This issue of The Alley Newspaper is largely dedicated to reflecting the voices and the activities over the past year of the Backyard Initiative. Each of 12 CHAT teams have contributed their own stories and photos.

At the center of all of our work is our Definition of Health

Health is a state of physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. It is not only the absence of infirmity and disease.

Health is the state of balance, harmony, and connectedness within and between many systems – the body, the family, the community, the environment, and culture. It cannot be seen only in an individual context.

Health is an active state of being; people must be active participants to be healthy. It cannot be achieved by being passive.

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**KEY:**
- Backyard Initiative = BYI
- Cultural Wellness Center = CWC
- CHAT= Community Health Action Team

Those articles with a Sunflower denote an official activity within the BYI.

ENJOY!
Looking for Affordable Health Care Coverage?

Portico Healthnet Can Help!

Thanks to support from the Allina Backyard Initiative, Portico Healthnet can:
- Help you apply for Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare
- Enroll you in Portico’s Primary and Preventive Health Care Program if eligible

Call us at 651-489-CARE for more information

Access to Health Care Services – Portico Healthnet

BY DEBRA HOLMGREN, PRESIDENT, PORTICO HEALTHNET

Portico Healthnet’s mission is to increase the number of people in Minnesota with health care coverage. Toward that goal, Portico offers help with applications for government health programs like Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare, and offers an alternative Coverage program to eligible residents in the Twin Cities. Portico is a community-based nonprofit agency. Portico offers these services through generous contributions from hospital and health plan partners, as well as other funding sources in the community.

Allina and Portico have partnered to provide Portico’s health care coverage program to residents of the east metro area since 1998. Beginning in 2009, Allina increased their support so that Portico was able to offer the Coverage program to residents of the Backyard.

The Coverage program is not insurance, but it does offer payment for primary and preventive medical services, as well as payment for outpatient mental health services and prescription medications. Eligibility is based on level of income as well as living in the Backyard area. The Coverage program has a small monthly participation fee which is also based on income, usually about $25 per month per household. Once enrolled in the program, Portico participants choose a primary care clinic where they can receive all of their non-emergency services, including immunizations, health screenings like mammograms, and appointments for any health issues, including illnesses like diabetes, asthma, and high blood pressure. Nearly 300 people from the Backyard have been enrolled in Portico’s Coverage program since the Backyard Initiative began. Please call Portico at 651-489-CARE (2273) for more information.

Part of Allina’s support to Portico is used to provide services of a Community Health Worker, Eva, who is available to residents of the Backyard area. She spends four days a week at the Family Resource Center located at Andersen School and will help anyone who is interested in applying for Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare. Eva knows a lot about these government programs, and will sit down with you to see if you are eligible, and then help you fill out an application and help you through the whole application process with Hennepin County or the state. Eva can also provide information about low cost medical and dental services, and about other services, as well as payment for out-of-pocket expenses.
An assessment team was formed to create a picture of the current state of health and well-being of the residents in the Backyard, engage a broad network of residents in the process, and inform and plan the next steps for The Backyard Initiative. 

The assessment team included community residents, staff from Allina, the CWC, and Wilder Research. Through 21 Listening Circles and 677 face-to-face, walk-around interviews, three themes began to emerge:

**The Power of Interconnectedness.** Each dimension of health named in the community definition of health is dependent on the others; one dimension of health cannot be understood or addressed in isolation.

**The Power of Relationships.** Relationships impact the determinants of health. People know that they need exercise and healthy food, plenty of rest and occasional check-ups to be healthy, but their relationships are crucial to whether they consistently act on that knowledge. Developing healthy relationships between community residents and health care providers is a powerful factor for improving community health outcomes.

**“It’s meant a lot of work but it’s not like labor. We are building and learning and in some cases challenging our- selves beyond our limits and I think that’s the kind of work the entire society needs to be doing so I thank you for that.” “Being in the Backyard Initiative has meant taking my first steps as a community organizer. A lot of networking opportunities...have happened for the first time for me here.” “I made some decisions from reflecting on health in community, I made the decision to be less busy so I can be more available to support my community like the Anchor Families do. You can’t help someone who’s in crisis if you’re always busy.”**
Stories from Our BackYard

By Jeanie Moore

My name is Jeanie and I hate to exercise. I am 71 years old and overweight and diabetic. Being a diabetic, of course, puts me at a higher risk for kidney and cardiovascular problems. My mother and father both died of heart-related disease. So did one of my grandmothers and one of my grandfathers.

But I let myself get to the age of being an older being without learning how to take care of myself, even with all those wonderful lessons. Well, I know how in my head but not my gut. Then a series of good-luck events happened to me. First, I ran into a neighbor, Jake, at a meeting and saw him without a coat on for the first time in months and he’d shrunk! By himself. He had lost 100 pounds. He gave me a ride home and I said what did you do and he explained his diet to me (the eats less—who knew? But he had some very useful information on how to accomplish that) and mentioned his support group. I asked, very casually, if I might go to his support group. Well, he’d see. And he did and I started attending A-POD meetings. And he did and I started attending A-POD meetings. He had family members and friends and a medical provider who certainly wanted to see me lose weight and be healthy and not die. Not yet. But A-PODers are diabetics, many of them older, like me, and they struggle with weight and diet and blood-sugar control just like I do. They knew what to say to me and I was smart enough to listen. They helped me lose fifty pounds.

And Jake and I rode to the meetings together and I couldn’t bring myself to call him and say, “Not this week.” He would say, “Well, okay.” And I would shuffle with guilt.

