

GRAND RAPIDS
**African American
Health Institute**



2024
ANNUAL
REPORT





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

FROM OUR CEO

On behalf of the entire team at the Grand Rapids African American Health Institute, I want to extend our heartfelt gratitude for your continued support and partnership throughout the year. Thanks to your commitment, we have made tremendous progress in advancing our shared vision of health equity, addressing some of the most pressing health issues impacting our communities.

As we continue to confront the deeply entrenched health disparities in the Black community, it is clear that systemic inequities in healthcare, access, and education have a profound effect on the well-being of many individuals and families. The work we are doing together—focused on community engagement, advocacy, research, and education—has been essential in challenging these disparities and advocating for the resources and changes needed to ensure everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy life.

This year's Annual Health Summit was a pivotal moment in our efforts. The strong, positive response to our call to action was nothing short of inspiring. We saw numerous organizations step up to take greater action in addressing the social determinants of health, maternal and infant health, sickle cell disease, mental health, and chronic diseases. Your involvement has been key in translating this momentum into tangible outcomes, and we are excited to see the lasting impact of these efforts.

We are profoundly grateful for your partnership in this journey. Together, we are laying the foundation for a healthier, more equitable future, one that empowers every community to thrive. Thank you once again for your dedication and support. We look forward to continuing our work with you to drive change and make a meaningful difference.

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.



Leading with C.A.R.E



COMMUNITY

At the heart of our mission is being able to truly serve and impact our community.

ADVOCACY

We work with health care systems, governmental agencies and educational institutions to create transformational change in the health and well-being of African Americans and other marginalized people.

RESEARCH

GRAAHI sets the standard for responsible collection and dissemination of data to inform action.

EDUCATION

GRAAHI creates avenues of learning that promote best practices and innovative thinking in order to disrupt current systems of inequity.

2024 | A YEAR OF IMPACT

2024 was a year of significant impact for GRAAHI, grounded in our unwavering commitment to the four pillars of CARE. Through impactful community engagement initiatives, robust advocacy efforts, groundbreaking research, and transformative educational programs, GRAAHI continued to address critical health disparities and empower individuals and communities to achieve optimal health and well-being.

COMMUNITY

- **Wellness Academy:** Our flagship community engagement program continued to empower individuals with the knowledge and tools to improve their health, serving more than 3,000 people with health information and resources.
 - Diabetes: Three 14-week cohorts (45 participants) achieved a 93% completion rate, with 93% increasing weekly exercise and 86% experiencing weight loss.
 - Stroke/Hypertension: Three 8-week cohorts (76 participants) saw a 70% reduction in BMI among participants.
 - Restoring Health: Three 14-week cohorts (57 participants) reported 90% satisfaction and highly valued peer support.
 - Kidney Disease: Two 18-week cohorts (32 participants) demonstrated a 60% improvement in lab results with 100% participant appreciation.
- **Rhythm Run & Health Fair:** This vibrant community event brought together over 400 residents, organizations, vendors, and healthcare providers for a day of health, wellness, and fun.
- **HEROES FOR LIFE Blood Drives:** 13 successful blood drives resulted in 236 donations, saving an estimated 708 lives.
- **Mammogram Screenings:** Four mobile screenings provided access to 61 mammograms and led to 16 new BC3NP registrations.
- **Digital Engagement:** GRAAHI expanded its online presence, reaching over 75,000 people with social media, video and podcast content. Our redesigned website experienced significant growth, with 64,000 views and 10,000 unique users.

ADVOCACY

- **Annual Health Equity Summit:** Our "Call to Action" summit brought together over 400 attendees, including healthcare professionals, policymakers, and community leaders, sparking new initiatives and collaborations to address health disparities.
- **Health Equity Task Forces:** These dedicated groups continued to advocate for policy changes and community-driven solutions to address pressing health concerns.

