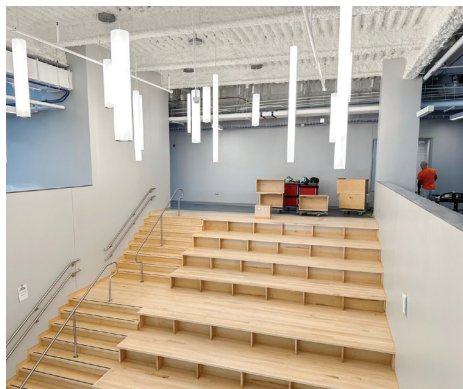
As Adams explains, “these graduate assistants get access to archivists across BMRC institutions who help them develop the skill sets needed to preserve African American cultural legacies and make them accessible. As BMRC board chair, I have enjoyed working on projects like this one that provide legacies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

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

Enhancing Health Equity

(continued from front page)

have helped to develop the framework for our evaluation processes, served as a valuable thought partner for the implementation of our teaching kitchens, and advised on food audit surveying, among many other critical needs. They have also invited us to



join their team at conference presentations, which have provided us the opportunity to share our health equity model with a wider audience, in addition to networking with other potential partners and collaborators.”

The partnership has benefited the Osher Center as well. “Our collaboration with Cultivate Collective isn’t a one-way street—it’s a relationship that strengthens our connection to the community, informs our understanding of community needs, and shapes our actions in response,” Ring says. By specifically addressing healthcare disparities affecting communities of color, the partnership advances the Osher Center’s goal of promoting racial equity in health outcomes. “This collaboration allows us to extend the impact of our work into the community,” Ring says, “bringing our commitment to innovative patient care and prevention-focused education directly to those who need it most.”

TO LEARN MORE about Cultivate Collective, visit cultivatehere.org.

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 develop-

ment 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.



CONNECT WITH US

Our monthly email newsletter includes important community updates. Email Shayla Butler at shayla.butler@northwestern.edu to sign up.

Do you have a business or non-profit in Evanston? We can help increase your visibility, facilitate connections to the Northwestern community, and find student volunteers.

For details, visit northwestern.edu/communityrelations or contact Dave Davis, senior executive director of the Office of Neighborhood and Community Relations, at dave.davis@northwestern.edu or 847-467-5762.