Running Wolf. I had tried doing exercises at home and I had even tried the Lake Street version of Running Wolf. As for at home, the words “exercise” and “excuse” looked too much alike. On Lake Street, Running Wolf was too daunting. It was too big, too shiny, too much.

Then Running Wolf moved and I was ready. Jake and I started working out at RW two or three times a week and it is perfect for me. Just the right size. Just the right amount of shiny. Just the right amount of weight.

The Alley wants to thank everyone who contributed time, talents, and dollars for making this possible. A special thanks also to Erin Thomsen (What’s Up at Franklin Library), Sara Pfeffer (Crossword Puzzle), Howard McDougal II (Movie Corner), and Peter Mohrman (Raise Your Voice) for having written contributions ready, always, in hopes of having room in this issue. At the “eleventh hour” it reassured that their spaces were needed for this special edition. We thank them for their gracious understanding and encourage their readers to enjoy their return in the August Alley.

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Portico Healthnet: A nonprofit health and human service organization that helps uninsured Minnesotans access affordable health insurance and care.

“The Backyard Initiative is an example of Allina Health’s commitment to improving the health and well-being of the communities we serve. What makes the Backyard Initiative unique is that it is both community-centered and community-driven, which means that people who live in the community and are most impacted by the initiative determine the work that needs to be done.”

Ellie Zuehlke
Director Community Benefit & Engagement • Allina Health

Partner in the Backyard Initiative

Allina Health: The Center for Health Care Research & Innovation researches new care models to transform health and healthcare and seeks collaborative partnerships as it fosters innovative approaches to providing care.

Circle of Healing CHAT

The Circle of Healing Practitioners CHAT is a collaborative of Backyard practitioners which includes complementary healers, elders, representatives from different cultural traditions, conventional health professionals and community care givers. Members of this CHAT come together or practitioners interested in creating a more formalized network of people operating in a Community Care-Giving system around Backyard residents. This will be done by providing a better information and support for healing and reflection on the message of dis-ease. This network serves both the Backyard community receiving care and the healing practitioner community in the Backyard.

The vision behind the Circle of Healing Practitioners CHAT is grounded in cultural health practices and ways of knowing that honor the reciprocal and holistic nature of healing. In order to meet the health needs of the people living in the Backyard, this CHAT aims to empower health practitioners and community members and to connect the community care giving system to the conventional health care system in a more formal and integrative way.

One way the CHAT plans to accomplish the task of establishing a Community Care-Giving system is by holding a series of dialogues about the Integral Framework and its relation to all healing systems. The Integral Framework will serve as a starting point for conversation about how people can practice what they know in a way that is complementary to what other people know. This series of discussions will eventually become part of an official training and certification process for practitioners from various healing modalities and professions who want to adopt a more holistic and community based approach to their practice and so become a part of the care giving system facilitated by this CHAT. The project’s vision is not based in creating a static system but focuses on building a process-oriented model that will continue to evolve and grow. The network will create a model of partnering between health care and community care practitioners.

If you are a health care practitioner and would like to learn more or get involved in the Circle of Healing CHAT, please call the Cultural Wellness Center at 612-721-5745.

Circle of Healing CHAT Members:
Fariba Khalaf, Antonio Apolinario, Akhmiri Sekhr, Janet Dalhem, June Bouye, Kaija Fardousa Yusuf, Farhio Khalif, Atum Azzahir, Berta Ruiz, Peter Molenaar (Raise Your Voice) for having the courage to call me and say, “Not this week.”

Families do. You can’t help but connect the community care and seek collaborative partnerships as you’re always busy.”

Stories from Our BackYard

“...Connecting in the Backyard...Connecting in the Backyard...Connecting in the Backyard...”

The Alley Newspaper • July 2012

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To connect the community care givers and community members and grounded in cultural health practices, this network is complementary to what other people know. This series of discussions will eventually become part of an official training and certification process for practitioners from various healing modalities and professions who want to adopt a more holistic and community based approach to their practice and so become a part of the care giving system facilitated by this CHAT. The project’s vision is not based in creating a static system but focuses on building a process-oriented model that will continue to evolve and grow. The network will create a model of partnering between health care and community care practitioners.
A-Pod CHAT: Advancing Opportunities through a Partnership of Diabetics

Background:

When A Partnership Of Diabetics (A-POD) was first designed and implemented, our goal was simply to create a community-based program for advancing the skills of persons with diabetes to become better self-managers of their condition. We started with POD-Tuesdays, a daylong workshop to introduce our strategies to participants and then sponsored weekly Meet-ups where participants could share the “milestones” on their journey toward health, wellness, and relationships.

Methods:

In late 2011, A-POD began a Somali women’s initiative that meets each Tuesday afternoon. This group has also been demonstrating considerable improvements in their numbers despite the fact that none speak English or read or write any language. Using only oral methods of communicating has provided a sufficient basis for improvement.

This suggests that key ingredients of chronic disease management should involve face-to-face sessions that give each person time to listen, respond, act, and review one’s personal strategies.

The fact that the English lessons in each Meet-up have surely promoted added interest and enabled joyful participation while maintaining weekly attendance.

