



REACHING TOGETHER

RACIAL ETHNIC APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY HEALTH (REACH)
GRANT NEWSLETTER

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A Message from the REACH Program Director

Greetings from the REACH team at RAO Community Health! We hope that everyone is doing well and getting ready to enjoy an amazing summer. Currently, we are in the middle of the year four grant cycle, continuing to make

connections and partnerships with other community based organizations aiding us in our work towards reducing racial and ethnic health disparities. Since our last update, we have begun implementation on various projects such as our Farm to Early Childhood Education (ECE) project with two daycares in West Charlotte; Daddy BEANS, a peer-to-peer breastfeeding support group for African American fathers; and health and wellness screenings and referrals for Lakeview Neighborhood via the United Way Neighborhood Initiatives grant funding. While we are making great strides, there is still much work to do! We are excited to share with you some updates on our current activities and look forward to completing year four strong!

In Health,

Ashley Carmenia

Discussing COVID-19 & Flu in the Black Community

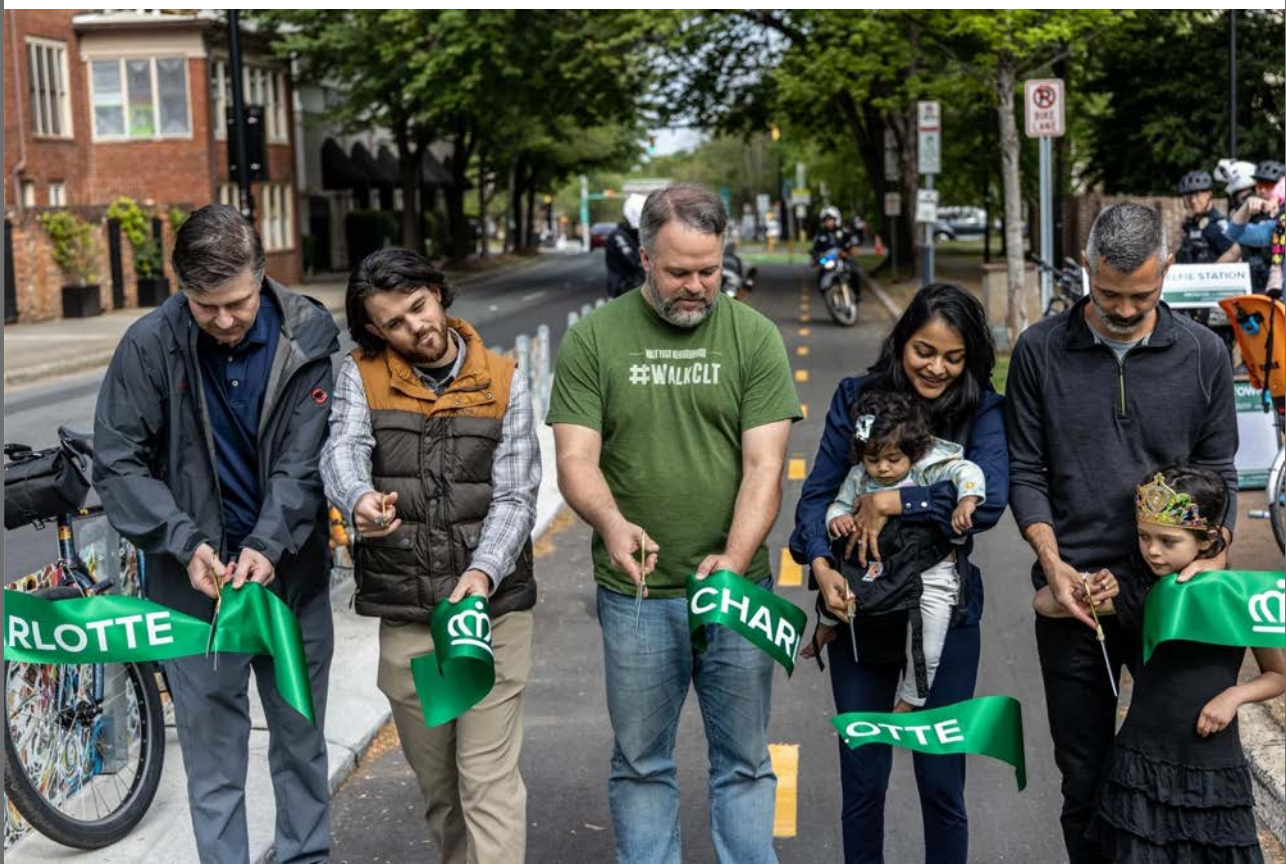


Watch full discussion above.

