Anticipating Positively More in 2024!

By Tabia Henry Akintobi, PhD, MPH
MSM PRC Principal Investigator

As the Morehouse School of Medicine Prevention Research Center (MSM PRC) continues its 26th year, we are grateful for the community partnerships that allow us to learn, collaborate and engage towards research and other initiatives that matter. MSM PRC’s core mission is to advance scientific knowledge about chronic disease prevention with, for and by minority and marginalized communities. Its vision is to help advance health equity through community-led prevention research, programs, and policy, system, and environmental change.

As we address health priorities in response to our Community Health Needs and Assessment, we look forward to using what we learned amidst the pandemic to advance community-driven, evidence-informed research and action in response to obstinate health inequities and the systems that must be uprooted or reimagined to positively advance health justice. Our long-term goal is to leverage the power of community-informed data, metrics systems, and networks to inform a health equity research model for strengthening community-based organizations and academic institutions to collaborate to plan, implement, and sustain interventions and programs that make positive difference.

Since our last issue, we submitted our plan to continue another five years as a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Research Center, led Morehouse School of Medicine's 9th Annual Community Engagement and hosted the 2023 Community Unsung Heroes Awards in collaboration with the American Public Health Associate Annual Exposition and collaborated with Community Campus Partnerships for Health for the Writing, Dissemination and Reviewing Workshop. The event was designed to expose community and campus leaders to skills, tools, and tips to equitably navigate writing the stories of how they conduct collaborative initiatives in response to identified needs, strengths, and priorities. We are excited to share the community relationships, resources, and research underway in this issue. We also look forward to learning how we can serve and collaborate with you to support communities that live their best lives possible.
Embracing a Year of Renewed Commitment: A Focus on Strengthening Teamwork and Partnership Engagement

By Rosanna Barrett, DrPH, MPH
MSM PRC Center Director

As we stand at the dawn of a new year, it is with great excitement and anticipation that I reach out to all PRC staff, affiliated faculty, community members, and other valued partners to express our deepest gratitude for all that you do to make our work impactful in the communities we serve. The past year has been transformative, challenging us to adapt, innovate, and evolve as we embrace the final year of PRC grant cycle and possibly, the beginning of another 5-year cycle. As we reflect on the journey behind us, we recognize the collective power and shared commitment to community engagement—the cornerstone of our PRC’s experience, success, and legacy.

Our PRC staff and affiliated faculty alongside our Community Coalition Board members are the driving force behind what we do to advance health equity and justice. We recognize that we cannot go forward without prioritizing the health and wellness of our team. Therefore, we encourage you all to take advantage of the mental health trainings offered through the PRC, if you have not done so already.

We are committed to enhancing the PRC experience of each member of our team by ensuring that they feel valued, connected, and inspired to do their best in their daily work and to excel within their sphere of influence. I want you all to know that you are supported and appreciated, and your success is our success. Now, as we look ahead in 2024, I strategically pause to acknowledge our tremendous service and unyielding commitment to building capacity and expanding our resources to continue promoting and advancing community-engaged research. Together, we will begin 2024 with a clear vision and renewed commitment to addressing racial, ethnic, and geographical disparities across the spectrum of health conditions that adversely impact individuals and families throughout Georgia.

Find out more about the PRC and the work we are doing by visiting our website:

https://www.msm.edu/Research/research_centersandinstitutes/PRC/index.php

Mental Health First Aid Training Dates:
May 8, 2024
August 7, 2024
New Faces, Stronger Team: Welcoming Our Latest Additions

By Katrina Brantley, DrPH, MPH
GA CEAL Project Director

Dr. Katrina Brantley is returning to work at the Morehouse School of Medicine Prevention Research Center (MSM PRC) after 12 years. The MSM PRC was one of Dr. Brantley’s first career jobs while she was a Master of Public Health 1st year student in 1999.

She has over 20 years of experience as a public health practitioner providing leadership with public and private sector representatives. Dr. Brantley is an alumnus of the Morehouse School of Medicine’s MPH program and has spent the last 11 years working in local and state government at Clayton County Board of Health in Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and the Georgia Department of Public Health in Maternal and Child Health. She earned her doctorate degree from Georgia Southern University in Public Health Leadership focused on employee turnover and retention research among Georgia’s Maternal and Childhood home visiting workforce.

