

# the Alley NEWSPAPER



NEWS & VIEWS SINCE 1976  
JULY 2012 • VOLUME 37, NUMBER 6

...Connecting in the Backyard...Connecting in the Backyard...Connecting in the Backyard...



## BYI Community Commission on Health

May 2012 Meeting

photos by dee henry williams

"For me the greatest benefit has been being a part of a group of people who are so determined to do something good together."

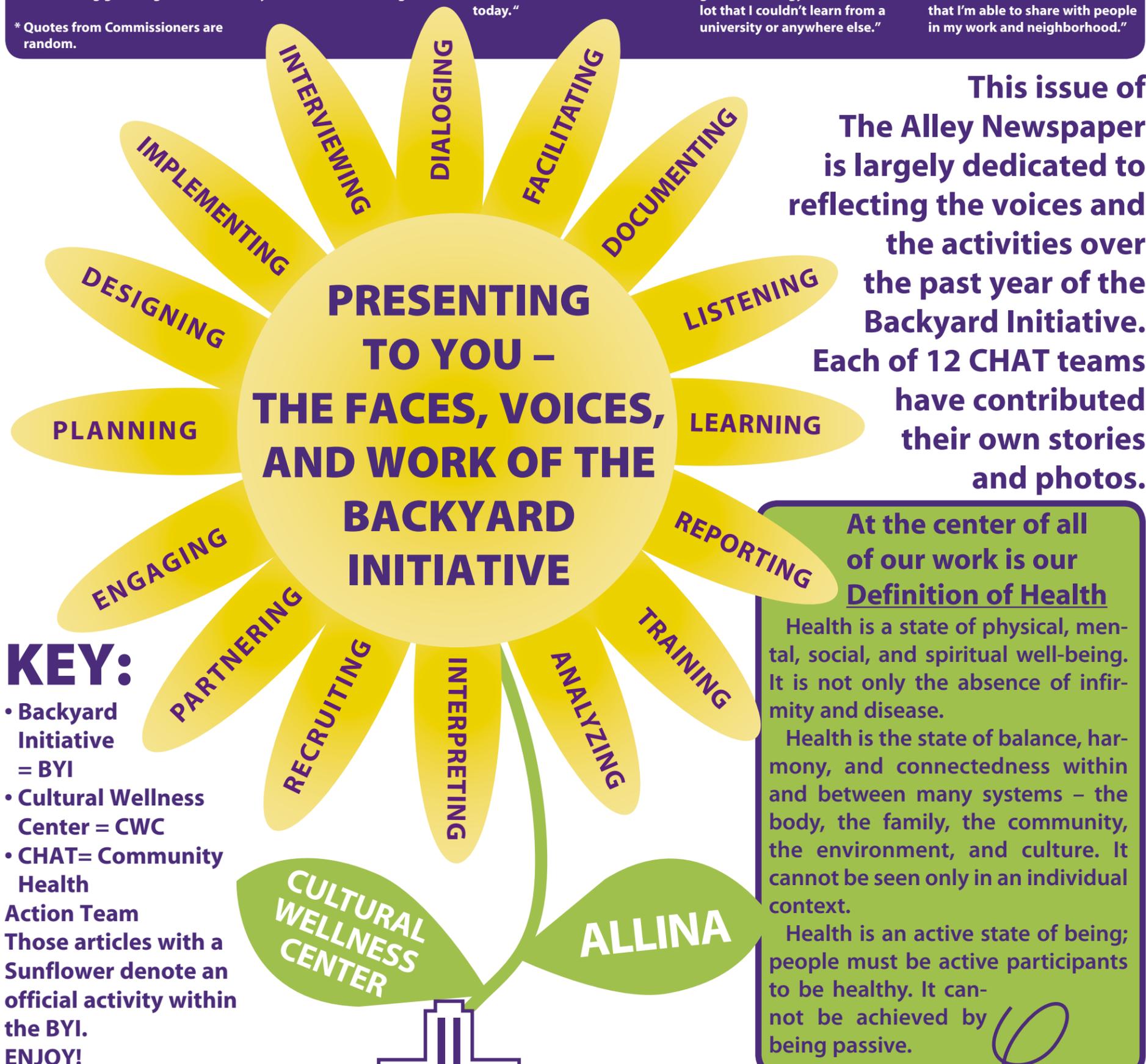
\* Quotes from Commissioners are random.

"Being a part of people who are really doing things to help strengthen and heal the community... has been a blessing."

"I've made a lot of connections here. We come together, share information, and try to do even better tomorrow than we did today."

"I feel I've connected to a lot of cultural values here. The togetherness here is what has really given me energy. I've learned a lot that I couldn't learn from a university or anywhere else."

"To me the benefits have been, first, meeting all you and having my network expanded; second, the information and resources that I'm able to share with people in my work and neighborhood."



This issue of The Alley Newspaper is largely dedicated to reflecting the voices and the activities over the past year of the Backyard Initiative. Each of 12 CHAT teams have contributed their own stories and photos.

### At the center of all of our work is our Definition of Health

Health is a state of physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. It is not only the absence of infirmity and disease.

Health is the state of balance, harmony, and connectedness within and between many systems – the body, the family, the community, the environment, and culture. It cannot be seen only in an individual context.

Health is an active state of being; people must be active participants to be healthy. It cannot be achieved by being passive.

## KEY:

- Backyard Initiative = BYI
  - Cultural Wellness Center = CWC
  - CHAT= Community Health Action Team
- Those articles with a Sunflower denote an official activity within the BYI.  
ENJOY!





"For me the greatest benefit has been communicating with people that normally you just see and walk by in the community. Just being a help—seeing things in your community

and helping—that's a benefit to me."

"I, a second generation immigrant, was born 71 years ago in Northwestern Hospital

(before Abbott Hospital merger) and lived across Chicago Ave. Now new immigrants—not born in this country—are involved without "apprenticing" for 30 years—not even

having to wait 30 minutes and that's great!"

"Having support about the way I think about community and having my community

expanded...has brought prosperity to my family—not just in having more people around us but also financially."

**the Alley**  
NEWSPAPER

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"We came into this world to give truth a little jog onward and to help our neighbor's rights."  
- Ann Greene Phillips 18\_\_-1855  
and Wendell Phillips 1811-1884

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Alley Communications, a 501C-3, Not-for-Profit Corp. publishes The Alley Newspaper. Donations are needed, welcome, and Tax Deductible

**Contributors to this issue:** Thanks to the following people who have volunteered direct assistance to this issue of The Alley.

This July issue of The Alley has had the countless hours of volunteered writing and other assistance from many participating members of the Backyard Initiative and staff people of the Cultural Wellness Center and Allina Health. Friends of the Cemetery, Susan Gust, Linnea Hadaway, Sue Hunter Weir, Soren Jensen, Howard McQuitter II, Midtown Greenway Coalition, Peter Molenaar, Dave Moore, Brad Pass, Carol Pass, Samantha "Sami" Pfeffer, Running Wolf Fitness Center, Erin Thomasson, Crystal Trautnau Windschitl, Jenn Ackerman, dee henry williams, and Hennepin History Museum

**Door to Door Delivery:** Youth of Calvary Church, Donna Neste, Andrew, Beverly, Brad, Brad, Carol, Patrick, Leon, Cathy, Dave, EPIC, Jacy, Jana, Heidi, Howard, Joyce, Lynne, Marjorie, Nathan, Midtown Phillips, Muriel, Paul, PWN, Raymond, Stephanie, Tara, Vi.

**Bulk Delivery:** 250 Apartments, Businesses, places of worship, and organizations; volunteers delivering many blocks of Ventura Village, Phillips West, Midtown Phillips, East Phillips, Central, Powderhorn Park, and Corcoran; and spots in Longfellow, Cooper, Cedar-Riverside, Elliott Park, and Whittier.