On the last day of May, A-POD took over the operation of a month-long breakfast that had operated for the past eight years by the Native American Community Clinic (NACC). With running Wolf Fitness Center now housed at the Phillips Community Center (2232 Eleventh Avenue South, Minneapolis) along with A-POD’s offices, it was a reasonable idea to move the monthly healthy-eating diabetic breakfast from the Minneapolis American Indian Center to the Phillips Community Center’s dining room. The partnership between those two houses, a multilingual translation system to enable all people to come together regardless of language, but also to develop an extensive effort within each cultural group as well.

A-POD is very grateful for initial and secondary funding by Allina Health for the past two years. This year, A-POD was also funded in part by Novo Nordisk, a Danish manufacturer of insulin. Pending further funding, A-POD will expand to encompass additional opportunities as they arise and develop effective activities to meet the challenges that diabetics present.

CHAT Team Members:

Robert and Sharan Albee, Lannya Baker, Dick Brooks, Jennifer Frisbee, Diane Greve, Tim Hopkins, Jake Jacobson, Doug Linson, Anita Martinez, Jeanne Moore, Pamela North, Pat Paul, Mary Rajatgan, Margaret Syle, Bob Rick, Deb Johnson Tate, Bridget Tierney, Shirley Hoyt, Patricia Van Ert, and Rita Johnson.

The fact that diabetics require.

Community Engagement & Leadership

Community Engagement in the BYI is lead and facilitated by the Cultural Wellness Center. The community infrastructure for the initiative consists of three “pillars”:

• Citizen Health Action Teams (CHATs)
• Community Commission on Health
• Community Resource Body

CHATs are formed by residents to design, implement and evaluate prevention and wellness projects. Each project targeted barriers to health, weaknesses in achieving health, and followed the recommendations outlined in the 2009 community health needs Assessment. In 2011, the CHATs held 173 activities in which 1285 residents participated. The following key themes were identified and implemented across the CHATs:

• Strategies to improve social support within their identified communities;
• Strategies to increase social cohesion within the Backyard community;
• Strategies based on their knowledge of problems and solutions and based on their skill set;
• Inventory of assets based on their social and cultural capital.

The Community Commission on Health is a 35 member body, primarily made up of residents, that serves as the leadership body for the Backyard Community. The Commission is accountable for realizing the community’s vision on health and for keeping an ear to the pulse of the community.

In 2011, the Commission approved five new CHAT projects, de-leveled financial principles and practices, and implemented processes for evaluation of CHAT prevention and wellness projects.

Adopted Cultural Wellness Center Leadership Development Curriculum in which 45 community members were trained in the CWC model of engaged community leadership which was adopted by the BYI and are now functioning as leaders.

Community Resource Board is an advisory group that interfaces with the Commission and residents to increase the scale of the work of the BYI. Mutually sharing resources including knowledge, research, and relationships, and social, cultural, and financial capital, the CRB strengthens the Backyard Initiative’s connections to local and national leaders in healthcare and community development. Members include Twin Cities LISC, BlueCross/BlueShield Foundation of Minnesota HealthPartners, NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center, and Wilder Foundation. The group was launched in 2011 and met four times.

Highlights of 2011: Strategies & Activities

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Meet-ups are more than a “support group” because we also track participant’s numbers to demonstrate that with the additional focus on diabetes learning and new and better tools to manage our conditions, we improved! In a third party evaluation conducted by a grad student from the University of Minnesota’s School of Public Health we found that more than 90% of our participants have improved, using the same statewide criteria used by all Minnesota clinics and hospitals.

A-POD has surpassed any other institution’s success rate by more than 25 percentage points, yet running several dia-chronic clinics and hospitals.

A-POD’s policies require.

Calling all African and African-American women! And all men! Come and join Rose in her COOKING UP COMMUNITY Call the Cultural Wellness Center 612-722-5745 or email rose.gbadamosi@aol.com

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A-POD’s policies require.
Connecting in the Backyard...Connecting in the Backyard...Connecting in the Backyard...

The Alley Newspaper • July 2012

Tales from Pioneers & Soldiers Cemetery
SUE HUNTER WEIR 93* in a Series

To me the benefit has been first, meeting all you and hav- ing my network expanded. Second, the information and resources that I’m able to share with people in my work and neighborhood.”

“Having support about the way I think about community and having my community expanded...has brought pros- perity to my family—not just in having more people around us but also financially.”

I made some decisions from reflecting on health in com- munity. I made the decision to be less busy so I can be more available to support my family like the Anchor Families do. You can’t help someone else if you’re always busy.”

You Matter

A cemetery seems like an odd place to be talking about building a healthy community since it’s where most of us will wind up when our health ultimately and inevitably fails. But cemeteries are about more than our physical selves, they are about the legacy that we leave to others and that others have given to us. They are about stories; they are about community.

Nation Builders.

Minneapolis Pioneers and Soldiers Memorial Cemetery is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is a place of national, not just local, sig- nificance. Part of the designation recognizes the cemetery’s archi- tectural features, but another part, perhaps the most important part, recognizes the role that the people who are buried here in the Phillips community played in both our local and national history. They are not people whose names are household words, yet they are rec- ognized as nation builders.

“...who is worth remember- ing and who is not...”

Howard Mansfield (“In the Memory House”) asks important questions about which people we tell us about ourselves and our histori- cal record is distorted by the fact that surviving artifacts are unrepresentative (HM).

We have saved mansions but not the homes of working class people. Everyone has a story and those stories can, and should be pre- served.

So, what does this Cemetery tell us about ourselves and our shared history? For one thing, it tells us that our community has always been diverse. The cem- etery’s original owners belonged to the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis, which has close ties to the anti-slav- ery movement. Approximately 170 men buried in the cemetery, both African-American and white, fought to end slavery.

