



2023

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**



GRAND RAPIDS  
African American  
Health Institute

[graahi.org](http://graahi.org)



# FROM OUR CEO

**Vanessa Greene**  
Chief Executive Officer  
vanessa.greene@graahi.org

## **A Year of Transformation: Building Bridges, Building Health**

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I am honored to present the Grand Rapids African American Health Institute's (GRAAHI) 2023 Annual Report. As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense gratitude for the strides we have collectively made and the profound impact we continue to have on the lives of individuals and families in our community.

**2023 was a year of significant collaboration.** A cornerstone of this collaboration was the inaugural Health Disparities Transformation Summit, which brought together nearly 300 community members, partners, healthcare providers, educators, and policymakers. This landmark event fostered a collaborative environment focused on identifying tangible steps toward eliminating health disparities. Building on this momentum, GRAAHI launched dedicated Health Disparities Task Forces with 15 members focused on four areas of health to create focused action on the most pressing health issues facing Black residents in our community.

The true measure of success lies in the tangible impact we have collectively made on the community. Whether it's empowering individuals with the knowledge and resources to manage chronic conditions, facilitating access to critical healthcare services, or fostering cultural competence among healthcare providers, we take a multifaceted approach. This includes not only direct services but also advocacy and public policy efforts to create a more equitable healthcare system.

This annual report offers a glimpse into the year's achievements, highlighting our diverse programs, impactful partnerships, and unwavering dedication to building bridges and building health. As you delve deeper, I am confident you will share in the joy of seeing the tangible difference we are making together.

On behalf of the entire GRAAHI team, we express our sincere gratitude for your continued partnership and support. **Together, we will build a healthier and more equitable future for generations to come.**

*Vanessa*



# OUR MISSION

---

To eradicate health disparities for African Americans by influencing health policy and practice through community engagement, advocacy, research, and education,

## OUR VISION

---

To ensure that all West Michigan residents will have optimal health care and benefit from health systems without race being an impediment.



# THE DATA

## Health Disparities in Kent County, Michigan: A Condensed Look

Black residents in Kent County face significant health disparities compared to white residents. This includes higher rates of diabetes, obesity, infant mortality, prostate cancer, and hypertension. Lack of access to affordable care, systemic inequities, and lack of healthy food options in low-income neighborhoods contribute to these disparities.

### Key Statistics:

- Diabetes: 15.1% of Black residents vs. 10% of white residents.
- Obesity: 41.6% of Black residents vs. 28.5% of white residents.
- Infant mortality: 13.8 per 1,000 births for Black residents vs. 4.8 for white residents.
- Black men were nearly 2.5 times more likely to die from prostate cancer than White men in Kent County.
- African Americans have the highest prevalence of hypertension- 49%, compared to 38% White; and 28% Hispanic

### Addressing the Issue:

- Improve access to affordable care in communities of color.
- Increase local, state, and federal support for healthcare equity initiatives.
- Support initiatives to diversify the healthcare workforce.
- Address social determinants of health like poverty, food insecurity, and lack of transportation.
- Monitor and document efforts to track progress, identify best practices, and address systemic barriers and inequities

### The Call to Action:

Collective action from policymakers, healthcare systems, insurance companies, and community organizations is crucial to eliminate health disparities and ensure equal access to quality care for all residents of Kent County.





# COMMUNITY



## Empowering Community through Education and Wellness

- Provided 10 health and wellness cohorts on chronic diseases, serving over 150 participants
- Hosted eight blood drives, yielding 168 donors, saving 672 lives
- In partnership with Corewell and Trinity Health, hosted 8 mammogram screenings, serving 120 women
- Received \$ 1 million in grant funding from the Kent County ARPA funds.
- Launched a comprehensive sickle cell initiative, consisting of extensive research, surveys, focus groups, community engagement, resource development on culturally relevant nutrition and exercise to mitigate acute painful sickle cell episodes and more.

[Click here to learn more](#)

## Signature Event

The 2023 **Rhythm Run & Health Fair**, held each August, marked the 15th year of this annual event. This free and fun-filled community gathering brought hundreds of neighbors together at MLK Park. Participants enjoyed a walk/run, health screenings, fitness demonstrations, music, food, and family activities, fostering a sense of community and promoting healthy lifestyles.



## IMPACT



More than 300  
Program  
Participants



More than 670  
Lives Saved



More than 500  
Event Attendees

# ADVOCACY



Summit keynote speaker, legendary **Xernona Clayton**, the 93-year-old activist who coordinated advocacy efforts and activities that led to the desegregation of hospitals in Atlanta, GA, and throughout the nation and continues to be an advocate for social justice.

## Fostering Collaboration: The Health Disparities Summit and Alliance

Bridging the gap between different sectors is vital for achieving lasting change. In 2023, we convened the Health Disparities Transformation Summit, fostering collaboration among community leaders, health providers, educators, students, government officials, partners, and supporters.