She served in a research administration capacity for 12 years in cardiovascular disease prevention, youth violence prevention, human papilloma virus vaccine acceptability and maternal and child health. She has extensive experience overseeing financial records, community outreach, research projects, assessments, policy development and developing strategies to meet goals and objectives. Dr. Brantley will oversee the operational and programmatic components of Georgia CEAL.

She is very excited to continue to work on community centered research that serves the underserved communities of Georgia. She has a lot of passion for public health and advancing health equity. She has an extreme interest in fostering relationships to improve communities, neighborhoods, and organizations to reduce health disparities that will overall improve health outcomes throughout Georgia.

By Leah Beavers, MPH
Program Manager

Leah Beavers embarked on her public health journey in 2019 when she earned her Master in Public Health degree from Mercer University. Her background includes valuable experiences at both state and federal government levels. During her master's program, she interned with the DeKalb County Board of Health as an Environmental Specialist, contributing to the surveillance of West Nile disease in the county. Subsequently, Leah transitioned to the role of Environmental Health Specialist, inspecting establishments such as restaurants, hotels, and pools in the metro-Atlanta area to ensure consumer safety. Taking her expertise to the national stage, Leah joined the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a Public Health Associate through the Public Health Associate Program (PHAP). Assigned to the Alabama Department of Public Health, she led the COVID-19 program in the southwestern district. Her responsibilities included working with diverse communities, conducting rapid community assessments, providing health education, and managing federal grants.

After her tenure with PHAP, Leah became a permanent Public Health Advisor with the CDC, stationed at the Louisiana Department of Health in New Orleans. In this role, she established vital partnerships between Louisiana's federally recognized tribes and the Immunization program. Her focus was on comprehending vaccine hesitancy within the American Indian community and enhancing routine vaccinations within the tribes.

Now, Leah Beavers is thrilled to leverage her diverse experiences at the MSM PRC, aiming to address health disparities in marginalized communities across the state of Georgia. Her multifaceted background positions her as a valuable asset in the pursuit of promoting health equity and well-being for all.
Excitement surrounds MSM PRC's recent venture as we delve into our latest evaluation project. The 2021-2022 Community Health Needs & Assets Assessments spanned Atlanta and underserved rural Georgia counties. Developed meticulously over months, the survey stems from a collaborative effort between the MSM PRC and the MSM PRC's Community Coalition Board (CCB). This academic-community partnership guides the MSM PRC and ensures evidence-based practice in all center based research efforts, while ensuring the community is consistently at the forefront. Aimed at gathering information on the health needs and priorities of Georgian communities, the survey will continue to guide the MSM PRC's health interventions, research focus, and health promotion strategies.

The CHNAA survey was disseminated both electronically and traditionally (paper), and with the help of the PRC staff, community stakeholders, and various community partners. The survey identified key health concerns such as diabetes, COVID-19, and mental health in Georgia.

The surveyed residents emphasized that Access to Healthy Foods, Access to Health Insurance, and Access and Knowledge related to Mental Health Treatment were all substantial concerns. In summary, our findings emphasize the pressing need for targeted interventions in these underserved areas to bridge the gap in health inequities, enhance overall community well-being, and address prioritized health challenges effectively.

The insights gleaned from our comprehensive assessment shed light on critical health challenges in Georgia. Our report is meant to serve as a catalyst for targeted initiatives, promoting a holistic approach to healthcare that addresses social determinants of health. The CHNAA survey, and its results, are consistently and intentionally utilized to contribute to the overall resilience and vitality of Georgia's diverse communities.
Morehouse School of Medicine Prevention Research Center (MSM PRC) received $1,021,898 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the first year in the five-year Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program. The REACH funding will help MSM PRC improve health, prevent chronic diseases, and reduce health disparities among our Black and Hispanic populations with highest burden of chronic disease in Fulton County. Dr. Latrice Rollins and Mr. LaShawn Hoffman will serve as co-principal investigators for the project.