It tells the sto- ries, some heart- breaking and some triumphant, of thousands of immigrants who came here to escape poverty and political oppression to build a bet- ter future for their children. Many of these immigrants were the peo- ple who worked, and all too often died, in flourmills, lumber mills and railroad yards.

It tells the story of thousands of children who died from drink- ing or coming into contact with contaminated water or who died because vaccinations for communicable diseases didn’t exist.

Ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

It tells the story of ordinary people doing extraordinary things: mothers who died rescuing their children from fires and friends who died trying to save their drowning friends. It tells the story of neighbors helping neighbors in times of crisis and need.

It tells why one community and its people represent a nation.

And our stories matter.

In the Backyard Initiative’s 2009 Listening Circles Report, the need for a sense of commu- nity and interconnectedness and the power of relationships were recurring themes. It’s important for us to know that we and our stories matter. We can choose who we want to remember and why and make them part of our commu- nity’s history. Tell your stories. Write them down. Pass them on.

Make your story part of our his- tory and make our community a force to be reckoned with. It’s the healthy thing to do.

Evaluation & Learning

Understanding and sharing our results is a critical component of the BYI. The BYI created an evaluation team that con- sists of contracted evaluators, the CWC and an evaluation community fellow team to provide objective evaluation for the Backyard’s resident engagement activi- ties. The Evaluation team worked with the Community’s Commission to develop a strength-based approach to monitoring and evaluating CHAT health pro- motion projects. The majority of the work has focused on helping residents develop their own tools for collecting information and understanding their work. A year-end tem- plate was developed in conjunction with the Assessment Team and Commission to allow CHATs to report their progress and challenges.

The evaluation team also completed a review of several hundred articles in the fields of community building and mobi- lization for health promotion. The review demonstrated that the BYI is unique among national health improvement projects because in the BYI, the needs assessment, planning and action are generated by the community so that the community is the agent, rather than the target of change. The findings of the review and the foundation year activities have led to the development of a very comprehensive and ambitious evaluation plan for 2013 that will assess how well the partnership idea between Allina and the community is working, the progress of empowering residents to build capacity for health promotion, and the impact of the model by creating positive health benefits for residents.

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Minnesota Center for Book Arts
Zenon Dance School

Register through Minnesota Center for Book Arts by calling 612-215-2520 or online at www.mnbookarts.org.

LOCAL STIPEND VOLUNTEER POSITION

Serve as a Local Stipend Volunteer for the Backyard Initiative. Several 15hr/wk positions available.

Contact Cory 651.310.9447

Dakota Language CHAT

The Dakota Language Revitalization CHAT continues to full fill its commitment to the well being of the Dakota peoples through spiritual, cultural, language and educational ways of life that are integral to the Dakota nation.

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were more than seven thousand speakers of the Dakota language located in over 24 different reservations, reserves, homestead settlements in Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada. All of these speakers, who called their homeland MniSota “shining lakes” and what is now called by settler society as the state of Minnesota, were all descendants of the original Dakota who inhabited this area since time immemorial.

The tragic consequences of the Dakota wars of 1862 lead to the Diaspora of the Dakota nation from their original homeland.

Subsequent to the events of 1862, and the creation of the reservation system; the governments of Canada and the United States in-acted policies and laws to, at times, forcibly remove Dakota children from their homes to federal and church run schools called: residential schools (Canada) or boarding schools (U.S.).

Due to the systematic oppression inflicted on the Dakota, many were reluctant to teach their children the Dakota language (in which lies the spiritual foundation of the Dakota ways of life) in fear of reprisal from the Government(s).

As a result the Dakota language was forbidden by strict punishment and even death. By the 1950’s three generations of Dakota peoples had grown up the boarding and residential school system.

One of our most recent activities that will help to revitalize the language and culture of the Dakota people. One of our most recent activities that will help to revitalize the language and culture of the Dakota people.

MOVING TOWARDS FORGIVENESS: Reflections by a Dakota Language CHAT member upon seeing the documentary “Dakota 38”

As a part of the Dakota Language CHAT, we were inclined to show our fellow CHAT members a piece of history that no longer is. Our showing was very powerful as well as emotional for all that were present for the showing of the documentary Dakota “38” plus 2. I especially want to give thanks to the CHAT members who were present to see a piece of history long over due in our daily discussions involving Indigenous peoples everywhere.

Our event became an intro into a realm of forgiveness! The depiction in the movie was intense as well as moving as we saw euro-centric humans as well as Indigenous humans come together in a scene not exactly familiar! Tears were undeniable, a new appreciation began to fill the room as the worldviews and the creation of the reservation was the showing of the documentary “Dakota 38” produced by Spirit Feather Productions. The film grew out of a dream in 2005 by Jim Miller, a spiritual leader and Vietnam Veteran from South Dakota. Jim’s dream is rooted in his people’s nightmare of the largest mass execution ever conducted by the United States government.

Jim and his wife traveled from South Dakota to be present for the film’s viewing at the American Indian Center. Local spiritual leaders were present and a prayer and a traditional song was held that average 5,000 dollars.

The film’s viewing at the American Indian Center. Local spiritual leaders were present and a prayer and a traditional song was held that average 5,000 dollars.

The Dakota Language CHAT is involved in various activities that will help to revitalize the language and culture of the Dakota people. One of our most recent activities that will help to revitalize the language and culture of the Dakota people.