Additionally, we established the Health Disparities Alliance, a multidisciplinary group of healthcare leaders, educators, researchers, epidemiologists, and quality improvement experts. This Alliance works diligently to address health disparities and improve health outcomes for Black residents in four key areas: Infant/Maternal Health, Chronic Diseases, Sickle Cell, and Mental Health.

[Click here to learn more](#)

## Signature Event

### Health Disparities Transformational Summit: A Catalyst for Change

The inaugural GRAAHI Health Disparities Transformational Summit, held in October 2023, was a resounding success. Over 300 attendees gathered to learn from renowned experts about the physical, mental, and economic cost of health disparities and solutions to make a meaningful difference.



## IMPACT

5



More than 300  
Summit Attendees



Health Task Force  
with 50 Members



Outreach to  
Legislators &  
Policymakers



# RESEARCH

## Advancing Health Equity Through Research

GRAAHI's unwavering commitment to health equity extends to the realm of research. We conduct data-driven studies that illuminate the scope of health disparities affecting the African American community in Kent County. Our research serves a multifold purpose:

**Identifying Disparities:** We gather and analyze data to pinpoint specific areas where health outcomes differ most starkly between Black residents and other racial/ethnic groups. This data serves as a crucial foundation for advocacy efforts and program development.

**Empowering the Community:** We translate our research findings into clear and accessible language for community members. This empowers residents to advocate for themselves and their families, fostering a sense of ownership over their health.

### Examples of GRAAHI's Research Initiatives in 2023:

**Health Disparities in Kent County Persist:** This ongoing research initiative tracks and analyzes data on key health indicators for different racial/ethnic groups in Kent County.

**Exploring Factors and Environments that Shape Health Inequities for Black Children:** This research delves deeper into the specific factors that contribute to health disparities among African American youth.

**The Impact of Social Determinants of Health on Health Disparities:** Social determinants, such as access to education, healthy food, and safe housing, significantly impact health outcomes. Our research explores the specific ways in which these determinants contribute to health disparities in Kent County.

[Click here to learn more](#)

*Advancing Equity with Data*

**The Health Equity Index,** GRAAHI's signature initiative, remains a cornerstone of our efforts to understand and address health disparities in Grand Rapids. This comprehensive data resource serves as a vital tool for identifying disparities, informing action, and educating the community.

LEARN MORE ABOUT

**Data and solutions to improve the health of West Michigan residents**

[View Data](#)

# IMPACT

6



**Provider Listing with 300+ local providers of color**



**20+ Health Topics & Resources**



**10+ Research Articles & Briefs**



# EDUCATION

## Building a Diverse Healthcare Workforce: Pathways to Healthcare Careers

Utilizing a "My Pace" framework, this comprehensive initiative empowers African Americans and underrepresented populations to pursue and excel in healthcare careers.

"My Pace" consists of four tracks providing age-appropriate programming, services, support, and resources, including:

- **Young Pacesetters** - summer program for 3rd-7th graders
- **Pacesetters** - 8th- 12th graders
- **Legacy Pacesetters** - Postsecondary participants who also serve as interns and mentors
- **Adult Learners** - transitioning adults seeking a new career in healthcare

- **Early Exposure:** We introduce 3rd-7th graders to a summer healthcare enrichment program to introduce them to the field of science and healthcare. We provide extensive exposure opportunities to 8th-12th graders on the diverse career paths available in healthcare through interactive workshops, field trips, and mentorship.
- **Academic Support:** PHC provides academic coaching and resources to help students navigate the challenges of pursuing healthcare careers. This includes guidance on admissions applications, financial aid, study skills, and test preparation.
- **Scholarships and Financial Assistance:** We understand the financial hurdles many students face. PHC offers scholarships and financial assistance to remove these barriers and empower students to focus on their studies.
- **Mentorship and Networking:** Building strong connections is crucial. PHC pairs students with mentors – healthcare professionals who provide guidance, support, and career insights.
- **Professional Development:** students are provided opportunities to both attend and present at forums, summits, workshops, and conferences to equip them with the exposure, skills, knowledge, and tools necessary to thrive and become leaders in their chosen healthcare career.

[Click here to learn more](#)



## IMPACT



Serving more than  
100 Students



More than 9  
Academic Partners



More than 6  
Healthcare System  
Partners

# 2023

## OUR TEAM,

### STAFF

**Vanessa Greene**

Chief Executive Officer

**Te'Asia Martin**

Director of Education & Access to Healthcare Careers

**Ashlie Jones**

Health Initiatives and Community Engagement Manager

**Dr. Vicki-Lynn Holmes**

Grants & Consulting

**Miguel Gonzales**

Program Manager

**Sharra Poncil**

Finance and HR Manager

**Karla Smith**

HR Assistant/Executive Administrative

**Kalon Shackelford**

Community Health Navigator

**Calvin Nguyen**

Community Health Navigator

**Virginia Walton**

Community Health Navigator

**Barbara Lash**

Marketing and Communications

### BOARD

**Paul Doyle**

*Board Co-Chairperson, Founding Member, and Legacy Award Recipient* | Founder & CEO, Inclusive Performance Strategies

