

CPHE Newsletter, May, 2019

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR HEALTH EQUITY

US-Cuba policy changes have been in the news lately. Yet we don't hear about how the harsh restrictions on family remittances have created even more economic hardships for the Cuban people. And we rarely, if ever, read about Cuba's educated and healthy population, who can do so much with so little – or of Cuban pride in their history and culture. CPHE participants have seen different faces of Cuba, and strongly identify with the spirit and assets of Cuban neighborhoods – poor in material resources, but rich in spirit, like their own US neighborhoods. We at MEDICC admire the ways CPHE commu-

nities have been able to creatively adapt Cuba's working models and approaches to improve health and health equity at home. This is the kind of news that is worth sharing – especially with our existing health care system in constant crisis. We are grateful to our CPHE participants for their staying power and their successful efforts to make their voices heard at local, state and national levels. We are also grateful for the long-term support of our funders who recognize how CPHE is contributing to the national movement for health equity and social justice. Onward!
- the CPHE team

CPHE's First Cuba Youth Exchange

“In the after-school program we observed at a middle school in Havana, all the kids went to their clubs and were excited! None of them left!”

“I liken it to an All-Star that shoots 100 jump shots after practice... these children were sharp... and wanted to be sharper! I thought it was SUPER dope that the STD club at the school partnered with the staff of Carrito por la Vida (the HIV/AIDS prevention center we had visited earlier) on some community outreach programs! I believe these kids' enthusiasm was fueled by the confidence of knowing their place in the universe and having connection to their roots. We danced and sang together and performed on their playground. It was all love!” *-From the travel journal of CPHE Milwaukee youth leader, Terron Edwards*

With support from The Christopher Reynolds Foundation, MEDICC's first CPHE Youth exchange in Cuba took place January 27-February 3, 2019, with 5 CPHE community leaders and 6 youth from Bronx, Milwaukee, Albuquerque, Navajo Nation and New Orleans. During the 6 months prior to traveling, everyone participated via conference calls in an interactive curriculum to help contextualize some of the expected experiences in Cuba. For example, after watching the film, *Salud* they then compared aspects of the film to their own personal lives. Seeing Cuban doctors who live and work in neighborhoods, Casey Long of Navajo Nation commented, “Older individuals who speak only the Navajo language don't want to go to doctors because they can't communicate in meaningful ways, and the hospitals and clinics are only in the larger towns, far from where people live.”



Students in a middle school in Havana



Dr David Garcia, family doctor, showing a map of each house in his cachement area in Matanzas, Cuba.



“ I want to bring the idea of out-patient providers connecting with the community, the going green idea of using recyclables for art, and working together. It's like this was a trip I never knew I needed in my life and work. Thank you MEDICC, you have impacted us all in a life changing way.” - Jacelyne Bonilla, Bronx CPHE

Left to right: Youth participants Jacelyne Bonilla (Bronx), Casey Long (Navajo Nation), Arriel Hollingsworth (New Orleans), Kenissha Joe (Navajo Nation), John Morales (Bronx), BJ Johnson (Milwaukee), and Brianna Monge (Albuquerque) in the El Cachón community garden in Matanzas.

The exchange in Cuba included community and youth centers, a school, a neighborhood *consultorio*, a “*casa de abuelos*,” a center for the Prevention of HIV/Aids and a cooperative garden. From Terron’s diary: “Cubans don’t have access to plentiful fresh greens the way we do, and thanks to places like the El Cachón garden, that is changing. I told Rolando, our host, about Walnut Way in the northside of Milwaukee, rising from being a drug house to being the hub of revitalization for our community. Rolando just tipped his hat to me and said that said that he couldn’t imagine the struggles of a community with those kinds of issues that we face in inner city America. I tipped my hat right back to him. Rolando gave me a lot to think about.”



In **Matanzas**, the group spent 2 days at *Maravillas de la Infancia* Center, one of CPHE’s strongest Cuban partners.