**Circulation: 10,000 hard copies and online.**

**August Alley Deadline: July 15**

## Access to Health Care Services – Portico Healthnet

BY DEBRA HOLMGREN, PRESIDENT, PORTICO HEALTHNET

Portico Healthnet's mission is to increase the number of people in Minnesota with health care coverage. Toward that goal, Portico offers help with applications for government health programs like Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare, and offers an alternative Coverage pro-

gram to eligible residents in the Twin Cities. Portico is a community-based nonprofit agency. Portico offers these services through generous contributions from hospital and health plan partners, as well as other funding sources in the community.

Allina and Portico have partnered to provide Portico's health care coverage program to residents

of the east metro area since 1998. Beginning in 2009, Allina increased their support so that Portico was able to offer the Coverage program to residents of the Backyard.

The Coverage program is not insurance, but it does offer payment for primary and preventive medical services, as well as payment for outpatient mental health services and

prescription medications. Eligibility is based on level of income as well as living in the Backyard area. The Coverage program has a small monthly participation fee which is also based on income, usually about \$25 per month per household. Once enrolled in the program, Portico participants choose a primary care clinic where they can receive all of their non-emergency services, including immunizations, health screenings like mammograms, and appointments for any health issues, including illnesses like diabetes, asthma, and high blood pressure. Nearly 300 people from the Backyard have been enrolled in Portico's Coverage program since the Backyard Initiative began. Please call Portico at 651-489-CARE (2273) for more information.

Part of Allina's support to Portico is used to provide services of a Community Health Worker, Eva, who is available to residents of the Backyard area. She spends four days a week at the Family Resource Center located at Andersen School and will help anyone who is interested in applying for Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare. Eva knows a lot about these government programs, and will sit down with you to see if it looks like you are eligible, and then help you fill out an application and help you through the whole application process with Hennepin County or with the state. Eva can also provide information about low cost medical and dental services, and about other resources in the community. Her services are free and you can visit her at Andersen School or call the Family Resource Center to reach her. Or you can call Portico directly for health-related resources and help with applications, at 651-489-CARE (2273). Last year, Portico assisted over 2,800 people with successful applications for Minnesota health care programs.

# Looking for Affordable Health Care Coverage?

## Portico Healthnet Can Help!

**Thanks to support from the Allina Backyard Initiative, Portico Healthnet can:**

- Help you apply for Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare
- Enroll you in Portico's Primary and Preventive Health Care Program if eligible

**Call us at 651-489-CARE for more information**

## The Backyard Initiative: What It Is and Why It Exists



Allina Health and its neighbors to improve health and health care in the seven communities immediately surrounding Allina Commons, Abbott Northwestern Hospital and the Phillips Eye Institute. The Backyard Initiative supports efforts to strengthen community health by empowering residents to

draw upon their own knowledge, skills, and cultural values to care for themselves, their families, and their neighbors.

Research shows that social conditions— including isolation and a lack of social support – have a profound impact on our health. By partnering the expertise and resources of health care institutions with the wisdom and experience of residents, The Backyard Initiative is exploring a new dimension to a health care system that will focus on promoting

health in addition to treating sickness.

Beginning in 2008, Allina partnered with the Cultural Wellness Center, a community nonprofit organization in South Minneapolis, to facilitate the community engagement process. The Cultural Wellness Center has a long history of engaging community residents to improve health through self-study, surfacing and producing knowledge, cross-cultural knowledge exchange, and relationship building. Early in the

process, the CWC led a process that engaged residents in developing a definition of health, a definition that became the foundation for The Backyard Initiative.



photo credits: dee henry williams



"It's meant a lot of work but it's not like labor. We are building and learning and in some cases challenging ourselves beyond our limits and I think that's the kind of work

the entire society needs to be doing so I thank you for that." "It's healing—as a community, as a culture. We have many diverse cultures here. I'm honored to be here in your pres-

ence." "Being in the Backyard Initiative has meant taking my first steps as a community organizer. A lot of networking opportunities...have hap-

pened for the first time for me here." "I made some decisions from reflecting on health in community. I made the decision to be less busy so I can be

more available to support my community like the Anchor Families do. You can't help someone who's in crisis if you're always busy."

## New Midtown Corridor Transit study



A turf-track streetcar in Bilbao, Spain.

BY SOREN JENSEN, EX. DIR. OF MIDTOWN GREENWAY COALITION

Metro Transit's Midtown Corridor Alternatives Analysis (AA) will look at enhanced bus, bus rapid transit, streetcar, and light rail transit for the Midtown Greenway and Lake Street.

A recent workshop concluded that Greenway Streetcars could unite and enhance the Lake Street-

Greenway corridor done with innovative features.

The Analysis kick-off date--July 30th-- starts a 12-18 month timeline. MGC believes a Greenway Streetcar would be good for the Greenway, neighborhoods, the corridor, and our city. Hopefully, this AA will be the first step towards getting it built!



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## Phillips West Neighborhood Upcoming Events:

July 5<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

*Phillips West Monthly Community Meeting!*

Join your neighbors and other Community Partners for updates from local government, business partners, residents, and police. This event will take place at the Center for Changing Lives in the Centrum Room located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor (2400 Park Avenue). Free parking is available in the rear off Oakland Avenue. Free Pizza & Beverages will be provided!

August 7<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday) 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

*Phillips West Neighborhood 16<sup>th</sup> Annual National Night Out Celebration!*

Please join dozens of Community Partners & Residents for the biggest National Night Out Celebration in Minneapolis! Event will be held along 27<sup>th</sup> Street between Columbus and Portland Avenues! A variety of free picnic food including carnival specialties! There will also be a variety of entertainment including a Mariachi Band, Salsa Dancers, Clowns, Puppet show, facepainting, fish pond, children's games, McGruff the Crime Dog, a rapping

contest hosted by Mad Dads and a giant inflated slide! Information on Community Resources will be available! If you would like an information table or would like to get involved contact Crystal at 612-879-5383 or email pwno2005@yahoo.com




## Themes that Emerged



An assessment team was formed to create a picture of the current state of health and well-being of the residents in the Backyard, engage a broad network of residents in the process, and inform and plan the next steps

for The Backyard Initiative. The assessment team included community residents, staff from Allina, the CWC, and Wilder Research. Through 21 Listening Circles and 677 face-to-face, walk-around interviews, three themes began to emerge:

**The Power of Interconnectedness.** Each dimension of health named in the community definition of health is dependent on the

others; one dimension of health cannot be understood or addressed in isolation.

**The Power of Relationships.** Relationships impact the determinants of health. People know that they need exercise and healthy food, plenty of rest and occasional check-ups to be healthy, but their relationships are crucial to whether they consistently act on that knowledge. Developing healthy relationships between community residents and health care pro-



viders is a powerful factor for improving community health outcomes.



"I made some decisions from reflecting on health in community. I made the decision to be less busy so I can be more available to support my community like the Anchor

Families do. You can't help someone who's in crisis if you're always busy."  
"This is a very important program to me because we are

each listened to and we get to share whatever we want to share about what the issue is."  
"For me the greatest benefit has been hearing the ideas

that people have shared. They're wonderful to put together in various ways."  
"I have learned a lot more about the community as a

whole versus just where I live and have learned more about the different people who make up the community."

## Circle of Healing CHAT



photo credit Farhio Khalif

The Circle of Healing Practitioners CHAT is a collaborative of Backyard practitioners which includes complementary healers, elders, representatives from different cultural traditions, conventional health professionals and community care givers. Members of this CHAT come together as practitioners interested in creating a more formalized network of people operating in a Community Care-Giving system around Backyard residents. This will be done by providing a better information and support for healing and reflection about the message of dis-ease. This network serves both the Backyard community receiving care and the healing practitioner community in the Backyard.