**Dr. Darla Bishop**

*Board Co-Chairperson* | Manager, Mktg & Comm. Health Programs, AmeriHealth

**Dr. Khan Nedd, MD**

*Founding Board Member, Medical Director & Legacy Award Recipient* | Founder & CEO, Infusion Associates

**Rochelle Fuller**

Senior Financial Analyst, Nestlé

**Dr. Phillip Guajardo, MD**

Outpatient Psychiatrist, Holland Hospital

**Mia Gutridge**

Human Resources Manager, Grand Rapids Housing Commission

**Dr. Tiffany Letts, MD**

Pediatrics, University of Michigan Health

**Dr. Fatma Mili**

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Grand Valley State University

**Laura Moody, RN**

Health Equity Award Recipient | Retired Faculty, Grand Rapids Community College

**Eddie Rucker**

Consultant

**Misti Stanton**

Vice President, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer  
Mercantile Bank

# 2023

## OUR ADVISORS

**Teresa Payne - Co-Chair**

Deputy Administrative Health Officer, Kent County Health Department

**Tonja Moyer- Co-Chair**

Director of Performance Improvement, Metro Health University of Michigan Health Metro Health Hospital

**Cassonya Carter**

Sr. Academic Advisor, Grand Valley State University, Kirkhof College of Nursing

**Kenyatta Hill**

Principal of the University Preparatory Academy Grand Rapids Public Schools

**Dr. Peter Knoester**

Anesthesiologist, Anesthesia Practice Consultants

**Ashley René Lee**

Vice President, Strategic Communications, Grand Rapids Community Foundation

**Dr. Lisa Lowery**

Section Chief Adolescent/Young Adult Medicine, Spectrum Health and Assistant Dean of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, MSU College of Human Medicine

**Kareem Scales**

Manager of Innovation & Technology, Greater Grand Rapids NAACP

**Vernella Shackelford**

Retiree, State of Michigan Corrections

## 2023 FINANCIAL HEALTH

### Income

Grants	\$1,122,858
Underwritings, Sponsorships, Contractual Revenues	\$315,723
Donations	\$160,649
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,599,232</b>

### Expenses

Salaries and Benefits	\$725,686
Programs, Services, Events	\$413,409
Supplies & Equipment	\$28,994
General Business/ Operations	\$89,938
Stipends/Scholarships	\$100,953
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,358,980</b>



# PARTNERS

At GRAAHI, we firmly believe that **achieving health equity requires a collaborative effort**. We are deeply grateful for the partnerships we've built with a diverse range of institutions and organizations across Grand Rapids. These partnerships allow us to share resources, expertise, and perspectives, ultimately amplifying our impact and driving meaningful change toward a healthier community for all.

## CORPORATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS

W.K. Kellogg Foundation  
Grand Rapids Community Foundation  
The David and Carol VanAndel Family Foundation  
WEGE Foundation  
Meijer Corporation  
Steelcase Foundation  
Perrigo  
Mercantile Bank  
Lake Michigan Credit Union  
Genentech  
TEVA

## HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Kent County Health Department  
Corewell Health  
Trinity Health  
University of Michigan West  
Cherry Health  
Exalta Health  
Catherine's Health  
Grand Rapids Black Nurses Association  
Our Mental Health Collective  
Network 180  
Arbor Circle  
National Kidney Foundation | Grand Rapids Chapter

## GREEK ORGANIZATIONS

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.  
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.  
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.  
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.  
Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.  
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.  
Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.

## EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Grand Valley State University  
Ferris State University  
Michigan State University  
Grand Rapids Community College  
Davenport University  
Calvin University  
Grand Rapids Public Schools  
Kentwood Public Schools

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

NAACP  
Asher Legacy Group  
Baxter Community Center  
Hispanic Center of West Michigan  
Disability Advocates  
Glimpse of Africa  
Kids Food Basket  
Urban League  
Noble Strong Training LLC  
Hero's Corner  
The Salvation Army KrOC Center  
West Michigan Asian American Association  
West Michigan YWCA  
LGBTQ+ Healthcare Consortium

## CHURCHES

Brown Hutcherson Ministries  
Lifequest Ministries  
First Community AME Church  
Pilgrim Rest Missionary Baptist Church  
Resurrection Fellowship Church  
From the Heart Church  
New Hope Baptist Church  
Messiah Missionary Baptist Church  
Bethel Empowerment Center  
Renaissance Church of God in Christ

**Walk with us on our mission to achieve Health Equity.**

**Your donations empower us to expand access to education, promote healthy lifestyles, and advocate for policies that uplift and empower our community.**



**[graahi.com/donate](https://graahi.com/donate)**



500 Lafayette Avenue, NE Grand Rapids, MI 49503 616-331-5831 [info@graahi.org](mailto:info@graahi.org)

[graahi.org](https://www.graahi.org)