



# REACHING TOGETHER

RACIAL ETHNIC APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY HEALTH (REACH)  
GRANT NEWSLETTER

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## A Message from the REACH Program Director

Hello and Happy Fall from the REACH Team! It is hard to believe that Year 3 of our health equity work under the REACH grant has come to an end. This has been an interesting year of pivoting, innovative thinking, and partnership

building! Much of our planned work for Year 3 was adjusted to account for the many challenges due to the pandemic. Despite challenges, our team continued to make great strides in our strategy work, while also incorporating efforts to increase vaccine confidence in the community. Currently, we are in preparation to begin Year 4 activities and look forward to the continuation of our impactful work. We are excited to develop new partnerships and see the smiling faces of our community, as we work to expand the reach of essential programs and resources. Be sure to check out some of the great work we have accomplished over this past year on our website and social media pages!

In Health,

Ashley Carmenia

## Calling All Community Partners!

Earlier, this spring, we began a partnership with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) to develop and conduct a Community Needs Assessment to address barriers in vaccine uptake. With those findings, we plan to equip/train influential messengers, develop programs, and create organic content for digital campaigns. To date, key informant interviews have been completed and we are in the process of wrapping up focus groups. The next steps in our Needs Assessment trajectory include the dissemination of our survey tool. We recognize that it will take great effort and active participation from our community partners to ensure that the survey reaches the community. **We will need your help!** Please be on the lookout for the survey link, as we would appreciate your participation in taking the survey and distributing it amongst your network! These findings will not only benefit us, but will also benefit all of our partners as we work to combat COVID-19.





# Exploring Greenways with the Community

One of the best ways to add more physical activity into our daily lives, is to build more movement into our everyday behaviors. Sustain Charlotte partners with RAO to help communities improve active routes to destinations, making it easy, safe, and inviting for people to walk or ride bicycles for fun or recreation. Sustain Charlotte recently hosted a guided walk on the Irwin Creek Greenway to introduce residents in the area to this beautiful urban trail that connects several neighborhoods, a school, and community activity centers. West Boulevard Neighborhood Coalition Board President, Rickey Hall, greeted participants with a warm welcome and shared his perspective on why the greenway is so vital to the community.

-Sustain Charlotte

## Over the River and Through the Woods to Food Equity We Go!

Year 3 was an opportunity to resume pre-pandemic activities in nutrition. The seven day specialty food box program piloted by Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays is officially off the ground! Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays, in partnership with Novant and Atrium Health, are now deploying two mobile food pharmacies to six different locations in Mecklenburg County; delivering 150 specialty food boxes per week. They are also opening their first brick and mortar location, Sanger, which will be housed in Ascension Lutheran Church, which will provide 96% of specialty boxes. This location is especially advantageous, as it is across the street from Atrium Health Carolinas Medical Center who will be administering patient referrals. This close proximity will create a one stop shop for healthcare and resources for those in need. For year 4, we look forward to collaborating with our new partners of Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and North Carolina State University (NCSU), as well as our continued partners.



### Fond Farewells and New Introductions

During the latter half of Year 3, we've had several staff changes on our team. We wish a fond farewell to Keila Marlin and Elliott Royal, as they excel in their new roles outside the

organization. Madeline Niederman has been promoted to replace Keila as our new Community Clinical Linkages Program Coordinator. Please join us in welcoming our new staff members to the REACH team!

### **Welcome Aniessa Rollinson, MS – Nutrition Program Coordinator**

Aniessa earned her Bachelors of Arts in Public Health from the University of South Carolina, with a minor in Nutrition and Food Systems. Soon after, she received her Master of Science from Winthrop University in Human Nutrition. In May 2021, she also received a certificate of completion from Meredith College Dietetic Internship. Aniessa hopes to expand her knowledge of community initiatives, policies, and resources to help bridge the gap between food equity and health.

### **Welcome Austin Nichols – Program Assistant**

Austin studied nutrition and dietetics at the University of North Florida and hopes to begin a master's program in Public Health in the near future. He has spent the last couple of years working as a nutrition educator, helping teach low income populations the benefits of eating healthy. While working at RAO, Austin hopes to help the team reach and surpass its goals in helping Charlotteans live healthier lives.

### **App Chat**

This month we have unveiled the new calendar feature! This feature allows us to publish a list of events in the area for the public to attend. Events may include COVID-19 vaccination sites, farmers markets, and other health and wellness events. Be sure to check the app frequently for events happening near you!

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## First Annual CARE Village

Just a few weeks ago, we hosted our **first** CARE Village! Our team and community partners worked hard to provide a safe and collective space for members of the community to access various resources, dedicated to health and wellness in Mecklenburg and Cabarrus County. Resources included COVID-19 vaccines, seasonal flu education and appointment scheduling, rapid HIV, Syphilis, and Hepatitis C testing, wellness screenings, a facilitated health chat with Dr. Marc Johnson from Atrium Health, and healthy cooking demonstrations with Chef Cordell! See more pictures, [here](#).

We cannot thank community partners and local organizations enough for volunteering their time and participation. While we hoped for a larger turn out, we were able to have fellowship and learn amongst community organizations. We look forward to planning a bigger and better event next year!

## Continuing Partnerships to Manage Chronic Diseases and COVID-19

For the past year, we have continued partnerships with Amity Medical Group, Premier Pharmacy Wellness Center, and Centralina Area Agency to promote and increase referrals in Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support (DSMES) services among African American adults with type 2 diabetes. Stepping into the new grant year, we will begin partnering with Avita Pharmacy, located onsite at RAO, to continue our efforts to increase referrals in DSMES services. Throughout the year, many unforeseen challenges arose around COVID-19 vaccine safety and effectiveness among the African American community, as well as in clinical settings in the Charlotte Metro region. To address these challenges, we participated in virtual community town hall

meetings, panel discussions, became a COVID-19 vaccination site, and participated and hosted multiple COVID-19 vaccine events. While the grant year comes to an end, we're excited to continue our work with both established and new partners, to continue to build confidence in COVID-19 and flu vaccines within the Charlotte Metro Region.

To find out more information about the REACH Grant, click [here](#).



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