

URBAN HEALTH INITIATIVE

The official newsletter of Emory University's Urban Health Initiative



IN THIS ISSUE

**STAFF SPOTLIGHTS:
TAQIYYA ALFORD &
JOAN WILSON**

**MEET NVS BUILDING
COMMUNITIES
PROGRAM**

**CURRENT EVENT:
COVID-19 & HEALTH
DISPARITIES**

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

A Message from Dr. Moore

Urban Health Initiative (UHI) began 2020 with a great start and is continuing to bring about positive change in our community, even in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic. We have partnered with the Healing Community Center to assist with their food distribution program to provide food to marginalized communities and those in need of assistance. We launched a bi-weekly Read to Me Program at PAWKids After School Day Care Center that supports educational enrichment opportunities through having a community member read to children from the neighborhood in West Atlanta. These activities support our mission to advance our efforts in combating food insecurity, improve literacy, and create a pipeline for future farmers. Additionally, UHI has conducted poverty simulations with our inter professional development course, as well as with Snellville Youth Council. This simulation gave participants a glimpse of what it might be like to live in poverty and to be forced to make difficult decision. As we continue to provide tobacco cessation programs throughout the Grady Health System, UHI has also implemented additional classes by working with Columbia Residential to provide tobacco cessation classes and informational cessations in their community.

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A Message from Dr. Moore, Continued

UHI has not let COVID-19 impede our progress and programs. We have expanded and adapted our programs to an online format that is accessible to everyone. We have also created a COVID-19 Relief Fund through donations from our contacts and readership where individuals who have experienced job loss can apply to receive assistance. In addition, we have collected over 500 face masks that are being distributed to our community in need.

As we continue to modify our approach during the time of this pandemic, we have also modified our traditional UHI yearly Finale meeting. We successfully hosted our first UHI Finale Conference through a virtual platform. We have also utilized virtual platforms to host live presentations to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 and adverse childhood experiences, and how COVID-19 disproportionately affects minority groups.

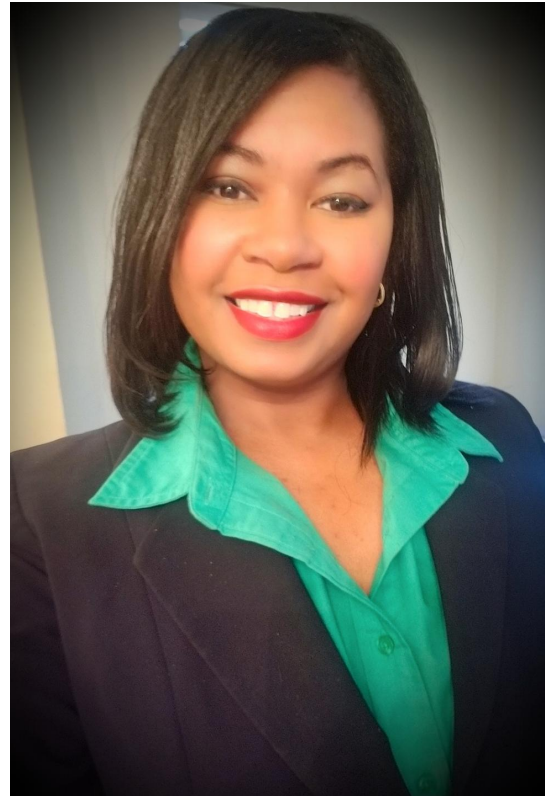
Finally, we have inducted 4 fellows into UHI, including Taqiyya Alford, Grace Buchloh, Blessing Falade and Penelope Strid. My deepest thanks to all of you who have attended and contributed this year as participants, partners or volunteers. Our successes would not have been possible without your efforts. As director of Urban Health Initiative, my hope for the rest of this year is that we continue to help our community thrive, even in the midst of these uncertain times.