The vision behind the Circle of Healing Practitioners CHAT is grounded in cultural health practices and ways of knowing that honor the reciprocal and holistic nature of healing. In order to meet the health needs of the people living in the Backyard, this CHAT aims to empower health practitioners and community members and to connect the community care giving system to the conventional health care system in a more formal and integrative way.

accomplish the task of establishing a Community Care-Giving system is by holding a series of dialogues about the Integral Framework and its relation to all healing systems. The Integral Framework will serve as a starting point for conversation about how people can practice what they know in a way that is complementary to what other people know. This series of discussions will eventually become part of an official training and certification process for practitioners from various healing modalities and professions who want to adopt a more holistic and community based approach to their practice and so become a part of the care giving system facilitated by this CHAT. The project's vision is not based in creating a static system but focuses on building a process-oriented model that will continue to evolve and grow. The network will create a model of partnering between health care and community care practitioners.

If you are a health care practitioner and would like to learn more or get involved in the Circle of Healing CHAT, please call the Cultural Wellness Center at 612-721-5745.

**Circle of Healing CHAT Members:** Farhio Khalif, Antonia Apolinario, AkhmiriSekhr-



Ra, Atum Azzahir, Berta Ruiz, Cara Carlson, Debra Jacoway, Dian Long, Fatima Mohamed, Fardousa Yusuf, Farhio Khalif, Janet Dalhem, June Bouye, Kaija Sivongsay, Khusaba Seka, Mark Anderson, Maryrose Dolezal, Miski Abdule, Pam White, Semerit Seankh-ka, Tara Chadwick, Mau Jernigan, Panya

The Alley wants to thank everyone who contributed time, talents, and dollars for make this issue possible. A special thanks also to Erin Thomasson (What's Up at Franklin Library), Sami Pfeffer (Crossword Puzzle), Howard McQuitter II (Movie Corner), and Peter Molenaar (Raise Your Voice) for having their written contributions ready as always in hopes of having room in this issue. At the "eleventh hour" it resulted that their spaces were needed for this special edition. We thank them for their gracious understanding and encourage their readers to enjoy their return in the August Alley.

## Stories from Our BackYard

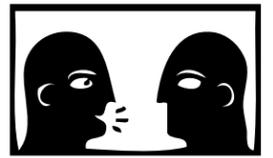
"This is the 'BackYard.' We tell stories here. Our name is The Alley. We need your stories. There are thousands of stories waiting to be told from 45,000 residents in 15,000 households—of kids getting good grades, friendly gestures between strangers, and stories of incredible hope and good humor.

There is one such story in this issue of The Alley marked by the icon above. Tell us your story or a

neighbor's, your block, or a family member."

- Stories have power, help to heal. acquaint us, and beget stories.

Info or Help? e-mail editor@alleynews.org or call 612-990-4022



### Running Wolf Exercise/Excuse alike

BY JEANE MOORE

My name is Jeane and I hate to exercise. I am 71 years old and overweight and diabetic. Being a diabetic, of course, puts me at a higher risk for kidney and cardiovascular problems. My mother and father both died of heart-related disease. So did one of my grandmothers and one of my grandfathers.

But I let myself get to the age of being an elder without learning how to take care of myself, even with all those object lessons. Well, I knew how in my head but not my gut. Then a series of good-luck events happened to me. First, I ran into a neighbor, Jake, at a meeting and saw him without a coat on for the first time in months and he'd shrunk! By half! He had lost 100 pounds. He gave me a ride home and I said what did you do and he explained his diet to me (he eats less—who knew? But he had some very useful information on how to accomplish that) and mentioned his support group. I asked, very casually, if I might go to his support group. Well, he'd see. And he did and I started attending A-POD meetings.

I had family members and friends and a medical provider who certainly wanted to see me lose weight and be healthy and not die. Not yet. But A-POders are diabetics, many of them older, like me, and they struggle with weight and diet and blood-sugar control just like I do. They knew what to say to me and I was

smart enough to listen. They helped me lose fifty pounds.



And Jake and I rode to the meetings together and I couldn't bring myself to call him and say, "Not this week." He would say, "Well, okay." And I would shrivel with guilt.

Running Wolf. I had tried doing exercises at home and I had even tried the Lake Street version of Running Wolf. As for at home, the words "exercise" and "excuse" looked too much alike. On Lake Street, Running Wolf was too daunting. It was too big, too shiny, too much.

Then Running Wolf moved and I was ready. Jake and I started working out at RW two or three times a week and it is perfect for me. Just the right size. Just the right amount of shiny. Just the right amount of instruction combined with just the right amount of letting me do it at my own pace. Other patrons who say Hi and smile and sometimes even chat but never interrupt. No one tells me what to do until I ask. Perfect.

Think you are too old or too fat for a fitness center? Thinks again, Silverlocks.



## Partners in the Backyard Initiative

**Allina Health:** The Center for Health Care Research & Innovation researches new care models to transform health and health care and seeks collaborative partnerships as it fosters innovative approaches to providing



care.

**Cultural Wellness Center:** is a non-profit community-based organization dedicated to developing cultural approaches for positively impacting health and health care, economic development, and community building.

**Hope Community:** A Phillips community development organization committed to deep community engagement. Hope Community led the process of engaging non-profit organizations in the Backyard.

**Portico Healthnet:** A nonprofit health uninsured Minnesotans access affordable and human services organization that helps health coverage and care

**"The Backyard Initiative is an example of Allina Health's commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of the communities we serve. What makes the Backyard Initiative unique is that it is both community centered and community driven, which means that people who live in the community and are most impacted by the initiative determine the work that needs to be done."**

**Ellie Zuehlke**

**Director Community Benefit & Engagement • Allina Health**



"What I've learned from being in the Backyard Initiative is that even though you can be far from "home," you can still find cultural touchstones wherever you are."

"This is the first time in 20 years that I've been working around my daughter and granddaughter so closely."

"In this we are also crossing the two sides of Lake Street. And we're not talking about things like zoning. I'm glad there are other people out there talking about that, but

we're talking about something else here."

"I work for the City of Minneapolis in the Health Department. I have gained

a lot from meeting so many people around this table and seeing the kinds of ideas that come from the CHATs and how they relate to the work we do in the Health Department."

## A-Pod CHAT: Advancing Opportunities through a Partnership of Diabetics



When A Partnership Of Diabetics (A-POD) was first designed and implemented, our goal was simply to create a community-based program for advancing the skills of persons with diabetes to become better self-managers of their condition. We started with POD-Tensives, a daylong workshop to introduce our strategies to participants and then sponsored weekly Meet-ups where participants could share the "mile-markers" on their journey toward better health and wellness. Meet-ups became and still are the key ingredient in A-POD's program because it's the time that participants can actually share their progress or problems

with others with similar challenges.

Meet-ups are more than a "support group" because we also track participant's numbers to demonstrate that with the additional focus on diabetes and learning new and better tools to manage our conditions, we improve! In a third party evaluation conducted by a graduate student from the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health we found that more than 90% of our participants have improved, using the same statewide criteria used by all Minnesota clinics and hospitals. A-POD has surpassed any other institution's success rate by more than 25 percentage points, yet at a

fraction of the cost that other programs require.

In late 2011, A-POD began a Somali elder women's initiative that meets each Tuesday afternoon. This group also has been demonstrating considerable improvements in their numbers despite the fact that none speak English or read or write any language. Using only oral methods of communicating has provided a sufficient basis for improvement.

This suggests that a key ingredients of chronic disease management should involve face-to-face sessions that give each person time to listen, respond, act and review one's personal strategies. The fact that we include an English lesson in each Meet-up has surely promoted added interest and enabled joyful participation while helping maintain weekly attendance.

On the last day of May, A-POD took over the operation of a monthly diabetes breakfast that has been operated for the past eight years by the Native American Community Clinic (NACC). With Running

Wolf Fitness Center now housed at the Phillips Community Center (2323 Eleventh Avenue South, Minneapolis) along with A-POD's offices, it was a reasonable idea to move the monthly healthy-eating diabetic breakfast from the Minneapolis American Indian Center to the Phillips Community Center's dining room. The partnership

House, a multilingual translation system to enable all people to come together regardless of language, but we also hope to do a more extensive effort within each cultural group as well.