“Honestly, that community center reminded me so much of home and Claremont Community Centers Inc. in the Bronx – how both kids and elderly interact with one another – and how they give opportunities to the youth to actually work in the Center they’ve been attending since 3 years old, which is exactly how we do it home.” - John Morales,

In Matanzas, we painted a mural. When we completed it, we covered our hand with ink and planted our hand prints on the mural like a flower garden. This was my first time painting anything outside of a wall or a school on a service day. Doing an art project made my brain itch... in a good way! -Terron's travel journal



Several years ago, CPHE sponsored Maria Eugenia Romero Garcia, the fiery Director of the Matanzas center, to spend a week in the Bronx, offering workshops and learning about the work of the Bronx CPHE team.

Back from Cuba, CPHE participants gave presentations about their experience, and are discussing how Cuban approaches will influence them as they work for the well-being of their communities.



John Morales, Bronx CPHE, points to Maria's photos from her time in the Bronx.



Maria (right) with Brianna Monge, youth from Albuquerque CPHE

"The theme of my experience in Cuba was resilience and unity in the face of adversity- a way of life that will endure in my professional and personal endeavors. This trip to Cuba broadened my perspective of possible solutions to community issues, and reminds me that change begins in the heart

-Benjamin Johnson, 19, Milwaukee CPHE

"When I return home, I'd like to do a poster and share with my friends, family, coworkers and my community to show the importance of family unity, and that things with less technology are possible." Brianna Monge, 18, Albuquerque CPHE

News from CPHE Sites

Milwaukee CPHE

Leaders of the Walnut Way Conservation Corp. and over 19 partners gathered in mid April to celebrate the completion of a number of green infrastructure projects in the surrounding Lindsay Heights neighborhood. Walnut Way Conservation Corp is a CPHE partner organization and home to many CPHE-Milwaukee members, including Tyler Weber, Jeremy Davis, Angela Smith, Ashley Valentine, Joanne and Manaan Sabir, and Sharon and Larry Adams, founders of Walnut Way.

Terron Edwards, a pioneer and leader in Walnut Way's Men's Wellness and Boys2Leaders programs, has transitioned to another opportunity with **Running Rebels** that is closely aligned with his long term ambitions of growing and strengthening the *Fathers Making Progress* initiative. Terron wrote, "This is an opportunity that in my opinion makes my work stronger and more aligned with the objectives of CPHE."

Navajo Nation CPHE

As part of CPHE's *Empowering Youth Leadership for Lasting Change* program, and with support from the Christopher Reynolds Foundation, MEDICC provided start-up funds to Navajo Nation CPHE for several youth projects, inspired by Cuba. 1) Two community gardens were successfully initiated on Navajo Nation – one in **Tecnospos (Kerlissa Bitah and John Hosteen)**, and one in Bluff

(**Malyssa Egge**). Students were taught to think about gardening at home with materials they already had (milk cartons, buckets), inspired by how Cubans make the most of what they have. 2) The **Red Mesa Media Team**, led by **John Hosteen**, purchased equipment to develop health messages that were shared school-wide. 3) The **Trash to Art project**, now in its 4th year, was inspired by visiting a Cuban community center which used to be a landfill.

Kerlissa Bitah also leads an annual community clean-up event, which promotes family and community engagement. 4) **Training Workshops**. The Awakened Warrior workshop took place in March, 2019, focusing on ways to recruit, engage and retain youth in Navajo projects important to them. **Casey Long** and **Hannah Sehn** of COPE also presented findings from youth feedback.

"This has been an exciting year and our team looks forward to continuing to work together with MEDICC to promote health and wellness in our communities. Our CPHE has created the team motto of 'Growing our Own,' and we are moving forward to in a positive way as we grow our own." Carmen George, Navajo Nation CPHE and COPE Project Coordinator



Bluff after-school art student holding his dedication plaque



Above, on right: John Hosteen, Navajo Nation CPHE youth leader, and members of the Red Mesa High School media team



Right: Preparing soil to plant an apricot tree in a community garden

Navajo Nation Youth Visits New Orleans

Crystal Littleben (former Miss Navajo Nation) reflects on her March trip to New Orleans CPHE :

"The trip to New Orleans was an amazing experience. First I met the staff and volunteers at the Ashe' Cultural Arts Center. Just down the street, Mama J took me to the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), a mentoring and youth advocacy program. We visited a classroom of eight students who were working toward their GED. We ate the Cafe Reconcile which was delicious! At Café Reconcile, young people go through a training program to learn all aspects of food service. These experiences made me realize that Navajo Nation needs to better cater to our at-risk youth. We need more support spaces where our youth can develop life skills like this 16 week program. I also got to visit a community garden. The Navajo Reservation is considered a "Food Desert." A lot of our grocery stores are about 30 minutes to 1 hour away from home, and many of the Navajo community members do not have access to fresh produce.