As one of 41 REACH recipients and one of four GA REACH recipients, MSM will implement proven public health strategies for:

• Healthy food choices easier everywhere—promoting food service and nutrition guidelines, expanding fruit and vegetable voucher incentive and/or produce prescription programs, led by Dr. Jennifer Rooke
• Safe and accessible physical activity—connecting pedestrian, bicycle, or transit transportation networks to everyday destinations, led by Dr. Jammie Hopkins.
• Family healthy weight programs—improving access to effective, family-centered, culturally relevant health behavior and lifestyle treatment programs, led by Dr. LaKesha Tables and Dr. Rakale Quarells
• COVID-19, flu, and other routine vaccines—increasing awareness, confidence, demand, and access to routinely recommended adult vaccines, for racial and ethnic groups experiencing disparities in immunization, including uninsured adults, led by Dr. Rosanna Barrett.

By Latrice Rollins, PhD
Director, National African American Child & Family Research Center
This year’s CED theme, Creating a Community of Care for All: Working to Advance Health Equity and Justice, signified the importance of communal access to equitable and sustainable healthcare resources. For the second year, our community partner, Antioch Urban Ministries, Inc. (AUMI) graciously opened their doors allowing us to host this event on the campus of Antioch Baptist Church North. Included in the festivities this year were several sponsors such as Advil/Haleon and LifeLink. During a brief stage presentation, Ms. Carrie Salmon, a representative of Advil/Haleon, informed our guests of the official launch of the Health Equity Project that addresses Black Pain in America.

Mr. Bobby Howard of LifeLink also gave inspiring words about his organization’s work in traditionally underserved communities to make them aware of the importance of healthy living to increase organ and tissue donations in communities of color.

As in the past, we hosted indoor and outdoor vending, offering public access to over 65 vendors that rendered a variety of services including, free health screenings, gender specific health screenings, STEM/STEAM youth stations, financial literacy information, health and wellness guidance, social services information, healthcare coverage information, civic and government resources and many more services. Additional amenities added to this year’s festivities include, a food truck village, local performance by SouthSide Soul and a guest appearance from Atlanta’s own, LaTocha Scott of the group Xscape.

Several MSM administrators graced the stage detailing the launch of the Morehouse School of Medicine Medical facility located in the Buggy Works complex in East Point, GA. Dr. Tabia Akintobi, Professor and Chair of Community Health and Preventative Medicine at MSM, gave the official welcome to our participants and Dr. Joseph Adrian Tyndall, Executive Vice President for Health Affairs, followed her greeting by extending an invitation for participants to access our many institutional resources. Dr. Errol Crook, Chief Medical Officer for MSM Healthcare, outlined the opening of the MSM Medical facility and encouraged the community to follow developments of the MSM Medical Center’s reopening. Planning for Community Engagement Day 2024 is underway, and it is expected to be an even grander event due to this being our 10th anniversary. The MSM Office of Community Engagement and the CED planning committee are excited about what the future holds for this event and the many people it serves.
Empowering Communities: Reflecting on 32 Years of FACAA's Transformative Impact

By Howard W. Grant, Ph.D.
President and CEO Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority (FACAA)

As the President and CEO of the Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority (FACAA), I am honored to share the remarkable journey of our organization, a dedicated force committed to fostering positive change within our community. Established in 1991, FACAA has remained steadfast at the forefront, providing a diverse array of services to low-income individuals and families in Atlanta and Fulton County. Over the past 32 years, we have played a pivotal role in positively influencing the lives of over one million residents through meticulous administration of social services, vigorous advocacy for community needs, and the implementation of impactful educational initiatives.

At the core of FACAA’s mission is the commitment to empowering citizens to attain self-sufficiency. Through thoughtfully designed programs and services, we aim to uplift individuals and families from economic despair, prevent homelessness, and enhance educational goals for an improved quality of life.

Addressing critical issues such as poverty alleviation, education support, rental and utility assistance, and healthcare access, FACAA has made a significant impact through meticulously planned social services and strategic partnerships. Collaborations with entities like the Morehouse School of Medicine have further fortified our ability to create positive transformations within the community.

In the fiscal year 2023, FACAA achieved notable milestones, serving 1,947 families in the Low-Income Housing Water Assistance program (LIHWA), assisting 139 families through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program, and providing support to 14,036 families in the Low-Income Housing Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). A total of 16,122 households received financial assistance, a testament to our unwavering commitment to making a tangible difference in the lives of those in need.

To sustain and expand upon this impactful work, FACAA actively seeks collaboration with other community-based organizations and foundations that share similar missions. By joining forces, we aim to break down barriers contributing to stagnancy and despair within our community. I firmly believe that it is through the collective effort of “tying our ropes together” that true progress in alleviating poverty can be achieved.