A-POD is very grateful for initial and secondary funding by Allina Health for the past two years. This year, A-POD was also funded in part by Novo Nordisk, a Danish manufacturer of insulin. Pending further funding, A-POD will expand to encompass additional opportunities as they arise and develop effective activities to meet the challenges that diabetes presents.

**CHAT Team Members:** Robert and Sharon Albee, Lanaya

Baker, Dick Brooks, Jennifer Frisbee, Diane Greve, Tim Hopkins, Jake Jacobi, Doug Limon, Anita Martinez, Jeanne Moore, Pamela North, Pat Paul, Mary Rhatigan, Margaret Sylte, Bob Rick, Deb Johnson Tate, Bridget Tierney, Shirley Heyer, Patricia Van Ert, and Rita Johnson

with NACC continues with this breakfast. More than fifty people attended the first one and more are expected as the word gets out.

In the future, funding permitting, we hope to add a Spanish-speaking diabetes breakfast or brunch and a Somali supper supporting diabetics in their culture. In the short term, we are also exploring with the Waite

### Rose's Rice and Beans- HAITIAN STYLE!

Serves 6    Prep Time: 15 minutes  
Cook Time: 2 hours

**INGREDIENTS:**

- \*\*\*1 (8 ounce) package of dry kidney beans
- 4 tablespoons of olive or vegetable oil
- 1 bulb shallot, minced
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 cup uncooked yellow rice or long grain white rice
- 1 tablespoon adobo seasoning (optional)
- \*\*\*In Haiti, poisrouge beans are used. These beans are available in NYC and Miami in the US. Red beans available in Mexican grocery stores are often used, too.

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Place beans in a large pot, and cover with 3 inches of water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer 1 and 1/2 hours, or until tender. Drain, reserving liquid.
2. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Sauté shallot and garlic until fragrant. Stir in cooked beans and cook for 2 minutes. Measure reserved liquid, and add water to equal 5 cups; stir into skillet. Stir in the uncooked rice. Season with adobo seasoning, salt, pepper, and cloves. Either make a small bouquet or place sprigs of parsley and thyme, and scotch bonnet pepper on top, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 18 to 20 minutes. Remove thyme, parsley, and scotch bonnet pepper to serve.

**Calling all African and African-American women!**  
Come and join Rose in **COOKING UP COMMUNITY**  
Call the Cultural Wellness Center  
**612-721-5745**  
or email [rose.gbadamassi@yahoo.com](mailto:rose.gbadamassi@yahoo.com)



### Community Engagement & Leadership

Community Engagement in the BYI is lead and facilitated by the Cultural Wellness Center. The community infrastructure for the initiative consists of three "pillars":

- Citizen Health Action Teams (CHATs)
- Community Commission on Health
- Community Resource Body.

**CHATs** are formed by residents to design, implement and evaluate prevention and wellness projects. Each project targeted barriers to health, weaknesses in achieving health, and followed the recommendations outlined in the 2009 community health needs Assessment. In 2011, the CHATs held 173 activities in which 1285 residents participated. The following key themes were identified and implemented across the CHATs:

Strategies to increase social support within their identified communities;

- Strategies to increase social cohesion within the Backyard community;
- Strategies based on their knowledge of problems and solutions and based on their skill set;
- Inventory of assets based on their social and cultural capital.

**The Community Commission on Health** is a 35 member body, primarily made up of residents, that serves as the leadership body for the Backyard Community. The Commission is accountable for realizing the community's vision on health and for keeping an ear to the pulse of the community.

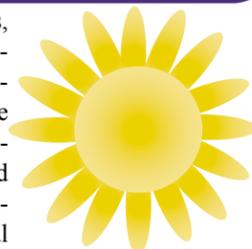
## Highlights of 2011: Strategies & Activities

In 2011, the Commission approved five new CHAT projects, developed financial principles and practices, and implemented processes for evaluation of CHAT prevention and wellness projects.

**Adopted Cultural Wellness Center Leadership Development Curriculum** in which 45 community members were trained in the CWC model of engaged community leadership which was adopted by the BYI and are now functioning as leaders.

**Community Resource Board** is an advisory group that interfaces with the Commission and residents to increase the scale of the work of the BYI. Mutually sharing resources including knowledge, research,

and relationships, and social, cultural and financial capital, the CRB strengthens the Backyard Initiative's connections to local and national leaders in healthcare and community development. Members include Twin Cities LISC, BlueCross/BlueShield Foundation of Minnesota, HealthPartners, NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center, and Wilder Foundation. The group was launched in 2011 and met four times.





"I've lived in the Phillips community for a little over 20 years and this is the first time we can really say we're a community."

"To me the benefit has been first, meeting all you and having my network expanded. Second, the information and resources that I'm able to share with people in my work

and neighborhood."  
"Having support about the way I think about community and having my community expanded...has brought pros-

perity to my family—not just in having more people around us but also financially."  
"I made some decisions from reflecting on health in community. I made the decision

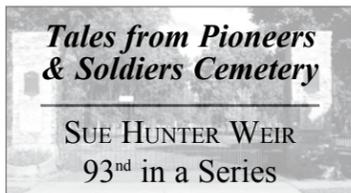
to be less busy so I can be more available to support my community like the Anchor Families do. You can't help someone who's in crisis if you're always busy."

## You Matter

A cemetery seems like an odd place to be talking about building a healthy community since it's where most of us will wind up when our health ultimately and inevitably fails. But cemeteries are about more than our physical selves, they are about the legacy that we leave to others and that others have given to us. They are about stories; they are about community.

### Nation Builders.

Minneapolis Pioneers and Soldiers Memorial Cemetery is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is a place of national, not just local, significance. Part of the designation recognizes the cemetery's architectural features, but another part,



perhaps the most important part, recognizes the role that the people who are buried here in the Phillips community played in both our local and national history. They are not people whose names are household words, yet they are recognized as nation builders.

"...who is worth remembering and who is not...?"

Howard Mansfield ("In the Memory House") asks important questions about which people we as a society choose to remember and which we choose to forget. Importantly, these are choices that

we make. "Facts are never simply recorded; they are recorded by people for a purpose (HM)." Judgments are made about who is worth remembering and who is not.

To a large extent those decisions are made on the basis of artifacts, but remaining artifacts do not tell the whole story. The historical record is distorted by the fact that surviving artifacts are unrepresentative (HM)." We have saved mansions but not the homes of working class people. Everyone has a story and those stories can, and should be preserved.

So, what does this Cemetery tell us about ourselves and our shared history? For one thing, it tells us that our community has always been diverse. The cemetery's original owners belonged to the First Baptist Church of

Minneapolis, which had close ties to the anti-slavery movement. Approximately 170 men buried in the cemetery, both African-American and white, fought to end slavery.

It tells the stories, some heart-breaking and some triumphant, of thousands of immigrants who came here to escape poverty and political oppression to build a better future for their children. Many of these immigrants were the people who worked, and all too often died, in flourmills, lumber mills and railroad yards.

It tells the story of thousands of children who died from drinking or coming into contact with



Stone columns being built in 1928

contaminated water or who died because vaccinations for communicable diseases didn't exist.

**Ordinary people doing extraordinary things.**

It tells the story of ordinary people doing extraordinary things: mothers who died rescuing their children from fires and friends who died trying to save their drowning friends. It tells the story of neighbors helping neighbors in times of crisis and need.

It tells why one community and its people represent a nation.