Mobile fresh produce vehicles, like Top Box Foods, can be a solution to provide communities with fresh produce and cooking classes/workshops. In the Navajo Nation, many of our community members do not have access to health care. I also visited Luke's House, a neighborhood clinic, which showed me that it can be done and health services CAN be free. The last day we drove 1.5 hours to the Houmas Nation that turned into an awesome experience! They are dealing with the same issues as many native reservations including Navajo reservation: big oil companies and potable water.

Overall, I really benefited from this trip and appreciate MEDICC's initiating these kinds of experiences for members of different CPHE's throughout the country. I am looking forward to presenting all this information to my community and surrounding communities. I am thankful to learn that there are solutions to every problem, especially when we can learn from each other."




Crystal Littleben, Arriel Hollingsworth and Mama Jamilah



Crystal with Adam Bradley, Director of Luke's House, a CPHE Partner

PROBLEM



SOLUTION

March 25, 2019 6-9 pm
 Ashe Cultural Arts Center
 1712 Ornelha Castle Haley Blvd
 New Orleans, LA 70113
 (504) 569-9070

JOIN

FREE

the New Orleans CPHE Program and the Ashe Cultural Arts Center Huumba Institute for an evening of solution-based conversation around the multiple problems facing communities in New Orleans. A representative of the Navajo Nation will join us to talk to us about how they are creatively dealing with issues in their communities. We'll also have a presentation on a recent trip we took to Cuba to highlight the unique ways that communities that look just like ours are using a solution-based model to improve the well-being of their communities.

We all know that our city is broken on many levels so we spend a lot of time focusing on the business of brokenness. Let's come together to use our collective power to discuss how we are going to fix these issues.

For further information please contact Mama Jamilah (504) 427-2132

New Orleans Youth Summit

In March, a Youth Summit was held at Ashé Cultural Arts Center in New Orleans . 30+ youth convened to discuss an asset-oriented approach to how to move forward with youth leadership. **Arriel Hollingsworth** from New Orleans presented on his recent trip to Cuba with CPHE, and **Crystal Littleben**, visiting from Navajo Nation, spoke about the reservation and some of their approaches to engage youth in their community. Several breakout tables gave all a chance to discuss topics relevant to youth, including Police/Crime; LGBTQ issues; Policy; and Education. They then had a report back to the larger group.

ALBUQUERQUE CPHE

Community Health Specialists

On April 3 of this year, **Francisco Ronquillo** was the featured speaker at the monthly webinar of the **Social Medicine Consortium**. In his excellent presentation, he outlined the history and current outcomes of the “Community Health Specialists” program he is developing. Francisco was inspired to create this initiative by seeing how accessible health care is in Cuban neighborhoods, and how needed it is in Albuquerque, where 46% of the population is Latino, many below the poverty line. He also became aware of the 45+ doctors, dentists and other health care providers in Albuquerque who cannot practice medicine because they have licenses from other countries – mainly Spanish-speaking countries in Central America and Cuba. His goal is to create a workforce of health specialists who can fill a needed gap, providing health education and promotion, and prevention

“Our medical system is fragmented.

I asked, what can we do differently?”



for patients with chronic problems/diseases, to help them manage their condition. He is anticipating developing a one-year credited training course about our US health system for these health professionals from other countries. Francisco has the support of various community and State partners, including **Dr. Art Kaufmann**, Chancellor of Community Medicine at the U of New Mexico School of Medicine. When trained, the community health specialists will be placed in 5 community hubs: Hospitals, FQHCs, Schools, faith-based centers, and community centers. Their services will be accessible and free to everyone, regardless of background or insurance provider. Expected goals include improved health literacy and health outcomes, reduced hospital costs, increased attention to uninsured and undocumented Spanish-speaking populations, and a patient-community connection which in and of itself, provides healing—as seen in Cuba.