As one of Minnesota’s indigenous languages, Dakota is an important asset to Minnesota and the world’s linguistic resources.

The complexity and unique aspects of the Dakota language provides important worldviews and concepts that can enrich Minnesotans.

With this noted, there is even more pressing need to revitalize the Dakota language. Specifically for the purposes of this project, revitalizing the Dakota language is of the utmost importance to turning around the currently bleak outlook for the achievement of young Native American living in Minneapolis. Reclaiming the Dakota language is a cornerstone for Native American Dakota’s to reconnect to culture, educational achievement and positive self image, which in and of itself, is an important indicator of academic, economic, and full access for self, family and community.

The Dakota Language CHAT is involved in various activities that will help to revitalize the language and culture of the Dakota people. One of our most recent activities that will help to revitalize the language and culture of the Dakota people.

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The one-year memorial for her night in South Dakota back in ’96. He died from exposure a week before he turned 18. My Winyan (Dakota/Dakota for women who walks beside me) and I have been through some rough times. This past Father’s Day marked the one-year memorial for her Mother’s end with her fight with Colon Cancer. Respectfully, I made Father’s Day a day for her. Through it all though, we’ve been blessed!

I’d like to re-thank the “Alley” for offering us this opportunity and Wopida Tanks (big thanks) to anyone who offered their time to read about our event and encourage those who would like more info on the Dakota Language CHAT and how to get involved, feel free to contact the Cultural Wellness Center at 612-721-5745 or ashleylongcrow@yahoo.com.

Under the leadership of Hope Community, the BYI organizational team implemented a plan to research the interests and needs of community organizations in the Backyard area.

Hope Community held one to one interviews and listening circles with 34 organizational leaders representing 31 organizations to provide an update about the BYI and hear their issues. Several key themes emerged:

- Support for the BYI definition of health and its focus on social connectedness as an important strategy to improve health.
- Organizations feel “silo- d” and isolated as immediate demands and inadequately fund making it difficult to take on new projects. Organizations are overwhelmingly interested in continuing to be involved in the work of the BYI if it is productive and action-focused.
- In response to a resident’s request for better understanding of available resources from organizations, the first ever comprehensive inventory of non-profit organizations in the Backyard was completed. The inventory yielded a list of 202 nonprofits within the geographic Backyard and upon further analysis; there is now a database of 125 active organizations in the area that are relevant to improving health. CHAT members and other residents in the Backyard will be able to use the inventory to identify and pursue organizations that may be able to support their work.

“Being a part of people who are really doing things to help strengthen and heal the community… has been a blessing.”

“I work for the City of Minneapolis in the Health Department. I have gained a lot from meeting so many people around this table and seeing the kinds of ideas that come from the CHATs and how they relate to the work we do in the Health Department.”

“Being in the Backyard Initiative has meant taking my first steps as a community organizer. I came to the Backyard Initiative when I was pregnant with my son as a just-taker… A lot of networking opportunities that people are talking about have happened for the first time for me here.”
The OUT in the Backyard CHAT is focusing their work and activities on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (GLBTQ) communities to reduce isolation, create community and foster connections in order to improve the health of individuals in our neighborhoods.

Some of the activities that we have worked on in the last year to put our goals and ideals into action include:

• Worked with the community and a website designer to begin the process of building an informational and interactive website that will provide resources and educational information. It will also be accessible to all outside the GLBTQ community so that we can increase awareness and build connections between our various communities.

• Sponsored several community forums to get information for the website and share resources, which included topics like services for LGBT youth and end of life issues and the need for healthcare directives.

• Sponsored Booth at the annual GLBTQ Pride festival in Loring Park to promote OUT in the Backyard and to recruit community members to the CHAT.

• Community screening/discussion of the documentary Bullyied", a film that tells one student’s ordeal with anti-gay bullying. Bullying is an issue that impacts many different communities, and the film helped generate dialogue among CHATs. This event took place at the Cultural Wellness Center.

• Since obesity, diabetes, heart disease, depression, and stress are big health issues not only for GLBTQ folks but for all residents in the Back Yard, we began a series of exercise classes that would be free and accessible to all. First, we started with a 6 or 8-week Kettlebell class. We have continued using an exercise class format as a way to improve the health of all in the Back Yard by offering Zumba, a very popular exercise movement class. These classes are offered every Monday night from 6:30 to 7:30 pm in Powderhorn Park with ZUMBA instructor, Bernice Arias, leading the sessions.

• We have held one meeting with Block Club leaders this year to support their efforts in organizing events, give them information about our CHAT, and to find out what resources would be helpful for them to improve the health of their block. Our goal this year is to put together a TOOL KIT of resources that will provide information for leaders about health resources in the Backyard.

Join us and be “out” in the park having fun and building community spirit. Open to everyone, not just GLBTQ folks.

• An important current focus of our CHAT is working with the organization Minnesota United for All Families to defeat the amendment that would limit the freedom for GLBTQ people to marry. It is very personal to us in this CHAT that people vote “no” to the Anti-Marriage Amendment in November to protect the rights of all families. Contact Janet Dahlem, jldahlem@stkate.edu, to join us in organizing around the effort to defeat this amendment that will harm our community.

CHAT Members include: Mili Dutta, Jen Dolan, April Posner, Marta Knuston, Diane Long, and Janet Dahlem.

FREE Classes!
Come out and ZUMBA Monday nights to the end of Aug 6:30 to 7:30 pm

Join the OUT in the Backyard CHAT at the NW corner of Powderhorn Park at 11th Ave. to keep it moving!!