For more information about FACAA’s programs and to contribute to our cause, I encourage interested individuals to visit our organization’s website at www.facaa.org. Your support will enable FACAA to continue providing immediate assistance to residents in need and further contribute to the ongoing positive transformation of the community.

Thank you for your unwavering support.
The American Public Health Association (APHA) brought its annual conference to Atlanta, GA in 2023, where the Morehouse School of Medicine’s Prevention Research Center (MSM PRC) made a significant impact by hosting a series of engaging events and presenting insightful posters. Emphasizing the pivotal roles of community engagement and scholarly writing, the PRC showcased its commitment to advancing public health.

Collaborating with Progress in Community Health Partnerships (PCHP) and Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH), the PRC organized a dynamic Writing and Dissemination workshop (pictured to the left). This workshop aimed to equip participants with essential skills for scholarly writing, employing interactive presentations, small group sessions, coaching, and sharing best practices and valuable resources. A total of 31 participants actively engaged in this enriching experience.

One notable presentation, titled “Project Take Charge: HIV Knowledge, HIV Stigma, and HIV Testing Among Students Attending HBCUs and MSIs,” was spearheaded by Samantha Martin, MA, Rhonda Holliday, PhD, Romell Phillips, Terry Ross, Lynette Allen, and Charles Releford Jr., CPM. The collaborative effort brought together expertise from Morehouse School of Medicine, Fulton County Health Department, and Odyssey Family Counseling Center, shedding light on critical aspects of HIV awareness and testing among students.

Another compelling presentation, led by Rhonda Holliday, PhD, and Samantha Martin, MA, delved into the "Awareness and Willingness to Take PrEP Among African American College Students.” This insightful session, conducted in partnership with Tai Chambers, explored crucial perspectives on PrEP among African American college students, contributing valuable insights to the public health discourse.

The commitment to community-centered research was further underscored in the presentation titled "Strengthening Institutional Infrastructures to Promote Community-Centered Research Advancing Health Equity." LaShawn Hoffman, Rhonda Holliday, PhD, Latrice Rollins, PhD, MSW, Yvette Daniels, JD, Howard Grant, PhD, Melissa Kottke, MD, and Tabia Akintobi, PhD, collectively addressed the importance of enhancing institutional infrastructures to foster community-centered research. The diverse expertise from Morehouse School of Medicine, Georgia Department of Public Health, Emory University, and community organizations highlighted the collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to promoting health equity.

In a partnership with The National Community-Based Organization Network (NCBON), the PRC played host to the 18th Annual Community Unsung Hero’s Reception (pictured to the right). This unique event served as a platform to celebrate community leaders who have demonstrated unwavering dedication and outstanding achievements in the field of community-based public health. A total of 22 Unsung Hero awards were presented during the reception, and the recipient of the prestigious 2023 National Lucille Webb Award was announced.
Dr. Tabia Akintobi being presented with the 2023 National Lucille Webb Award for Leadership in Community-Based Public Health

Dr. Akintobi was honored at the National Community-Based Organization Network's (NCBON) 18th Annual Community Unsung Hero's Reception. This prestigious award is presented annually to an individual who exemplifies community leadership in Community-Based Public Health. This can include community-based public health achievements through supporting and promoting NCBON, contributions toward advancing health in a particular community or geographic area, or progress made in community-based public health accomplishments at local, state and national levels.

Dr. Howard Grant, being presented with the Community Unsung Heroes Award

Dr. Grant was honored at the National Community-Based Organization Network’s (NCBON) 18th Annual Community Unsung Hero's Reception. Dr. Grant is the President/CEO of the Fulton Atlanta community action Authority (FACAA). FACAA's operating model provides a wide array of services to low-income individuals and families in Atlanta and Fulton County. The organization has helped more than 1 million residents through the administration of social services, advocacy, and community education.