Warm Regards,
Charles E. Moore, MD

Staff Spotlight

Meet UHI's Taqiyya Alford

Taqiyya Alford is UHI's Volunteer and Project Operations Manager. Taqiyya has a beautiful family, with three precious kids. Alford got involved with UHI through Brittany Evans, UHI's Assistant Director and completed her Master's of Public Health Practicum with UHI. During her practicum, Alford mainly focused on UHI's Tobacco Cessation Project; however, she was also heavily involved on the operations side of all of UHI's projects.



Through her experience, she learned important skills such as time management, organization and the ability to prioritize tasks. Alford believes that her practicum has taught her professionalism, how to communicate with a diverse audience, and how to efficiently and effectively respond to tasks and individuals. Through her experience, Alford also gained quality hands on experience with the community and saw the struggles that community members face on a daily basis. Due to Alford's practicum experience and clinical background, Alford landed a full time position with Emory as a clinical research coordinator. In the next 5-10 years, Alford sees herself continuing to work in the field of Public Health, as well as research. Ideally, she would like to continue to work for Emory and CDC, but ultimately she just wants to serve her community in anyway she can.

Staff Spotlight

Meet UHI's Joan Wilson

How did you get involved in Emory UHI?

I began working with UHI in 2014. I learned of UHI from Dr. Bill Sexson, who was the founder and Director (at that time) of UHI. Dr. Sexson knew of some of my work with Native Americans and food insecurity, and thought I would be a good fit for UHI and encouraged me to apply for a position with UHI. I was excited to be able to address some of the same issues in a different part of the country, and with a different population.

In addition to my work with UHI, I also work as the Assoc. Director of the Global Collaborating Center for Reproductive Health to improve maternal and infant mortality, and have started an initiative for educating girls as a way to improve health and wellbeing for girls & women (HOPE for Girls—Health, Opportunity, & Prosperity through Education).

What do you look forward to most at the start of each work day?

Communicating with members of the communities where I do most of my work, particularly some of the kids who call me “mom.” Also, working with students and helping them to gain experience that will help and inspire them in their future careers.

Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years supported by your experience with Urban Health Initiative?

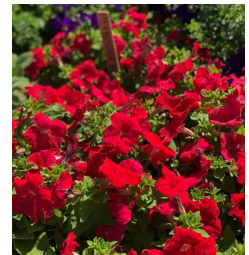
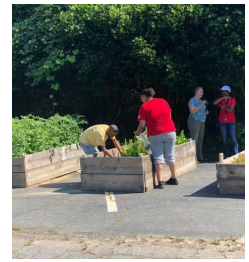
For the past three years I have been attending Emory Law School part-time, working toward a Juris Masters degree focused on Global Health and International Human Rights. I am graduating this summer, and look forward to integrating my law education and experience into the UHI programs that I direct, and to develop additional programs that more strongly involve policy and advocacy.

If you could secure one resource (currently considered scarce) for UHI stakeholders and community, what would it be and how would you position it to do the most good for the most people?

Since I have been with UHI, we have had to move our community teaching garden four times, and each time the move has been a major disruption to the momentum we had established and it takes a lot of our funding to re-build, funding that could be put to better use elsewhere. I would love to find some property in metro Atlanta where we could “set down roots” and know that we would not have to move again as soon as we get established!

Who is your role model?

Lillian Carter, mother of President Jimmy Carter. When I was in college I worked part time at the Sears store in Buckhead (no longer there), which was down the street from the Governor’s mansion when Jimmy Carter was Governor of Georgia. Ms. Lillian came to Sears frequently and I got to know and love her. She gave me the book of her Peace Corps letters and I have read and re-read it many times. She has inspired me ever since.



Meet NVS Building Communities Program

by Katherine Harper



NVS Building Communities Program is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that offers youth, aged 4-21 and their families quality recreational activities and life skills workshops. NVS primarily serves families in Clayton county. It was founded in 2018 by Nicole and Victor Smith.