ALL ARE WELCOME!

The Did You Know? CHAT Team’s mission is to get people together through Block Clubs/Events. Our hope is that these connections help prevent isolation and promote community. We are partnered with Community-University Health Care Center to provide support to clubs by sharing health information and referrals, participating in the CHAT Team and giving Block Leaders the tools they need to support the health of their block.

One of our CHAT Team members is a Crime Prevention Specialist with the Police Department who partners with Did You Know? and encourages participation in the Block Leader Training and National Night Out. This was the second year we sponsored Spring Reunions, giving $30 to each block that held a gathering of neighbors.

We have held one meeting with Block Club leaders this year to support their efforts in organizing events, give them information about our CHAT, and to find out what resources would be helpful for them to improve the health of their block. Our goal this year is to put together a TOOL KIT of resources that will provide information for leaders about health resources in the Backyard.

CHAT Members include: Amy Shellabarger and John Bailey. We are always looking for more neighbors to participate in our efforts. If you are interested in participating in our CHAT Team, please contact Amy @ 612-638-0578.

Did You Know? CHAT
3440 BLOOMINGTON AVE.
POWDERHORN PARK
MINNEAPOLIS
M-F 7-30-6
SAT 7-5 • SUN 7:30-5
729-5827
ORGANIC &
FAIR TRADE COFFEE
FREE Wireless Internet
This project organizes Latino families to learn about environmental health and how they can contribute to creating a healthy environment for their families and community. The first stage of this effort is to teach Latinas how to make healthy products to clean the home and organize ways to implement what they have learned and support each other to maintain a healthy environment.

Our vision is to improve the health of the Latino residents and community by creating a healthier indoor environment for Latino families, build community between Latino families, and build momentum in the community to be a part of the bigger environmental justice movement.

We have developed curriculum for the Latino community on safe household cleaners and how to do a healthy home audit and trained a group of people to clean kitchens with natural products and to conduct a healthy home audit. We received training in making our own safe and healthy cleaning products and practices from the Women’s Environmental Institute. Work sessions are held in people’s homes who have signed up to have their kitchen cleaned. Participants learn 1) to create cleaning products from natural, environmentally safe ingredients, 2) where they can get the ingredients, 3) what the benefits are for using these products instead of their usual products (inexpensive and healthier), 4) to draw on their cultural traditions and background for healthy resources, and 5) to reframe or redefine what “clean” means (a product which attacks germs in your kitchen your might mean the product is attacking your body, standards of what cleanliness means might be excessive).

Our vision is to eventually form “Grupos de apoyo” (support groups) for women to clean each other’s kitchen together with support from the trainers. The ingredients for cleaning products will be left at each kitchen for future cleanings. After cleaning, a spiritual healer takes the participants through a spiritual cleansing, in the traditional ways. This is consistent with the cultural understanding that cleansing is not just about the physical, but it is also spiritual. Our hope is this will lead families continuing to support each other and build community.

CHAT Members include: Berta Ruiz.

Latina/o Environmental Health Begins at Home CHAT

In 2012, the Rebirthing Community CHAT, in conjunction with Communities of Light Co-op plans to continue our inter-generational workshops using discussions about community, self-sufficiency, sustainability and capacities for action. Our vision is to encourage families to join the Communities of Light Co-op and attain self-sufficiency and solvency by producing and selling solar lanterns, solar generators and other products and services the co-op member identifies.

Rebirthing Community CHAT

Maria’s Cafe

Ancient Traders Market

1113 E. Franklin Ave.

Minneapolis

7AM to 3PM Mon. thru Sat.

8AM to 3PM Sun.

612.870.9842

www.mariascafe.com

ST. PAUL’S LUTHERAN

Block Party July 14

Vacation Bible School August 6–9

2742 15th Ave South

Call 612-724-3862 for more info

Our website, www.allinahealth.org/Backyard, was revamped in 2011. sNational communications included a presentation at the national Association for Community Health Improvement conference. An article on the Backyard titled “Being Active in Your Community is a Cornerstone of Good Health” was published on the Institute for Comprehensive Community Development Website by national LISC.

The Alley Newspaper is a member of Communications CHAT

Sharing our Story

Community strategists are designed to promote the story and the lessons of the BYI. Multiple vehicles including: print and on-line media, participation in community events, conference and classroom presentations and word-of-mouth are utilized to reach a variety of audiences.

The BYI Communications CHAT is proud to be the conduit helping to get the many voices, images, and wisdom on to these pages. We hope you will be as inspired by the work reflected on these pages as we were. Alley Communications, Inc. is the fiscal agent of the Communications CHAT. For more info: call Susan Gust, Coordinator, 612-414-6623.
Connecting in the Backyard

The entire society needs to be doing so I thank you for that.

It’s healing—as a community, as a culture. We have many diverse cultures here. I’m honored to be here in your presence.

“Being in the Backyard Initiative has meant taking my first steps as a community organizer. I came to the Backyard Initiative when I was pregnant with my son as a notetaker.”

“I’ve lived in Minneapolis for years, I came here when I was 23 and was ready to fight for rights. Now as the children and the grandchildren are coming, I’m not want-

**Anchor Family CHAT**

Do you need anything?”