**We and our stories matter.**

In the Backyard Initiative's 2009 Listening Circles Report, the need for a sense of community and interconnectedness and the power of relationships were recurring themes. It's important for us to know that we and our stories matter. We can choose who we want to remember and why and make them part of our community's history. Tell your stories. Write them down. Pass them on. Make your story part of our history and make our community a force to be reckoned with. It's the healthy thing to do.

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IN THE HEART OF THE BEAST PUPPET AND MASK THEATRE



## Evaluation & Learning



Understanding and sharing our results is a critical component of the BYI. The BYI created an evaluation team that consists of contracted evaluators, the CWC and an evaluation community fellow team to provide objective evaluation for the Backyard's resident engagement activities. The Evaluation team worked with

the Community's Commission to develop a strength-based approach to monitoring and evaluating CHAT health promotion projects. The majority of the work has focused on helping residents develop their own tools for collecting information and understanding their work. A year-end template was developed in conjunction with the Assessment Team and Commission to allow CHATs to report their progress and challenges.

The evaluation team also completed a review of several hundred articles in the

fields of community building and mobilization for health promotion. The review demonstrated that the BYI is unique among national health improvement projects because in the BYI, the needs assessment, planning and action are generated by the community so that the community is the agent, rather than the target of change. The findings of the review and the foundation year activities have led to the development of a very comprehensive and ambitious evaluation plan for 2012 that will assess how well the partnership idea between Allina and the community is working, the progress of empowering residents to build

capacity for health promotion, and the impact of this capacity for actually creating positive health benefits for residents.





"Being a part of people who are really doing things to help strengthen and heal the community... has been a blessing."

"I work for the City of Minneapolis in the Health Department. I have gained a lot from meeting so many people around this table and seeing the kinds of ideas that

come from the CHATs and how they relate to the work we do in the Health Department."

"Being in the Backyard Initiative has meant taking

my first steps as a community organizer. I came to the Backyard Initiative when I was pregnant with my son as a notetaker...A lot of networking opportunities that people

are talking about have happened for the first time for me here."

## Dakota Language CHAT

The Dakota Language Revitalization CHAT continues to full fill its commitment to the well being of the Dakota peoples through spiritual, cultural, language and educational ways of life that are inherit to the Dakota nation.

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were more than seven thousand speakers of the Dakota language located in over 24 different reservations, reserves, homestead settlements in Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada. All of these speakers who called their homeland Mnisota "shining lakes" and what is now called by settler society as the state of Minnesota, were all descendants of the original Dakota's who inhabited this area since time immemorial. The tragic consequences of the Dakota wars of 1862 lead to the Diaspora of the Dakota nation from their original homeland.

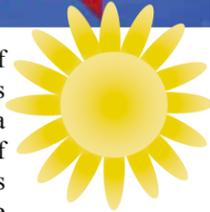
Subsequent to the events of 1862 and the creation of the reservation system; the governments of Canada and the United States in-acted policies and laws to, at times, forcibly remove Dakota children from their homes to federal and church run schools called: residential schools (Canada) or boarding schools (U.S.), were the use of the Dakota language was forbidden by strict punishment and even death. By the 1950's three generations of Dakota peoples had grown up the boarding and residential school system. Due to the systematic oppression inflicted on the Dakota, many were reluctant to teach their children the Dakota language (in which lies the spiritual foundation of the Dakota ways of life) in fear of reprisal from the Government(s). As a result the Dakota language is on the verge of extinction in their-own homeland. The tragic history and histori-



cal trauma of these events has lead to a diaspora of health issues that include diabetes, obesity, early death, alcoholism, drug use, heart disease and broken families.

As one of Minnesota's indigenous languages, Dakota is an important asset to Minnesota and the world's linguistic resources. The complexity and unique aspects of the Dakota language provides important worldviews and concepts that can enrich all Minnesotans. With this noted, there is even more pressing need to revitalize the Dakota language. Specifically for the purposes of this project, revitalizing the Dakota language is of the utmost importance to turning around the currently bleak outlook for the achievement of young Native American living in Minneapolis. Reclaiming the Dakota language is a cornerstone for Native American Dakota's to reconnect to culture, educational achievement and positive self image, which in and of itself, is an important indicator of academic, economic, and lifetime success for self, family and community.

The Dakota Language CHAT is involved in various activities that will help to revitalize the language and culture of the Dakota people. One of our most recent activi-



## MOVING TOWARDS FORGIVENESS: Reflections by a Dakota Language CHAT member upon seeing the documentary "Dakota 38"

As a part of the 'Dakota CHAT, we were inclined to show our fellow CHAT members a piece of history that no longer is disaOur showing was very powerful as well as emotional for all that were present for the showing of the documentary Dakota "38" plus 2. I especially want to give thanks to the CHAT members who were present to see a piece of history long over due in our daily discussions involving Indigenous peoples everywhere.

Our event became an intro into a realm of forgiveness! The depiction in the movie was intense as well as moving as we seen euro-centric humans as well as indigenous humans come together in a scene not exactly familiar! Tears were undeniable, a new appreciation began to fill the room as

ties was the showing of the documentary "Dakota 38" produced by Spirit Feather Productions. The film grew out of a dream in 2005 of Jim Miller, a spiritual leader and Vietnam Veteran from South Dakota. Jim's dream is rooted in his people's nightmare of the largest mass execution ever conducted by the United States government. Jim and his wife traveled from South Dakota to be present for the film's viewing at the American Indian Center. Local spiritual leader, Jim Claremont opened the evening with a prayer and a traditional song.

**CHAT Members include:** Ashley Agard, Wayne Long Crow, Sheldon Noel



Photo by from Waste Wahacaka

we "all" understood the message at hand and that was ultimately "love". Sharing it, exploring it, and accepting it. All of this brought to us by a beautiful man with a vision, Mr. Miller.

The journey was one of determination as the relentless weather conditions shown in the film offered hardly a moment for relaxation or pleasurable intake. This is what life offered our human efforts and this is a format we could all appreciate in an expedition that spanned over 300 miles into Mankato. Hardships can happen in a blink of an eye. Our city (Minneapolis) is one of greatness as we find ways to over come these hardships somewhat without much effort as instincts carry far and long. Our event went as planned, with traditional delicious food, and the turn-out was for who were all in attendance. One thing I can say is that a lot can be learned from our neighbors in South Dakota with a daunting financial status. The census often considers this area to be one the poorest county's in our country with annual incomes per household that average 5,000 dollars.

Life is tough as well as hard for us all as we are all affected by our declining financial state

(the recession), so with that being said, I'm in motion for our community to reach out to our neighbors, talk to each other and bring "life" back into our communities through acts of love and caring for one another. I would respectfully like to say that "togetherness" can be achieved!

Personally, I lost my eldest Brother (Jerrod) on the coldest night in South Dakota back in '96. He died from exposure a week before he turned 18. My Winyan (Lakota/Dakota for women who walks beside me) and I have been through some rough times. This past Father's Day marked the one-year memorial for her Mother's end with her fight with Colon Cancer. Respectfully, I made Father's Day a day for her! Through it all though, we've been blessed!

I'd like to re-thank the "Alley" for offering us this opportunity and Wopida Tanka (big thanks) to anyone who offered their time to read about our event and encourage those who would like more info on the Dakota Language CHAT and how to get involved, feel free to contact the Cultural Wellness Center at 612-721-5745 or ashleylongcrow@yahoo.com.



Under the leadership of Hope Community, the BYI organizational team implemented a plan to research the interests and needs of community organizations in the Backyard area.

Hope Community held one to one interviews and listening circles with 34 organizational leaders representing 31 organizations to provide an update about the BYI and hear their issues. Several key themes emerged:

- Support for the BYI definition of health and its focus on social connectedness as an important strategy to improve health.



Photo by dee henry williams

- Organizations feel "silo- d" and isolated as immediate demands and inadequate funding make it difficult to take

on new projects.

- Organizations are overwhelmingly interested in continuing to be involved in the work of the BYI if it is productive and action-focused.