RESEARCH

- **Enhanced Health Equity Index:** Providing comprehensive data on local, state, and national health disparities, this valuable resource provides a roadmap for addressing disparities and informs our advocacy efforts.
- **Research Briefs and Reports:** Published more than 10 research briefs and reports on critical health topics impacting Black Americans, such as sickle cell, mental health, and infant/maternal health, providing data and actionable recommendations to inform decision-makers and drive change.

EDUCATION

- **Pathways to Healthcare Careers:** This program expanded to include a comprehensive Doula initiative, CPR training, and lab simulations, inspiring more students to pursue careers in healthcare.
 - **Pacesetters:** High School: 40 participants (79% re-enrolled in 2024-25)
 - **Legacy Pacesetters** (College): 10 participants
 - **Black Womb Workers:** Cohort 1: 12 participants, with 75% completing Medicaid training, 11 completing business training, and 9 establishing their own LLCs.
 - **Scholarships:** GRAAHI awarded \$58,343.50 in scholarships to support aspiring healthcare professionals.

COMMUNITY



HEROES FOR LIFE
BLOOD DRIVES



MAMMOGRAM
SCREENINGS

The **Health Initiatives and Community Engagement** department empowers the African American community by providing the education, skills, resources, and tools to maintain healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, physical, and mental wellness.

In 2024, our health and wellness program achieved remarkable success, with 95% of participants rating their experience as exceeding expectations. This program enhanced physical health while fostering a strong sense of community, helping residents of all ages lead active, fulfilling lives. Through compassionate support, we improved their emotional well-being, reduced isolation, boosted self-worth, and renewed their sense of purpose, contributing to a more positive outlook on aging.

[Click here to learn more](#)

Signature Event

The **2024 Rhythm Run & Health Fair** attracted over 420 participants, including runners, vendors, and community members. This impactful event provided vital health screenings, including 80 blood pressure checks (with one individual referred to urgent care), 18 massages, 13 breast cancer screenings, 11 colorectal cancer screening kits, and 14 STI screenings. Additionally, the event emphasized substance abuse prevention and treatment, distributing 25 boxes of Narcan to the community.



The **Wellness Academy** is a cornerstone of GRAAHI's commitment to supporting community members in directly tackling the most important chronic diseases impacting African American health. This comprehensive initiative offers distinct, FREE educational series, providing access to expert guidance, valuable resources and inspiring peer support.



Wellness Academy

KIDNEY DISEASE
EDUCATION COHORT

[Click here to learn more](#)



CPR
TRAINING
CLASS

Good Health
is a
PRIORITY



Restoring Health met me right where I was at and provided an individualized program that really tapped into my specific needs. I got life lessons that will greatly improve my quality of life, especially as I age. The program truly understood the unique challenges we face as we get older.

Carla Trammell

ADVOCACY



HEALTH DISPARITIES TASK FORCE

- Kent County Opioid Task Force
- KCHD STI Task Force
- MLLP Advocacy Bootcamp
- Kent County Health Equity Council
- Chronic Disease Task Force
- Sickle Cell Disease
- Maternal & Infant Health

GRAAHI remains dedicated to advocating for health equity within the African American community through education and policy change. The 2nd Annual Health Equity Summit has become a cornerstone of our advocacy and policy outreach efforts. This impactful event serves as a crucial platform for educating and informing healthcare and business professionals, policymakers, and other non-profit partners about the importance of health equity as a key component of the social determinants of health.

GRAAHI sponsored the Legislating Kent County Forum in partnership with the NAACP and participated in several advocacy boot camps and legislative meetings.

Through active participation in numerous task forces, including the Kent County Opioid Task Force and the KCHD STI Task Force, GRAAHI solidified its position as a leading voice on health equity, strengthening partnerships and driving meaningful change within the community.