To reflect on the past 2 years of the coronavirus pandemic, we filmed an open panel discussion with leaders and influential men in the Charlotte community to discuss COVID-19 and the effects in the Black/African American community.

To evaluate the impact of the video, we created a short survey to capture viewers' responses to the discussion. Please take a few minutes to share your feedback.

[Share feedback](#)



Uptown Bike Lanes are Now Open!

Picture: Sustain Charlotte's Executive Director, Shannon Binns (far right) joined City leaders in the ribbon-cutting of the new protected bike lanes in Uptown Charlotte.

The new Uptown CycleLink protected bike lane spanning all of uptown Charlotte that Sustain Charlotte and supportive residents asked the City to build five years ago is now officially open! The opening of the bike lanes represents a small, but significant step in unlocking a larger network of protected bike lanes that are convenient safe, inexpensive, healthy and fun for people of all ages and ability levels. Sustain Charlotte is working with residents throughout Charlotte to ensure that safe routes for walking and biking will be available in every neighborhood.

When residents are able to choose walking or biking instead of driving for short distances, they can enjoy many benefits both individually and collectively. The most obvious benefit is that walking and bike riding directly supports our physical and mental health. Less driving results in fewer vehicle emissions that contribute to air pollution, which disproportionately affects children and older adults with pre-existing health conditions. As gas prices skyrocket, active forms of transportation can help residents save money to spend on other needs. Traveling in active ways helps neighbors to meet each other on a "human scale" outside of a car, which supports community connectivity and helps neighbors meet each other in natural encounters on a regular basis.

[Learn More About Sustain Charlotte](#)

Doulas and Daddies

Last year, RAO launched our pilot Doula Impact program in partnership with Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU) and Novant Health Presbyterian Medical Center. The goal of the program is to create a strategic program model to increase the number of Black/African American doulas in Mecklenburg and Cabarrus County.

We are proud to announce that a *second* cohort of doula students completed their training, and we are currently forming the third cohort that is set to begin later this month! We are pleased with the positive reception we have received in response to this program from both current and aspiring doulas. To complement this program, we are in the process of developing a new maternal health website that will feature educational content on breastfeeding and lactation, maternal and infant nutrition, and additional features for doulas and lactation consultants. The launch date for the website will be released *very soon*!

We are also thrilled to announce that our new pilot program, "Daddy B.E.A.N.S." with Q.C. Cocoa Beans, is currently underway! Daddy B.E.A.N.S. is a breastfeeding and parenting peer-to-peer support and mentoring program for Black/African American fathers. Recruitment for new and expecting fathers throughout Mecklenburg and Cabarrus County are still open, and will be open throughout the summer. For more information, please contact Ashley Carmenia, acarmenia@raoassist.org.

Team Transitions

Since the new year, we've had several employee transitions on the REACH team. Candace Wasabi (Butler) - Data Analyst and Madeline Niederman - Community Clinical Linkages Coordinator have both accepted new positions outside of the organization. We wish them the best in their new endeavors! Austin Nichols has been promoted from Program Assistant to replace Madeline's position as our new Community Clinical Linkages Coordinator.



App Chat

This month the C.A.R.E App is scheduled to rollout several updates! New features include a mental health tab with resources, a list of local vaccination events, and SNAP resources available under the Nutrition tab. Using the app's integrated navigation system makes it easy to find the nearest resources near you. Be sure to update the app at the end of June to check out the newest features!



Building Gardens for the Future

Great things are growing in RAO Nutrition! Under the Association of State Public Health Nutritionist (ASPHN) CABBAGE grant, we partnered with Bright Future Early Learning Center to create two on-site produce gardens to be utilized by facility, students, and guardians. On May 12th, guardians attended a family garden night to plant the first crops, discuss cultural experiences in gardening, and learn valuable gardening tips to try at home. A second family gardening event is scheduled for mid-June. In addition to gardening training, Bright Future Early Learning Center's facility will be participating in "Color Me Healthy Training", a classroom toolkit that provides teachers with tools to encourage students to learn about healthy eating and physical activity.

Extending a Hand Through Referrals

To ensure our patient population is receiving the best care at RAO, we are in the process of developing a health referral system. This system will allow RAO staff to refer our patients, who may need further assistance outside our scope, to other organizational partners. These organizations include food pantries, housing offices, chronic disease management centers, behavioral health facilities, job assistance programs, and more. Offering this service will provide holistic care options to increase the overall health of our patients, while also expanding the use of health professionals in Mecklenburg County and surrounding areas. We look forward to launching our referral system in September 2022.

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



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