Igniting Change from the Ground Up: Uplifting Best Practices for Community Organizing and Leadership Engagement

Prevention Institute
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Roxy Rivas
Guest Presenters

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Community Farm Alliance
Martin Richards—Executive Director
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Webinar Objectives

• Describe strategies and principles for cultivating authentic community engagement

• Highlight best practices from both rural and urban communities on community organizing and resident leadership

• Identify action-oriented strategies that support policy and systems change rooted in partnership
In just a few words, how would you define "community?"
Community is both a feeling and a set of relationships among people. People form and maintain communities to meet common needs. Members of a community have a sense of trust, belonging, safety, and caring for each other. They have an individual and collective sense that they can, as part of that community, influence their environments and each other.

- David M. Chavis & Kien Lee
Community participation, when it’s real, is your main investment in accountability. It’s your main investment in sustainability...community participation is when, truly, you involve people in creating a mechanism for themselves to define change.

- America Bracho, Executive Director, Latino Health Access
Moving from transactional to transformational community engagement
SEEDS Take Root for Pedestrian Safety
SEEDS Take Root for Pedestrian Safety
Valuing Community Experience and Capacity

- Partnerships with communities experiencing health and safety inequities are strengthened by prioritization of an equitable process.

- Community engagement efforts that provide space for identifying root causes of inequities build trust and foster long term relationships.

- Collaboration that identifies and compensates community partners, fairly acknowledging contributions, helps build equity into institutional practices.
Creating Space for Being/Doing/Connecting

United Women of East Africa
San Diego, CA
Lessons Learned: Community Focus

• Community conditions form the basis for an actionable prevention approach.
• The THRIVE Community Clusters are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.
• A focus on community conditions provides a mechanism to address and reduce stigma.
• A focus on community conditions provides an opportunity to move beyond traditional treatment models.
Questions for Reflection

- Are those most affected by the issue actively involved in defining the problem and shaping the solution?

- Are we using techniques that build community capacity and leadership? If not, what techniques could be pursued?

- What barriers to community engagement—including our perception and history in the community—should we consider?

- What can we do differently to improve or enhance community engagement? What is our plan of action to implement those changes?
Partnering for Health Equity

Explores how the political landscape, funding, staff skills, leadership, and partnerships influence the ability of community-based organizations to work effectively with public health agencies to address health inequities and racial injustices.
“Uplifting Best Practices for Community Organizing and Leadership Engagement”
Alisha Brown, M.N.M.
Senior Vice President
Foundation for Sustainable Urban Communities
Director
be well Health and Wellness Initiative
be well’s vision is for a culture in which all people have an equal opportunity to achieve the health they desire, regardless of their race, income, gender, or location.

The mission of be well is to effect programs, policies and practices to create health equality and access for all people.

An on the ground movement of communities coming together to take charge of their health and wellness.
6 Neighborhoods
Approximately 100,000 People
be well
Community Collaborative

A multi-sector coalition that consists of:

- Residents & Community Stakeholders
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Development
- Education
- Transportation
- Churches Businesses & Organizations
- City Officials
Residents and Community Stakeholders

- 1st Bank
- 2040 Partners for Health
- 50/50 Fitness
- AF Williams Family Medicine
- Aurora Housing Authority
- Aurora Public Schools
- Bluff Lake Nature Center
- Center for African American Health
- City of Aurora Parks and Recreation
- City of Denver Parks and Recreation
- Colorado Council of Black Nurses
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- Denver Health
- Denver Health Community Voices
- Denver Public Schools

- East Montclair Neighborhood Association
- Forest City, Stapleton
- Gary Williams Energy Company
- Greater Park Hill, Inc.
- Greater Stapleton Business Association
- I’m Unique
- Inner City Health Center
- Johnson and Wales University
- Mile High Fitness
- Northwest Aurora Neighborhood Organization
- Northeast Denver Housing
- Original Aurora Renewal
- Park Hill Thriving Communities
- Piton Foundation
- Platte College
- Regis University
- Regional Transportation District (RTD)

- SandCreek Regional Greenway
- Senator Michael Johnston
- Stapleton Development Corporation
- Northeast Transportation Connections
- Stapleton United Neighbors
- Taking Neighborhood Health to Heart
- Tri-County Health Department
- University of Colorado Dept. of Family Medicine
- Urban Land Conservancy
Advancing Health Equity through Community Engagement

Building capacity of communities is essential to advancing health equity and involves:

- Community leaders and residents being educated about disparities in their community
- Bringing together multiple stake-holders who have an interest in health equity
- Stakeholders engage decision-makers in discussions on community needs
be well strategies to Community Engagement

**Inclusive Participation:** be well is characterized by partnering with groups or individuals that others may not be aware of or have access to.

**Civic Engagement:** be well helps educate community members around policy and system level improvements informing them of opportunities to become fully active in their communities.