OAKLAND CPHE

Highland Hospital’s HealthPath initiative has accepted 3 US graduates from Cuba’s Latin American Medical School (ELAM). The Highland program focuses on promoting health equity and opportunities for underserved youth. For several months the ELAM graduates will participate in individualized research fellowships, and have opportunities to work with youth from Oakland Unified School district. This is the fourth year for this research fellowship opportunity, which is one of the most sought-after experiences for match-ready US ELAM graduates. Since 2010, MEDICC has also coordinated summer observerships for ELAM students. **Oakland CPHE member Judy Wofsy, MD** has been overseeing and coordinating both of these Highland’s ELAM programs, along with **Devon Baird**, MEDICC’s Academic Program Director. Also, this year Highland accepted its second ELAM graduate into its Internal Medicine Residency program.



(Back row L) Judy Wofsy, MD, Oakland CPHE and Devon Baird (next to Judy), MEDICC’s Academic Program Director, with Highland Hospital staff and ELAM fellows, March, 2019

Bronx CPHE

Linda Kemp continues to hold breast cancer awareness events regularly in Claremont Village, to petition for the need for changes in medical, insurance and health and hospital policies. The public events highlight the rising number of black and women of color who are being diagnosed under the age of forty in latent stage BC with no prior markers.

Claremont Neighborhood Center is proud of two youth who have been active in CNC for over 5 years, and who will be continuing their education at the university level. One student was accepted to over 10 colleges, and the other accepted a football scholarship to Buffalo State University.

Greetings family and friends
please come join us in prayer, hope, and Courage for 19th
Annual STOP the violence, STOP the madness event

We rally against "all" types of violence

St. Augustine our lady of victory church

1512 Webster avenue/171 Street, Bronx NY 10457

Saturday, August 10, 2019

Time: 10:00 am to 6:00 pm

Contact Information: Mr. Bernard Smith



CPHE National Network Meeting

Friday and Saturday, June 21-22, 2019

Metropolitan College of NY, Bronx campus

This is the 5th National Network meeting for MEDICC's Community Partnerships for Health Equity (CPHE). Participants will share how experiences in Cuba have sparked new initiatives to confront entrenched, systemic health inequities in the US. Specific presentations, speakers and workshops TBD, but the meeting will include the following themes:

- ◆ Community empowerment and engaging youth as future leaders, including a presentation by CPHE youth who recently traveled to Cuba
- ◆ Policy change rooted in community empowerment and engagement
- ◆ Strengthening CPHE collaboration and alignment with national community-based health equity movements in the US — so crucial in the current political climate

CPHE participants traveling from other sites should plan to arrive Thursday, June 20 (suggest LaGuardia airport) and depart June 23 in order to participate in the full meeting and Fiesta-Reception. MEDICC has reserved a block of rooms in the nearby Opera House Hotel.

Please contact Diane Appelbaum, dappelbaum@medicglobal.org for questions, or to receive a Registration form

The meeting is held in collaboration with MEDICC's CPHE-Bronx partners: the Claremont Neighborhood Center, Inc, and the William Hodson Senior Center.



Elena Schwolsky has been invited to accompany the Rainbow World Foundation to Cuba in May, to participate in activities around Cuba's Day Against Homophobia. The delegation will include Cleve Jones, the American LGBTQ rights activist who conceived the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. Mariela Castro, daughter of Raul Castro and director of CENESEX in Havana, will honor Mr. Jones at an awards ceremony. Two 12 x 12 foot blocks of the quilt will be displayed in Havana. Elena will facilitate an encounter between Mr. Jones and the *Proyecto Memorias*, which is the name of the Cuban quilt project. Elena worked for 10 years as an HIV-Aids nurse in the US, and has a long history with Cuba, where she was invited in 1996 to train the first group of HIV positive patients to serve as HIV educators.

An active member of CPHE, Elena coordinated the Bronx CPHE travel to Cuba in 2013-14, and subsequently developed a leadership training program for community members, with the support of a grant to MEDICC from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.