[Click here to learn more](#)



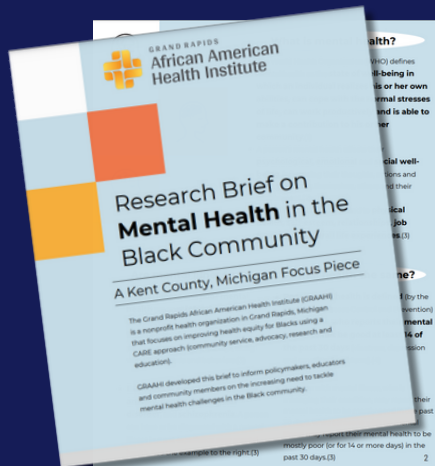
Signature Event

Health Equity in Motion-From Policy to Practice

GRAAHI's Health Disparities Transformation Summit, an annual gathering focused on achieving health equity for Black communities, convened over 400 attendees. This year's "Call to Action" summit served as a powerful platform for leading voices to discuss critical health equity issues, explore innovative solutions, and inspire actionable change. The event catalyzed new programs and initiatives within health systems and organizations across the region, demonstrating the transformative power of collective action in addressing health disparities.

[Watch the Summit Video](#)

RESEARCH



GRAAHI's Policy Brief on Stress

The Impact of Stress on Health Inequities in the Black Population

WHAT ARE DIFFERENT FORMS OF STRESS?
Stress is a common factor in everyone's life. The World Health Organization defines stress as a state of anxiety or mental tension caused by a difficult situation. While stress can be a normal coping response to daily events, long-term stress can devastate one's overall health and well-being. Because of this, it is important to understand some of the different forms of stress.

- **Acute stress:** is a common form of stress. This form of stress is usually short-lived and is often caused by a specific event or situation.
- **Chronic stress:** is a long-term form of stress that can last for months or years. It is often caused by ongoing problems such as financial difficulties, health issues, or family problems.
- **Cumulative stress:** is a form of stress that builds up over time. It is often caused by a series of small stressors that add up over time.

GRAAHI's Policy Brief for Infant Mortality

The Infant Mortality Problem in the United States
In 2018, the infant mortality rate in the United States was 7.1 per 1,000 live births. This is a significant public health problem, as it is a leading cause of death for infants in the United States. The infant mortality rate is a key indicator of a country's overall health and well-being. In the United States, the infant mortality rate is significantly higher than in other developed countries. This is due to a variety of factors, including racial and ethnic disparities, socioeconomic status, and access to healthcare.

- **Black infants are more likely to die than white infants.** In 2018, the infant mortality rate for Black infants was 12.1 per 1,000 live births, compared to 6.1 per 1,000 live births for white infants.
- **Black infants are more likely to be born prematurely.** In 2018, 13.1% of Black infants were born prematurely, compared to 10.1% of white infants.
- **Black infants are more likely to be born with low birth weight.** In 2018, 10.1% of Black infants were born with low birth weight, compared to 7.1% of white infants.

How the scarcity of Black men in health care professions impacts health inequities

Blacks experience the **scarcity of health care professionals** in the United States (U.S.) for many health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and obesity. Addressing such health inequities is a focus of many public health strategies, including **Health Equity 2030** that features evidence-based resources and programs at the state, community and organizational levels. One such **strategy** in public health includes the recruitment and retention of Black men into health care professions across the U.S.

Increasing the number of Black men in health care is a major need and challenge. First, Black men represent 13% of the college student population in the U.S. Second, matriculation rates of Black men into medical school has **increased** in the U.S. since 1976, making this fact even more challenging. Black men only comprise 21% of all U.S. physicians, even though Blacks represent roughly 13% of the U.S. population. This reality is even starker when reviewing medical specialties. While men are diverse across all fields of the medical profession, the

In 2024, GRAAHI's Health Equity Index was enhanced with the latest data on local, state, and national health disparities, providing a comprehensive resource for hospitals, universities, and community organizations. This data-driven tool empowers stakeholders with actionable policy recommendations and solutions to address critical health inequities.

Furthermore, GRAAHI conducted extensive research on critical issues such as infant and maternal mortality, racial disparities associated with Long COVID, and the health of Black men. The findings of these studies were disseminated through over 10 impactful research and policy briefs, advocating for policy changes and driving meaningful improvements in health outcomes for the African American community.