In response to resident's request for better understanding of available resources from organizations, the first ever comprehensive inventory of non-profits in the Backyard was completed. The inventory yielded a list of 202 nonprofits within the geographic Backyard and upon further

### Engagement with Organizations



analysis; there is now a database of 125 active organizations in the area that are relevant to improving health. CHAT members and other residents in the Backyard will be able to use the inventory to identify and pursue organizations that may be able to support their work.



"For me the greatest benefit has been hearing the ideas that people have shared. They're wonderful to put together in various ways."

"I have learned a lot more about the community as a whole versus just where I live and have learned more about the different people who make up the community."

"This is the first time in 20 years that I've been working around my daughter and granddaughter so closely."

"I've made a lot of connections here. We come together, share information, and try to do even better tomorrow than we did today. I feel I've connected to a lot of cultural

values here. The togetherness here is what has really given me energy. I've learned a lot that I couldn't learn from a university or anywhere else."

## OUT in the Backyard CHAT



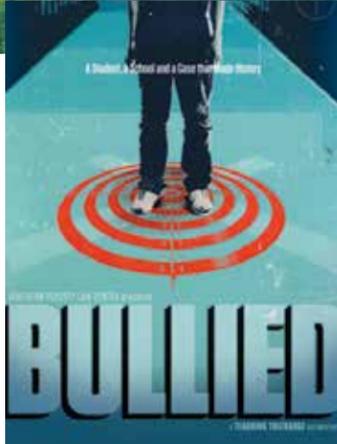
The OUT in the Backyard CHAT is focusing their work and activities on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (GLBTQ) communities to reduce isolation, create community and foster connections in order to improve the health of individuals in our neighborhoods.

Some of the activities that we have worked on in the last year to put our goals and ideals into action include:

- Worked with the community and a website designer to began the process of building an informational and interactive website that will provide resources and educational information. It will also be accessible to all outside the GLBTQ community so that we can increase awareness and build connections between our various communities.
- Sponsored several community forums to get information for

the website and share resources, which included topics like: services for LGBT youth and end of life issues and the need for healthcare directives.

- Sponsored Booth at the annual GLBTQ Pride festival in Loring Park to promote OUT in the Backyard and to recruit community members to the CHAT.
- Community screening/discussion of the documentary "Bullied", a film that tells one student's ordeal with anti-gay bullying. Bullying is an issue that impacts many different communities, and the film helped generate dialogue among CHATs. This event took place at the Cultural Wellness Center.
- Since obesity, diabetes, heart disease, depression, and stress are such big health issues not only for GLBT folks but for all residents in the Back Yard, we began a series of exercise



classes that would be free and accessible to all. First, we started with a 6 or 8-week Kettlebell class. We have continued using an exercise class format as a way to improve the health of all in the Back Yard by offering Zumba, a very popular exercise movement class. These classes are offered every Monday night from 6:30 to 7:30 pm in Powderhorn Park with ZUMBA instructor, Bernice Arias, leading the sessions.



### Health Care Access

The BYI partners with Portico Healthnet, an organization that assists uninsured Minnesotans access affordable health care and coverage. Portico works to improve community health by enrolling uninsured individuals into Minnesota Care, Medical Assistance and other public programs. Those who are ineligible for public programs are enrolled in the Portico Coverage

program. A full-time English-Spanish speaking Community Health Worker is stationed at Andersen Community School in the Backyard to facilitate access to Portico services. In 2011, 436 residents accessed health insurance through public programs. An additional 116 residents were able to access primary and preventive care services through the Portico coverage program. Due to a partnership between Portico and the BYI, Backyard residents have

## PORTICO

Healthnet  
651-489-CARE  
www.porticohealthnet.org

immediate access to the coverage program. There is typically an 18 month wait period for the program.

Join us and be "out" in the park having fun and building community spirit. Open to everyone, not just GLBTQ folks.

- An important current focus of our CHAT is working with the organization Minnesota United for All Families to defeat the amendment that would limit the freedom for GLBTQ people to marry. It is very personal to us in this CHAT that people vote

"no" to the Anti-Marriage Amendment in November to protect the rights of all families. Contact Janet Dahlem, [jldahlem@stkate.edu](mailto:jldahlem@stkate.edu) to join us in organizing around the effort to defeat this amendment that will harm our community.

**CHAT Members include:** Mili Dutta, Jen Dolan, April Posner, Marta Knutson, Diane Long, and Janet Dahlem.



### FREE Classes!

Come out and ZUMBA

Monday nights to the end of Aug  
6:30 to 7:30 pm

Join the

OUT in the Backyard CHAT at the NW corner of Powderhorn Park at 11th Ave. to keep it moving!!!

ALL ARE WELCOME!

## Did You Know? CHAT



The Did you Know? C H A T Team's mission is to get people together through

Block Clubs/Events. Our hope is that these connections help prevent isolation and promote community. We are partnered with Community-University Health Care Center to provide support to clubs by sharing health information and referrals, participating in the CHAT Team and giving Block Leaders the tools they need to support the health of their block.

One of our CHAT Team members is a Crime Prevention Specialist with the Police Department who partners with Did you Know? and encourages participation in the

Block Leader Training and National Night Out. This was the second year we sponsored Spring Reunions, giving \$50 to each block that held a gathering of neighbors.

We have held one meeting with Block Club leaders this year to support their efforts in organizing events, give them information about our CHAT Team, and to find out what resources would be helpful for them to improve the health of their block. Our goal this year is to put together a TOOL KIT of resources that will provide information for leaders about health resources in the Backyard.

**CHAT Members include:** Amy Shellabarger and John Bailey. We are always looking for more neighbors to participate in our efforts. If you are interested in participating in our CHAT Team, please contact Amy @ 612-638-0578.



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"What I've learned from being in the Backyard Initiative is that even though you can be far from "home," you can still find cultural touchstones wherever you are."

"For me the greatest benefit has been being a part of a group of people who are so determined to do something good together."

"This is a very important program to me because we are each listened to and we get to share whatever we want to share about what the issue is."

"What Rebirthing Community and the BYI has brought to me is the opportunity to engage people and communities that I would have never otherwise been able to from

all walks of life, socio-economic backgrounds, etc. It's an opportunity for us to be a part of something good."



BEFORE



AFTER using safe cleaning products and procedures



## Latina/o Environmental Health Begins at Home CHAT

products and practices from the Women's Environmental Institute.

Work sessions are held in people's homes who have signed up to have their kitchen cleaned. Participants learn 1) to create cleaning products from natural, environmentally safe ingredients, 2) where they can get

This project organizes Latino families to learn about environmental health and how they can contribute to creating a healthy environment for their families and community. The first stage of this effort is to teach Latinas how to make healthy products to clean the home and organize ways to implement what they have learned and to support each other to maintain a healthy environment.

Our vision is to improve the health of the Latino residents and community by creating a healthier indoor environment for Latino families, build community between Latino families, and build momentum in the community to be a part of the bigger environmental justice movement.

We have developed curriculum for the Latino community on safe household cleaners and how to do a healthy home audit and trained a group of people to clean kitchens with natural products and to conduct a healthy home audit. We received training in making our own safe and healthy cleaning

the ingredients, 3) what the benefits are for using these products instead of their usual products (inexpensive and healthier), 4) to draw on their cultural traditions and background for healthy resources, and 5) to reframe or redefine what "clean" means (a product which attacks germs in your kitchen might mean the product is attacking your body, standards of what cleanliness means might be excessive).

Our vision is to eventually form "Grupos de apoyo" (support groups) for women to clean each other's kitchen together with sup-

port from the trainers. The ingredients for cleaning products will be left at each kitchen for future cleanings. After cleaning, a spiritual healer takes the participants through a spiritual cleansing, in the traditional ways. This is consistent with the cultural understanding that cleansing is not just about the physical, but it is also spiritual. Our hope is this will lead to families continuing to support each other and build community.