Nicole and Victor's motivation and passion to start NVS comes from a personal place. Nicole grew up in a family of 6, with a dad and a dad figure who were addicted to drugs. At the age of 18, Nicole decided she wanted a better life and left her home with her 16 year old sister. Nicole worked 3 jobs and went to school full time. At the young age of 20, Nicole faced a life changing event when she was robbed and shot, while pumping air into her tires. Due to her injuries, she was no longer able to work or go to school; however, when she applied for assistance with the government, she was denied assistance, due to her having made too much at her previous three jobs, not having kids and her full time student status. After the life changing incident, Nicole decided she wanted to help underprivileged individuals find available community resources and also teach crucial life skills.

NVS' focus on providing kids opportunities to participate in sports comes from Victor's past experiences. Victor grew up in a single parent household, where his mom worked constantly, but still struggled to make ends meet. As a young boy, Victor wanted to be involved in sports, but because sports cost money and his family was financially stretched thin, he took up several side jobs in order to pay the fees to participate in sports. He realized that many kids were like him and did not participate in sports, due to a lack of finances. Currently, NVS provides kids with opportunities' to participate in tennis, football, golf, cheerleading, kickball and track. Victor believes that the sports provide kids with the necessary distraction to deter kids from participating in unruly things, such as gangs and violence. NVS also provides necessary life skills classes such as gardening, public speaking, tutoring, mentoring, job training, financial literacy, and the importance of community service. Nicole and Victor desire to give kids confidence that they can achieve greatness in their future and that success comes with hard work and dedication.



NVS' partnership with UHI started through a relationship with Dr. Moore, who offered a clinic for sports physicals. Victor and Nicole took the kids involved in the NVS program, who needed a sports physical to Dr. Moore's Clinic. UHI now partner's with NVS' gardening program, by provided funding in able to provide gardening supplies and resources. Due to the COVID- 19 crisis, the kids in the program are receiving garden kits to grow their own fruits and vegetables at home. Each week, the students will track the progress of their gardens through online meetings. NVS is now also offering tutoring online, public speaking online, and recreational strength and conditioning classes online.

Although NVS has been able to transition most of their services online due to COVID-19, COVID-19 has destroyed their main fundraising sources. NVS raises most of their funds at the concession stands of Suntrust Park and the Mercedes Benz Stadium; however, with sports events cancelled, their main fundraising resources are gone. If you would like to donate or volunteer, please see the bottom of the newsletter, as well as NVS pictures.

Nicole and Victor are true community heroes and provide kids with opportunities and motherly and fatherly- like mentorship to help kids thrive in their future.



Donate to NVS Building Community Program

- Zelle: 678-755-1418; Nicole Smith
- Cash app: \$NVSISBLDG
- Check: Make payable to: NVS Building Communities Program
- Mail: NVS Building Communities Program
- 1415 Hwy 85N Ste 310-120 Fayetteville, Georgia 30214

Current Events: Covid-19 and Health Disparities

by Katherine Harper

Emory's UHI is dedicated to alleviating health disparities through advocacy and education, community partnerships and best practice models.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) defines health disparities as “preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations,” as defined by factors such as race or ethnicity, gender, education or income, disability, geographic location (e.g., rural or urban), or sexual orientation.

The communities that UHI work in often face health disparities and the COVID-19 crisis is only highlighting these health inequalities. In March, The CDC analyzed 305 COVID-19 cases across seven metro Atlanta hospitals. The study found that 83% of the COVID-19 patients were black. Health differences amongst racial and ethnic groups can occur because of economic and social conditions, such as work circumstances, living conditions, underlying health conditions, and less access to care. Although the COVID-19 virus does not discriminate, as we are all equally susceptible, it is highlighting the inequities in the communities that UHI serves. Now more than ever, it is crucial that we prioritize the health needs of the communities we serve, and the communities and racial groups most affected by COVID-19.

What can you do?