Through the Backyard Initiative Assessment process, it became apparent that families in the BYI communities are experiencing isolation and lack of resources to sustain the health and well-being of their families. It is quite apparent that this has a direct connection to the state of turmoil and destructive behavior our youth are exhibiting. Families are feeling less and less connected to one another and to the spiritual, cultural and social resources in the community that are necessary to sustain their families. These resources include someone to talk to when things get tough, wisdom from elders and those who have survived. They also include someone to lean on when their own internal resources become limited. There is a clear need to rebuild the web of relationships that will mend the fragmentation that families are experiencing. It is also necessary to restore the family bond with our youth to increase their sense of belonging and interconnectedness. This action can shift the emphasis and public perception of our youth and reinforce their positive behaviors by connecting them to elders in the community to provide guidance and direction.

Our CHAT works to solve this problem by establishing an Anchor Family on selected blocks within the 475 BYI blocks, the number and priority to be determined by the Community Commission on Health. To improve the sense of health and well being of people living in the Backyard, the Anchor Family will act as catalyst for increased interconnectedness, building community through community rituals, gatherings and relationship building activities. Anchor Families will coordinate community celebrations surrounding cultural customs, individual achievements and personal or family grief and loss.

Recent activities of the Anchor Family CHAT have included a multi-generational gathering and feast on Mother’s Day, block cleanups, barbecues, a walking club and visiting and checking in on others on the block when they haven’t seen each other. Young men on the blocks with an Anchor Family are encouraged and supported to be part of the “Fellows” program. The Fellows program mentors these young men to be emerging leaders in our community.

One new initiative has been inspired and grew out of the work of the Anchor Families CHAT: the Young Business-Minded Men program. This is an entrepreneurial project that teaches youth that live in the BYI how to make money and cultivate the skills of a professional business person. Their mentors emerged from a culturally-based, all male group who attended a brotherhood circle that began as a book club. Youth from the BYI area as well as Anchor Family Fellows are mentored into the Young Business-Minded Men program. Participants in the Young Business-Minded Men program have learned jewelry making and utilizing their entrepreneurial spirits by buying products in bulk and selling such items for a profit.

**PROJECT S.E.L.F. (Save, Educate, Liberate, Free) CHAT**

**PROJECT S.E.L.F. (Save, Educate, Liberate, Free) CHAT**

Recent Project S.E.L.F. Annual Ice Cream Social and Free Henna Decoration

Project S.E.L.F. (SAVE EDUCATE LIBERATE FREE) is an Immigrant Health CHAT group that established a program called “Nomadic Expressions” which aims to assist youth, elders and families in healthy living and artistic expressions through poetry, open micro-phone performances, information workshops and community dialogue.

The face of immigrant youth in our society has been negative as there is often more emphasis on those engaged in negative behaviors. Immigrant youth in our community are misguided and confused by conflicting messages between mainstream society and their original cultural ways. Communication across generations is strained and challenging. Youth are not responsive to guidance from elders and are conflicted by peer pressure.

Our CHAT works to solve this problem by improving the health of the people living in the BYI through Nomadic Expressions, especially elders and youth. These activities help to bridge the gap between the older and younger community members to encourage healthy relationships through various artistic mediums.

End of article
Somali Women’s Health Support Group CHAT

"If you educate a woman, you educate the nation." - African Proverb

The original plan for the Somali Women’s Health Support Group CHAT was to promote communication, understanding, and support among women of the Somali community who have children in the judicial system by creating spaces and systems for them to talk, connect, and assist each other. The aim was to provide women room to express themselves and to explore ways in which the cultural systems of discipline could be used to avoid the intervention of the US judicial system. The hope was that this effort would help to maintain the balance and harmony of the community.

However, after forming the group and receiving special training on how to interface with the prison system, it was discovered by the women that they would not be able to visit the prisons wearing their hijabs or head scarves for the sake of their own safety. By this time though, bonds had formed between the women and they had shared other ways they could increase the health knowledge. This is achieved by: teaching families their culture; empowering community members; grassroots leadership; conducting community education workshops on civic engagement and health issues; preventing tobacco use; and offering parent workshops bringing families together to solve problems and bridge understanding.

With that in mind, we started working with our young girls using an educational approach. We begin with a home visit and help assure the children have an electric sharpener, a quiet place to learn with a studying table. Then we engage the parents in understanding the school system, report cards and healthy lifestyles. Additionally, our group supports post-secondary education by referring participants to SAT and ACT exam preparation courses and college tours. We organize a broad range of learning opportunities with trips to museums, workshops on our cultural heritage, and enrolling in classes at the YWCA. A Somali’s Women’s Walking Group has formed at Powderhorn Park where there is still room for more participants! We also have other classes every week for our girls at the Brian Coyle Community Center. The Somali’s Women’s Health Support Group CHAT is doing all that we can to prevent loneliness, isolation, depression, school failure, family violence, etc. for our women and girls. To find out more, email faradowajamac@yahoo.com.

CHAT Members include: Fardowsa Yousuf, Bishare Gardad, Maryan Adam, and Faduma Yusuf

Guri Nabad (Peace House) CHAT: Somali American Community

Our Guri Nabad (meaning: Peace House) CHAT, part of the Somali American Community non-profit organization, is comprised of community leaders and individuals whose families are impacted by the incidences of childhood asthma. We address the causes of these chronic conditions and offer tools to assist our families in coping with and managing these conditions. Part of our effort helps to identify community resources that can help our families successfully address issues surrounding asthma in our Somali community.