**Health Education:** be well educates and builds awareness around the social determinants of health using trainings and information dissemination.

Education is essential to helping community members overcome their skepticism that their opinions don't matter.
The *be well* Way

Engagement Strategies

- Meet people where they are:
  - Little League Practice
  - Apartment Complexes
  - Bus Stops
  - Healthy Happy Hours
  - Church
  - School
  - Grocery Store
  - Door to Door Outreach
  - Word of Mouth

- Make involvement simple
  - Clear pathways to participation
- Be open to the community’s suggestions for how they’d like to be engaged
be well Block Captains

• Share & receive information

• Demonstrate how individual experiences are part of the larger community context

• Engage residents in community efforts

• Address community challenges and leverage opportunities

• Empowerment
At be well, we know how busy life can be, so we’ve created a volunteer structure within the Block Captain program that gives volunteers the opportunity to engage the be well community at a level that best matches their personal interests and availability.

There are 3 different tiers:

- Connector
- Captain
- Coach
The *be well* Way
Block Captain Training

- Capacity-focused approach
- Supports residents seeking to create positive and meaningful improvements
- Helps residents to actively contribute to their health and wellness and that of their families, friends, neighbors, and community
### be well Way

#### Training Sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The <em>be well</em> Way Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Prevention: Heart Health &amp; Chronic Disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Nutrition &amp; Physical Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Manage Your Mental Load</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Who you are impacts your health</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Policy and Systems Change</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>The Built Environment and Civic Engagement Strategies</td>
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Increasing Physical Activity Opportunities through Transit Equity

In Northeast Denver, physical inactivity is a risk factor for poor health outcomes, particularly among African Americans.

**Hypothesis:** Poor health outcomes are related to a variety of obstacles including the potential of underdeveloped linkages to public transit systems from targeted neighborhoods.

**Activities:** *be well* is leading efforts to better engage African American residents in opportunities to impact transit decisions.

**Outcome:**
- *be well* hosted six community conversations.
- Residents formed a transit stakeholder group.
- Group reviewed proposed plans and provided feedback to RTD.
- Route that was deemed to be cut will be continued with a slight reduction in service.
Increasing physical activity by making Denver Recreation Centers more accessible

**Hypothesis:** Poor health outcomes are related to a variety of obstacles including the lack of usage of the local recreation centers for physical activity

**Activities:** *be well* is leading efforts to engage African Americans in compiling data and participating in civic engagement processes to impact recreation center services

**Outcomes:**
- Hosted 9 Healthy Happy Hours
- Created a recreation center workgroup
- Shared the City Auditor’s 2014 Report
- Completed a Health Impact Assessment
- Learned about new methods
- Entered into an agreement with Denver Parks and Recreation to form a standard partnership project
Challenges

Slow Wins
• Relationships take time
• Policy and systems improvements take time

Burn Out
• Too many meetings
• Duplication of effort

Competing Priorities
• be well framework allows flexibility

Political Environment
• Changes in administration or leadership
• Organizational Changes
The be well Block Captain “How To Guide” & Tool-Kit
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project kick-off call</td>
<td>Confirm project plan and schedule for both organizations. Tentatively, APDC has identified training dates in July/August and the VNA has identified training dates in September/October</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training preparation</td>
<td>Customized training materials and presentation slides for all three training sessions for APDC</td>
<td>June</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training Day 1:</td>
<td>Understanding of the be well Way approach and how its methods to build organization’s capacity to engage the community to advance health equity. Criteria for which organizations can refer to as they are engaging the community. Established boundaries from which they would like to first achieve community engagement. Specific strategies to intentionally reach out to affected populations to become partners.</td>
<td>July</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction of Organizing the be well way, Identification of partners and roles, Establishing boundaries, Reaching affected populations, Designing a successful engagement (recruitment) strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete customized engagement strategy</td>
<td>be well will compile the notes from the training day to provide APDC with a customized engagement strategy</td>
<td>July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Day 2:</td>
<td>The establishment of a customized shared learning experience (Development of the training)</td>
<td>July/August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation of a shared learning experience (Development of the training)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete customized shared learning experience syllabus in partnership with the community</td>
<td>be well will compile the notes from the training day to provide APDC with a customized shared learning experience syllabus and tools to be implemented among the new volunteers</td>
<td>July/August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Day 3: Organizing your Block Captain Program for the Long-Term</td>
<td>Detail plan of how to support your the be well block captain program on an ongoing basis</td>
<td>August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oversight • Roles and Responsibilities • Recognition • Monitoring and • Continuing</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete customized program management tools</td>
<td>Tools, templates, reporting processes, community support</td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call/webinar to review toolkit and customized program management tools</td>
<td>Understanding of how to use tools and templates moving forward</td>
<td>August</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-months implementation support and coaching (~4 hours/month)</td>
<td>Ongoing advice and troubleshooting</td>
<td>June-November 6 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project coordination</td>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Days</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>11.0</strong></td>
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1. Advocated for approval of property taxes that helped fund affordable housing in the area.