To support the communities that UHI serves in this crisis, you can continue to support UHI and advocate for these communities and groups. You can keep up with UHI's news and social media, where we are posting opportunities to volunteer, such as making masks. It is also just as important to take care of yourself and your family. During this uncertain time, you may feel overwhelmed, stressed, anxious, sad, or angry. These emotions are normal. Here are 10 tips from the Mayo Clinic Health System to help you take care of YOU:

1. Eat a well balanced diet and drink plenty of water
2. Get adequate sleep
3. Exercise regularly- go for a walk, do yoga, spend time outdoors
4. Avoid risky behaviors, such as abusing alcohol or drugs
5. Set and maintain a routine
6. Focus on the things that you can control
7. Use technology to connect with the ones you love
8. Read books and listen to music
9. Look for ways to volunteer in the community-blood donations, checking on older adults, and donating supplies
10. Be thankful for what you do have



Volunteer Spotlight

by Katherine Harper

Maya Viust

Maya Viust graduated May 2020 with her Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from the Georgia Institute of Technology. She is interested in the Urban Health Initiative because she deeply cares about the wellness of the Metro Atlanta community..

Ajay Pandey

Ajay Pandey is a high school student at Centennial High School who is interested in pursuing medicine as a future career. He is excited to support the efforts of Emory's Urban Health Initiative in the Atlanta Community.

Allayna DeHond

Allayna DeHond is currently a student at Emory's Rollins School of Public Health working towards her Master's in Public Health. She is interested in joining UHI to join the team in working with communities throughout Atlanta to provide health programming and resources

Brittany Thompson

Brittany Thompson is second year Master of Public Health candidate concentrating in Health Promotion and Behavior at Georgia State University. She believes Emory's Urban Health Initiative mission to acknowledge health disparities and increase health equity aligns with my own personal mission.

Daniel Mehrabian

Daniel Mehrabian is a hopeful future physician. He is interested in joining the Urban Health Initiative team to help ensure both local and national safety and security around college campuses by using the valuable business and health related experience he has gained through his undergraduate career.

Hillary Bonuedie

Hillary Bonuedie is a rising 2nd year epidemiology student at the Rollins School of Public Health on track to complete the Social Determinants of Health Certificate. Prior to Rollins, she received a bachelor's in economics from Columbia University in the City of New York. Hillary is excited to volunteer with the Urban Health Initiative and work alongside other volunteers to advocate against health disparities.

Katherine Harper

Katherine Harper is a Master's of Public Health Student at the University of Georgia, with a concentration in Health Policy and Management. Katherine is interested in volunteering with UHI because she is passionate about eliminating health disparities in whatever ways she can.

Keya Jacoby

Keya Jacoby is a junior at Emory University studying Human Health and Spanish. As a UHI volunteer, she hopes to learn how to effectively develop, promote, and evaluate public health programs. She is passionate about working towards achieving health equity globally, and she is excited to contribute to UHI's efforts to address health disparities in the Atlanta community.

Sabrina Flores

Sabrina Flores is a current junior at Emory University studying Psychology and Human Health with a concentration in Health Innovation. Sabrina is excited to volunteer with UHI to learn how research, evaluation, and access healthcare services can impact the greater Atlanta community.

Sally Shin

Sally Shin is a graduate of Northwestern University, majoring in neuroscience and global health studies. She joined UHI because she is interested in health disparities and social determinants of health, and although her education and career has taken her away from Atlanta, she wanted to get involved and stay connected to the city she called home for most of her life.

Yaneli Bibiano

Yaneli Bibiano's interest in UHI arose from a combination of growing up in a medically underserved area of Atlanta, volunteering at a Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, and being an educator in a Title One school.

Volunteer Spotlight Continued

Amitej Venapally

Amitej Venapally just graduated from Georgia Tech with a B.S. in computer science and biochemistry. He is interested in the Urban Health Initiative because he is interested in public health, and wants to help address some of the concerns in the Metro Atlanta community.

Shivani Bhagat

Shivani Bhagat is a recent graduate from the Georgia Institute of Technology where she completed her B.S. in Neuroscience and minored in Computing and Intelligence. Her interest in UHI comes from her passion for serving people and public health as well as her love for the Atlanta community, in general.

Megna Rao

Megna Rao is an undergraduate student at Emory College of Arts and Sciences (Class of 2022) studying neuroscience and behavioral biology. She is interested helping with Urban Health Initiative to inspire progress towards health equity.

Thank you!

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