**CHAT Member include:** Berta Ruiz



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## Rebirthing Community CHAT



In 2012, the Rebirthing Community CHAT, in conjunction with Communities of Light Co-op, plans to continue our inter-generational workshops using discussions about community, self-sufficiency, sustainability and capacities for action. Our vision is to encourage families to join the Communities of Light Co-op and attain self-sufficiency and solvency by producing and selling solar lanterns, solar generators and other products and services the co-op member identifies.



**CHAT Members include:** Dee Henry Williams, Edgar Young III Bey, Jim Cook, Khadijch Riopelke, Jimmy Johnson, and Debra Michelle.

For more info see the above flyer.



## Sharing our Story

Communication strategies are designed to promote the story and the lessons of the BYI. Multiple vehicles including: print and on-line media, participation in community events, conference and classroom presentations and word-of-mouth are utilized to reach a variety of audiences.

Community strategies are designed to encourage residents to tell their stories from their geographic and cultural perspectives through monthly articles in The Alley Newspaper, a community based newspaper in Phillips and participation at neighborhood meetings and events. Residents and staff also participated in the first ever Midtown Global Market Jazz Festival held in July, 2011.

Our website, [www.allinahealth.org/backyard](http://www.allinahealth.org/backyard), was revamped in 2011.

National communications included a presentation at the national Association for Community Health Improvement conference. An article on the Backyard titled "Being Active in Your Community is a Cornerstone of Good Health" was published on the Institute for Comprehensive Community Development Website by national LISC.

## Communications CHAT



The BYI Communications CHAT is proud to be the conduit helping to get the many voices, images, and wisdom on to these pages.

We hope you will be as inspired by the work reflected on these pages as we were. Alley Communications, Inc. is the fiscal agent of the Communications CHAT. For more info: call Susan Gust, Coordinator, 612-414-6623.



"It's meant a lot of work but it's not like labor. We are building and learning and in some cases challenging ourselves beyond our limits and I think that's the kind of work

the entire society needs to be doing so I thank you for that."

"It's healing—as a community, as a culture. We have many diverse cultures here. I'm hon-

ored to be here in your presence."

"Being in the Backyard Initiative has meant taking my first steps as a commu-

nity organizer. I came to the Backyard Initiative when I was pregnant with my son as a notetaker."

I've lived in Minneapolis for years, I came here when I was 23 and was ready to fight fight fight. Now as the children and the grandchildren are coming, I'm not want-

## Anchor Family CHAT



### Do you need anything?"

Through the Backyard Initiative Assessment process, it became apparent that families in the BYI communities are experiencing isolation and lack of resources to sustain the health and well-being of their families. It is quite apparent that this has a direct connection to the state of turmoil and destructive behavior our youth are exhibiting. Families are feeling less and less connected to one another and to the spiritual, cultural and social resources in the community that are necessary to sustain their families. These resources include someone to talk to when things get tough, wisdom from elders and those who have survived. They also include someone to lean on when their own internal resources become limited. There is a clear need to rebuild the web of relationships that will mend the fragmentation that families are experiencing. It is also necessary to restore the family bond with our youth to increase their sense of belonging and interconnectedness. This action can shift the emphasis and public perception of our youth and reinforce their positive behaviors by connecting them to elders in the community to provide guidance and direction.

Our CHAT works to solve this problem by establishing an Anchor Family on selected blocks within the 475 BYI blocks, the number and priority to be determined by the Community Commission on Health. To improve the sense of health and well being of people living in the Backyard, the Anchor Family will act as catalyst for increased interconnectedness, building community through com-

munity rituals, gatherings and relationship building activities. Anchor Families will coordinate community celebrations surrounding cultural customs, individual achievements and personal or family grief and loss.

Recent activities of the Anchor Family CHAT have included a multi-generational gathering and feast on Mother's Day, block cleanups, barbecues, a walking club and visiting and checking in on others on the block when they haven't see each other. Young men on the blocks with an Anchor Family are encouraged and supported to be part of the "Fellows" program. The Fellows program mentors these young men to be emerging leaders in our community.

One new initiative has been inspired and grew out of the work of the Anchor Families CHAT: the Young Business-Minded Men program. This is an entrepreneurial project that teaches youth that live in the BYI how to make money and cultivate the skills of a professional business person. Their mentors emerged from a culturally-based, all male group who attend a brotherhood circle that began as a book club. Youth from the BYI area as well as Anchor Family Fellows are mentored into the Young Business-Minded Men program. Participants in the Young Business-Minded Men program have learned jewelry making and utilizing their entrepreneurial spirits by buying products in bulk and selling such items for a profit.

**CHAT Members include:** Angelica Buenrostro, Gloria Thompson, Ray Thompson, Khusaba Seka, Lee Younger, Mau Smai Aye Re, and Reggie Ferguson

## PROJECT S.E.L.F. (Save, Educate, Liberate, Free) CHAT



and their original cultural ways. Communication across generations is strained and challenging. Youth are not responsive to guidance from the elders and are conflicted by peer pressure.

Our CHAT works to solve this problem by improving the health of the people living in the BYI through Nomadic Expressions, especially elders and youth. These activities help to bridge the gap between the older and younger community members to encourage healthy relationships through



Project S.E.L.F. founder, Amged Yusuf, with youth at the Ice Cream Social.

Recent Project S.E.L.F. Annual Ice Cream Social and Free Henna Decoration

Project S.E.L.F. (SAVE EDUCATE LIBERATE FREE) is an Immigrant Health CHAT group that established a program called "Nomadic Expressions" which aims to assist youth, elders and families in healthy living and artistic expressions through



poetry, open microphone performances, information workshops and community dialogue.

The face of immigrant youth in our society has been negative as there is often more emphasis on those engaged in negative behaviors. Immigrant youth in our community are misguided and confused by conflicting messages between mainstream society

various artistic mediums. Nomadic Expressions host community engagement and dialogue activities, cultural celebrations and creative workshops where youth and elders can share their stories including Open Mic Shop and traditional Under the Tree storytelling. The storytelling sessions (Sheeko Sheeko) occur twice a month. Project S.E.L.F. CHAT was founded by Amged Yusuf, a poet and Spoken Word artist.

There are many activities which the Project S.E.L.F. CHAT has helped to coordinate over the past year. One of the most recent ones occurred on Saturday evening, June 23 when women and children gathered on a beautiful summer's evening for an annual Ice Cream Social, free henna and to socialize while their children played. For more information, visit [projectSELF@facebook.com](mailto:projectSELF@facebook.com).

**CHAT Members include:** Fatima Mohamud, Muski Abdulle, Amged Yusuf, Sahra Ismail, Jama Mohamed, Fowzia Mohamed, Maryan Ali, Fowzia Mohamud, Hiba Abdulkadir, Ahmed Ali, Mohamed Mohamud, Shukri Mirre



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ing to fight little things like neighborhood boundaries, I'm wanting to do deep work and this group is willing to go deep.

"I was born 71 years ago in Northwestern Hospital (it wasn't Abbot then) and lived across the street from there."

"In this we are also crossing

the two sides of Lake Street. And we're not talking about things like zoning. I'm glad there are other people out there talking about that, but we're talking about some-

thing else here. And we have people here who were not born here and have not lived in this neighborhood for 74, some who were not born in this country and they are

not having to have 20, 30, 40 years of paying dues before they can be heard, they're not even having to wait 30 minutes and that's great."

## Somali Women's Health Support Group CHAT

"If you educate a woman, you educate the nation." - African Proverb



The original plan for the Somali Women's Health Support Group CHAT was to promote communication, understanding, and support among women of the Somali community who have children in the judicial system by creating spaces and systems for them to talk, connect and assist each other. The aim was to provide women room to express themselves and to explore ways in which the cultural systems of discipline could be used to avoid the intervention of the US judicial system. The hope was this effort would help to maintain the balance and harmony of the community.