Ms. Sabrina Mobley, being presented with the Community Unsung Heroes Award

Sabrina Mobley-Frazier was honored at the National Community-Based Organization Network's (NCBON) 18th Annual Community Unsung Hero's Reception. Mrs. Mobley-Frazier has been a community health worker at the MSM PRC for _ years where she has consistently demonstrated true leadership in community engagement, going above and beyond to connect with and serve the community. Mrs. Mobley-Frazier's dedication and commitment have not only enriched the lives of those she serves but have also made a lasting impact on the overall well-being of the community.
Chinonye “Chiny” Wamkpah is a Master of Public Health (MPH) student at Emory University. She joined MSM PRC as an intern with the Project PEACH Community Health study. During her internship she was involved with the Project PEACH Community Health Study team to recruit participants into the program. During her time, she gained experience in data collection, data analysis, and qualitative interviews.

“My experience at the PRC was full of opportunities! I have also had my passion for public mental health grow in my time here. Some of my other favorite experiences at the PRC have been learning about community-engaged research in fatherhood at the NAACFRC Conference, obtaining my Adult Mental Health First Aid Training, helping with the Talk Learn Collaborate (TLC) Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) Mental Health Awareness session in July. Most recently, I have helped in coordinating the upcoming National Diabetes Awareness Month Health and Resource Fair by helping with logistics, vendor recruitment, and event marketing. I am excited to see the finished project this month.

Ayanna Farmer is a Junior at Spelman College majoring in Psychology with a Concentration in Mental Health. She serves as an intern at MSM PRC where she had the opportunity to engage in strengthening her research skills, professional development, networking skills and opportunities, and has had exposure to conferences and community engagement within Metro Atlanta.

As an intern, she works on tasks related to the Project Peach Community Health Study. Ms. Farmer gained experience conducting eligibility screenings data collections through baseline surveys (data collection), qualitative interviewing and completing rapid assessment procedure (RAP) sheets. She also had the great opportunity to attend several public health conferences and events, some include the National African American Child and Family Research Center (NAACFRC) Conference, the TLC Session with the MSM Community Engagement Office, Health Equity Day, and Community Engagement Day. “My time with MSM PRC has been very educational and rewarding for my professional career development.”

We thrive through the support of our student interns, fellows, and graduate research assistants. During Fall and Winter 2023, MSM PRC had the great pleasure of welcoming the following scholars to engage in research and community-based initiatives:

Ayanna Farmer
Junior
Spelman College

Chinonye “Chiny” Wamkpah
MPH Student, Emory University, Rollins School of Public Health

Ferguson-Rise Fellows
Eunice Larbi, Mercer University
Joel Espinoza, Emory University

Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN) Health Equity Internship
Alvin Reynolds, University of North Carolina-Greensboro
Armani Stewart, Georgia State University
Jaelynn Taylor, Howard University
J’la Jenkins, Tennessee State University
Malia D. Jennings, Fisk University

Atlanta University Center (AUC) Student Interns
Sierra Simmons, Spelman College
2023 Recap

2023 Community Engagement Day

Writing and Dissemination Workshop

18th Annual Community Unsung Heroes Ceremony
Upcoming Opportunities

Mental Health First Aid Training

Join more than 2.6 million First Aiders who have chosen to be the difference in their communities!

Training Dates:
- December 13, 2023
- May 8, 2024
- August 7, 2024

Time: 9:30 AM - 3:00 PM

What does social media mean and do for you as a Community Health Worker?

How do you personally use social media for health?

How does social media influence the health of people in your communities?

What are the opportunities and challenges for using social media for work as a CHW?

Do you think it is important for CHWs as a professional community to engage with emerging technologies?

Purpose of the Study
We want to understand the perspectives of CHWs about social media and other emerging technologies as related to their work, and the potential for CHWs to leverage these technologies for health outreach and advocacy.

Participant Requirements
- Participants must work as CHWs in Georgia
- Focus groups will be conducted virtually and last 90 minutes
- Participants will receive compensation

To join the study or learn more, contact:
Amy Chen, PhD student in Human-Centered Computing
amychen@gatech.edu

Gail McCray, MA, MCHES*
gmccray@msm.edu

This study is funded by the National Institutes of Health.

Scan the QR code to visit www.projectpeach.org for additional details about the study.

Advancing Health Literacy Survey

Those who qualify will receive a $25 Gift Card

Visit URL or Scan Code!

The survey will assess people's views, attitudes, and behaviors about COVID-19 and mental/behavioral health.

To qualify you must be:
- Be at least 18 years old.
- Live in Fulton County.
- Able to take a 15-20 minute survey.

If you have questions, please contact us at mscchhl@gmail.com