2. In partnership with Colorado Mountain College Advanced workforce development to train mechanics and provide certification to community residents who complete the program.
1. Improvements to transit services

2. Enrollment of refugee community members in Medicaid

3. Engagement in Renters Rights Sessions to better understand housing contracts
Sustainability

- Community Ownership
  - How the community has informed the project
- Clear Roles and Responsibilities
  - What is expected of me
  - What supports are in place
  - Who is my contact person
- Recognition
  - be well Awards and Community Celebration
  - Newsletter Articles
  - Presentations at Community Meetings
- Support from other sources
  - Refreshments
  - Tickets to Events
  - Gift-cards
  - Exploring the development of a be well Club Card
Lessons Learned

- Do your home-work
- Ensure that your staff is diverse and can relate to the community you intend to serve
- Enter communities humbly/You are not the expert
- Speak the community’s language not public health lingo
- Invest time, energy, and resources in relationship building
- Expose your agenda while being open to change
- Be open and genuine
- Communities are not laboratories: Be committed
Get in the ZONE!

Follow us:

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@bewellconnect1

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PREVENTION INSTITUTE

“Uplifting Best Practices for Community Organizing and Leadership Engagement”

August 7, 2018

COMMUNITY FARM ALLIANCE

33 Years of Change From The Ground Up!

www.cfaky.org
Martin Richards
Community Farm Alliance
Executive Director

A graduate of the University of Kentucky’s College of Architecture, Martin was a farmer for twenty years.

Martin has been an active member of CFA since 1995, serving as the CFA President in 1998.

Martin became the director of CFA in November of 2010.
• Formed during the 1980’s farm crisis
• 1500 members statewide
CFA Mission:
We work to organize and encourage cooperation among rural and urban citizens through leadership development and grassroots democratic processes to ensure an essential, prosperous place for family-scale agriculture in our economies and communities.

CFA Vision
“We envision a food and fiber system that provides nutritious food for Kentuckians in a manner that is socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable.”
What Community Farm Alliance Does: OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

During the Farm Crisis of the 1980s, Kentucky farmers came together to face the industrial agricultural policy of “get big or get out!”

Their first action was direct service to their neighbors by setting up a suicide hotline.

Then they organized to change public policy.

Resulting in CFA’s Theory of Change that positive change begins with

• constructive grassroots dialogue,
• is built on successful models, and
• secured with good public policy.

CFA utilizes a Story-Based communications strategy to lift the voices of those most effect to the front of every issue!
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Organizing

Putting a face on the issue

Immediate impact and engagement

SYSTEM CHANGE

Leadership Development

Direct Service
Rural and Urban Farmers Markets

Entrepreneurship

Distribution

Farm to School

Rural and Urban Farmers Markets
Legislation shaped by CFA members

HB 611 (2000): Dedicating $1.7 billion to diversifying from tobacco.


HB 120 (2007): Allows farmers to do on-site cooking demonstrations and samples at farmers markets.


CFA members have led over 24 successful grassroots legislative campaigns in the past 33 years.
State Level Efforts on Food Security

- Hunger Initiative
- Partnership for a Fit KY
- Farm to Food Banks Advisory Council
- Kentucky Double Dollars
- Public Health Dept. Healthy Communities
- Farm to School
- Summer Feeding Program
**Improved public health is economic development!**

Every $1 spent on:

- wellness programs saves **$3.27 in medical costs and $2.73 in absenteeism costs.**
- nutritional and physical activity programs saves **$1.17 in medical expenses.**

*2010 Harvard wellness program study*

**Improved food access is economic development!**

- An increase of SNAP/Food Stamp benefits creates a “ripple effect through the economy.
- Moody's Analytics found that food stamps were the most effective, increasing economic activity by $1.73 for every dollar spent.
Kentucky Lessons and Challenges

Meet People Where They Are! Build a Diverse Movement!

- Kentuckians daily face the root causes of our national inequity crisis.
- The problems of limited economic opportunities, poor health, and political marginalization are among the highest in the nation.
- High unemployment, low levels of education, outmigration, low per capita income, and poor health characterize both rural and urban Kentuckians.
- With 58% of Kentuckians living in its urban centers and 42% in rural communities (but occupying 96% of the land), Kentucky looks much more like America of the 1920s than 2017 with a significant exception.
- Structural racism has forced the decline and concentration of Kentucky’s rural black populations, who in 1860 made up 25% of Kentucky's population.
- According to the 2000 Census, whites make up over 89% of Kentuckians with 52% of Kentucky's African American population concentrated in the Louisville Metro Area.
THANK YOU!
When you start with needs, you get programs. When you start with strengths, you get possibilities.

- Lupe Serrano, Casa de Esperanza
Q&A