However, after forming the group and receiving special training on how to interface with the prison system, it was discovered by the women that they would not be able to visit the prisons wearing their hijabs or head scarves for the sake of their own safety. By this time though, bonds had formed between the women and they had shared other ways they could increase the health knowledge. This is achieved by: teaching families their culture; empowering community members in grassroots leadership; conducting community education workshops on civic engagement and health issues; preventing tobacco use; and offering parent workshops bringing families together to solve



Photo credits: Susan Gust

problems and bridge understanding.

With that in mind, we started working with our young girls using an educational approach. We begin with a home visit and help assure the children have an electric sharpener, a quiet place to learn with a studying table. Then we engage the parents in understanding the school system, report cards and healthy lifestyles. Additionally, our group supports post-secondary education by referring participants to SAT and ACT exam preparation courses and college tours. We organize a broad range of learning opportunities with trips to museums, workshops on our cultural heritage, and enrolling in classes at the YWCA. A Somali's Women's Walking Group has formed at Powderhorn Park where there is still room for more participants! We also have other classes every week for our girls at the Brian Coyle Community Center. The Somali's Women's Health Support Group CHAT is doing all that we can to prevent loneliness, isolation, depression, school failure, family violence, etc. for our women and girls. To find out more, email fardowsajamac@yahoo.com.

**CHAT Members include:** Fardowsa Yossuf, Bishare Gardad, Maryan Adan, and Faduma Yusuf



Photo credits: Jehn Ackerman

Somali Women's Health Support Group CHAT: Walking Group

## Guri Nabad (Peace House) CHAT: Somali American Community

Our Guri Nabad (meaning: Peace House) CHAT, part of the Somali American Community non-profit organization, is comprised of community leaders and individuals whose families are impacted by incidences of childhood asthma. We address the causes of these chronic conditions and offer tools to assist our families in coping with and managing these conditions. Part of our effort helps to identify community resources that can help our families successfully address issues surrounding asthma in our Somali community.

Many parents are ashamed, afraid or unwilling to address the issues surrounding their children's health conditions. This is especially true for parents with asthmatic children who fear that their children will be unable to participate in healthy physical activities. With language and cultural barriers that many people feel they have, they are less aware or less effective in reaching out to available resources and are sometimes afraid to ask for help. With our CHAT Team, we create a venue in which people can come together, speak about

their health issues and together seek the resources most appropriate for addressing our children's asthma. Through our mosques, media, and personal word-of-mouth, we reach out to other families with similar conditions and situations.

To date, we have conducted asthma management trainings and assisted 17 children and their families. Families attend 10 asthma management sessions which occur 1-2 times a month. Since asthma is something that affects the entire family even though it may be experience by just one person in the family, we believe it is very important for the entire family to become educated about asthma and to understand what it is, the triggers, how episodes can be prevented and generally how to live more comfortably with this disease. By working with the entire family, our efforts have reached and impacted many more people.

Families involved with us do not just attend the support groups and



receive asthma management training. We also accompany them to their child's school, day care center or health care provider to support them and help them and others to make the link between their child and the proper management of their child's asthma. It is important that our work also be conducted in a culturally appropriate manner.

The Somali American Community as an organization which helps Somali people in South Minneapolis with issues such as; immigration, becoming American citizens, health education, etc. Watch for a future article about the organization in The Alley Newspaper. For more information, please contact Mahamed Cali at calimahamed@gmail.com.

**CHAT Members include:** Abdi Hussein, Fatma Hassan, Hadsan Abdulle, Shirwa A-Jibril, Ubah Keynan, and Mahamed Cali



Photos by  
dee henry williams

Quotes from  
Commissioners  
are random

**“What Rebirthing Community and the BYI has brought to me is the opportunity to engage people and communities that I would have never otherwise been able to from**

**all walks of life, socio-economic backgrounds, etc. It’s an opportunity for us to be a part of something good.”**

**“For me the greatest benefit**

**has been communicating with people that normally you just see and walk by in the community. Just being a help-seeing things in your community and helping—that’s a benefit**

**to me.”**

**“The May Day Parade began as a festive way to unify neighbors on each side of Lake Street from 35W to**

**Hiawatha. The Backyard Initiative carries that vision forward with year-long activities and work.”**

**Meet the Backyard Initiative staff from Allina Health!**

Ruth Hampton Olkon, Lovel Trahan, and Dimpho Orionzi are the team here to support the work happening in the Backyard.



**Name: Ruth Hampton Olkon**  
Hometown: Minneapolis, MN  
Heritage: Jewish

Family: Husband, three kids, one sister, one brother-in law, one niece, parents, in-laws, and close friends  
What brought you to the Backyard Initiative? I wanted to be involved in what I believe is the most important work in the world  
What is your role with the project? Provide support and facilitate connections between and amongst Allina Health and the community.  
How long have you been with the project? One year  
What is your favorite restaurant in the Backyard? Maria’s Cafe



**Name: Lovel Trahan**

Hometown: Lafayette, LO  
Heritage: Cajun and Creole  
Family: Two parents, one brother, three grandparents, six aunts, three uncles, seven cousins, and one partner  
What brought you to the Backyard Initiative? A desire to be part of the development of what health care may look like in ten or fifteen years  
What is your role with the project? To build capacity in the project and to make the Backyard more important than it is today.  
How long have you been with the project? Eleven months  
What is your favorite restaurant in the Backyard? Safari Express in the Midtown Global Market



**Name: Dimpho Orionzi**

Hometown: St. Cloud, MN  
Heritage: Lugbara, tribe in Northwestern Uganda

Family/Siblings: Two parents, two sisters, one brother, two grandmothers, and many, many aunts, uncles and cousins  
What brought you to the Backyard Initiative? I wanted to learn about genuine community engagement because I believe communities are an important stakeholder and often get left out of critical conversations.  
What is your role with the project? To find ways of connecting what we’re learning in the Backyard to other important work that is happening in the community and in Allina Health.  
How long have you been with the project? One year and eleven months  
What is your favorite restaurant in the Backyard? Maria’s Cafe

**Growing the Backyard CHAT- 25 families and growing!**



In the last two years, Growing the Backyard CHAT assisted 25 families to establish gardens and grow their own food. This CHAT empowers Backyard residents to produce their own healthy foods, increase connections to the local food system, and to increase each family’s understanding about how the food system works. Families participating in the project will actively take responsibility for creating and maintaining a series of gardens throughout the Backyard. These activities will also increase a sense of belonging and community for each family. The CHAT team members help to provide supplies and connections to gardening resources and the local food system.

The work of this CHAT team ties into overarching goals that were identified by the Assessment process conducted in 2009 by Backyard Initiative. Two specific points that related to the work of this CHAT include:

- Families expressed a lack of access to affordable healthy food for their family
- 97% of Backyard assessment participants felt that affordable locally grown fruits and vege-

tables were very important  
Families have developed a dependency on grocers to provide access to food rather than being able to produce some amount of food on their own. Some families have expressed a reluctance to begin gardening because they have limited knowledge and resources. Others have expressed the belief that their cultural foods cannot grow in Minnesota. Residents may not feel comfortable navigating the existing food system because the system is complex, exclusive and although it may take into consideration cultural differences, it does a poor job of connecting to people of different cultures. Furthermore, promotion of over-processed foods has created a disconnect from the ability and know-how to prepare and store fresh food.

Many of the existing organizations in the backyard have programs that target children, youth and adults, but the work of this CHAT focuses on the entire family.

The Growing the Backyard CHAT feels that people growing food, preparing food, and becoming an active participant in the local food system is integral in preserving and sustaining family life.

**CHAT Members include:** Hashep Seka, David Boehnke, Deeq Abdi, Shea Peeples, Peter Noble, Lita Beach, Kurt Blomberg, Collie Graddick, Louann Replogle and Sainab Sahal,

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