Many parents are ashamed, afraid or unwilling to address the issues surrounding their children’s health conditions. This is especially true for parents with asthmatic children who fear that their children will be unable to participate in healthy physical activities. With language and cultural barriers that many people feel they have, they are less aware or less effective in reaching out to available resources and are sometimes afraid to ask for help. With our CHAT Team, we create a venue in which people can come together, speak about their health issues and together seek the resources most appropriate for addressing our children’s asthma. Through our mosques, media, and personal word-of-mouth, we reach out to other families with similar conditions and situations.

To date, we have conducted asthma management trainings and assisted 17 children and their families. Families attend 10 asthma management sessions which occur 1-2 times a month. Since asthma is something that affects the entire family even though it may be experience by just one person in the family, we believe it is very important for the entire family to become educated about asthma and to understand what it is, the triggers, how episodes can be prevented and generally how to live more comfortably with this disease. By working with the entire family, our efforts have reached and impacted many more people.

Families involved with us do not just attend the support groups and receive asthma management training. We also accompany them to their child’s school, day care center or health care provider to support them and help them and others to make the link between their child and the proper management of their child’s asthma. It is important that our work also be conducted in a culturally appropriate manner.

The Somali American Community as an organization which helps Somali people in South Minneapolis with issues such as: immigration, becoming American citizens, health education, etc. Watch for a future article about the organization in The Alley Newspaper. For more information, please contact Mahamed Cali at calimahamed@gmail.com.

CHAT Members include: Abdi Hussein, Fatma Hassan, Hadsan Abdulle, Shirwa A-Jibril, Ubah Keypnan, and Mahamed Cali

The Alley Newspaper • July 2012 | ...Connecting in the Backyard...Connecting in the Backyard...Connecting in the Backyard...
Meet the Backyard Initiative staff from Allina Health!

Ruth Hampton Olkon, Lovel Trahan, and Dimpho Orionzi are the team here to support the work happening in the Backyard.

Name: Ruth Hampton Olkon  
Hometown: Minneapolis, MN  
Heritage: Jewish  
Family: Husband, three kids, one sister, one brother-in-law, one niece, parents, in-laws, and close friends  
What brought you to the Backyard Initiative? I wanted to be involved in what I believe is the most important work in the world  
What is your role with the project? I provide support and facilitate connections between and amongst Allina Health and the community  
How long have you been with the Backyard Initiative? One year  
What is your favorite restaurant in the Backyard? Maria’s Cafe

Name: Lovel Trahan  
Hometown: Lafayette, LA  
Heritage: Cajun and Creole  
Family/Siblings: Two parents, two sisters, one brother, two grandparents, six aunts, uncles and cousins  
What brought you to the Backyard Initiative? A desire to be part of the community. Just being a help–seeing things in your community and helping—that’s a benefit to me.  
What is your role with the project? One year and eleven months  
What is your favorite restaurant in the Backyard? Safari Express in the Midtown Global Market

Name: Dimpho Orionzi  
Hometown: St. Cloud, MN  
Heritage: Lugbara, tribe in Northwestern Uganda  
Family/Siblings: Two parents, two sisters, one brother, two grandmothers, and many, many aunts, uncles and cousins  
What brought you to the Backyard Initiative? I wanted to learn about genuine community engagement because I believe communities are an important stakeholder and often get left out of critical conversations.  
What is your role with the project? To find ways of connecting what we’re learning in the Backyard to other important work that is happening in the community and in Allina Health.  
How long have you been with the project? One year and eleven months  
What is your favorite restaurant in the Backyard? Maria’s Cafe

Growing the Backyard CHAT—25 families and growing!

In the last two years, Growing the Backyard CHAT has assisted 25 families to establish gardens and grow their own food. This CHAT empowers Backyard residents to produce their own healthy foods, increase connections to the local food system, and to increase each family’s understanding of how the food system works. Families participating in the project will actively take responsibility for creating and maintaining a series of gardens throughout the Backyard. These activities will also increase a sense of belonging and community for each family. The CHAT members help to provide supplies and connections to gardening resources and the local food system.

The work of this CHAT team ties into overarching goals that were identified by the Assessment process conducted in 2009 by Backyard Initiative. Two specific points that related to the work of this CHAT include:

• Families expressed a lack of access to affordable healthy food for their family
• 97% of Backyard assessment participants felt that affordable locally grown fruits and vegetables on grocers and food stores are random dependency on grocery stores to provide access to food rather than being able to produce some amount of food on their own. Some families have expressed a reluctance to begin gardening because they have limited knowledge and resources. Others have expressed the belief that their cultural foods cannot grow in Minnesota. Residents may not feel comfortable navigating the existing food system because the system is complex, exclusive, and although it may take into consideration cultural differences, it does a poor job of connecting to people of different cultures. Furthermore, promotion of over-processed foods has created a disconnect from the ability and know-how to prepare and store fresh food.

Many of the existing organizations in the backyard have programs that target children, youth and adults, but the work of this CHAT focuses on the entire family.

The Growing the Backyard CHAT feels that people growing food, preparing food, and becoming an active participant in the local food system is integral in preserving and sustaining family life.

CHAT Members include:
Hashep Seka, David Boebhke, Deeq Abdi, Sheb Peeples, Peter Noble, Lita Beach, Kurt Blomberg, Collie Graddick, Louise Reppogle and Sainab Sahal.

Ingebritsen’s Scandinavian Gifts, Foods, Needlework, and Clothing

Stop in at Ingebritsen’s for good food, music, flags, party gifts and supplies, for your Summer fun and celebrations! Enjoy Summer!

Photos by dee henry williams  
Quotes from Commissioners are random.

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