[Click here to learn more](#)

- Read more:**
- Policy Brief: **"Impact of Stress on Health Inequities in the Black Population"**
 - Policy Brief: **"Infant Mortality"**
 - Policy Brief: **"Scarcity of Black Men In Health Care Professions"**
 - Scoping Review: **"2024 Infant Maternal Health"**



The **GRAAHI Health Equity Index** is a holistic tool for understanding health disparities in West Michigan. This online resource serves as a data hub for hospitals, universities, businesses, and individuals alike. It provides insights into health inequities, informs research and grant efforts, and offers actionable recommendations to improve health outcomes for all.

[Go to the HEI](#)

EDUCATION



Pathways to Healthcare Careers

PHC is the educational and career readiness extension of GRAAHI that seeks to provide access, community, and equity to historically underrepresented populations in the healthcare industry. Through a variety of programs, resources, and events, PHC introduces early learners, high school students, and adult learners to diverse entry points and opportunities into the health and medical industry.

My Pace

My Pace, a multi-year Pacesetters program, empowers underrepresented populations with the tools and support to succeed in healthcare careers. Through a comprehensive approach, the program addresses systemic barriers by providing access and support at every stage, from middle school to returning learners. In 2023-2024, the program impacted 50 students across various levels, including college, high school, and middle school.

[Click here to learn more](#)



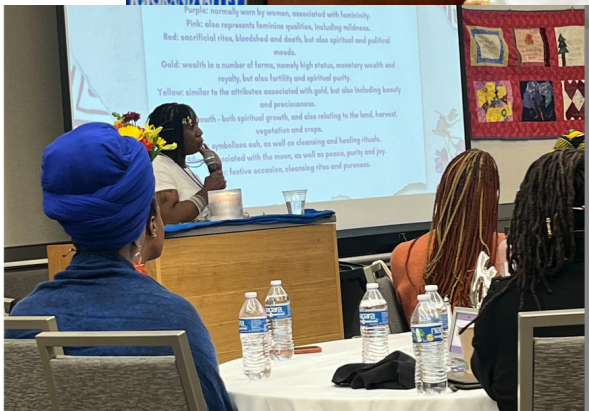
Black Womb Workers Doula Initiative

The Black Womb Workers program prioritizes certifying community members as doulas, improving prenatal care access and equity for Black birthing individuals in Kent County, while also fostering partnerships with academic institutions to address the complex challenges facing our community.



The Dr. Khan Nedd Scholarship

Named in honor of a founding board member, this program supports students transitioning between educational stages, such as high school to college or college to graduate school and helps to eliminate financial barriers to success. A Scholarship Luncheon is held annually to celebrate the achievements of the recipients.




Professional Development

Pacesetters exclusively accessed third-party professional development resources. These resources enhanced academic success and provided targeted exam prep for healthcare careers.

Education
is a
**LADDER OF
OPPORTUNITY**

"Receiving the GRAAHI scholarship has been a lifeline, allowing me to overcome financial barriers and pursue my passion for a career in Health Information Management, a dream I feared was slipping away."

Carla Pointer

A head-and-shoulders portrait of a young Black woman with long dark hair, smiling warmly at the camera.

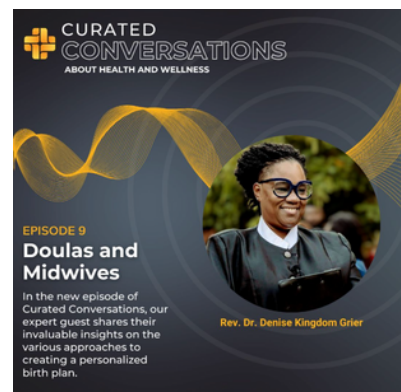
NEWS & PUBLICATIONS

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS



In 2024, GRAAHI expanded its communications and advocacy efforts through a variety of channels. We conducted impactful research, published thought-provoking articles and op-eds, held free health information sessions and engaged with the community through podcasts featuring industry experts and "Community Conversations" featuring leading voices in Black health. This multifaceted approach ensured our message of health awareness and equity reached a wider audience and influenced critical conversations.

HEALTH EDUCATION SERIES



[Listen to the Podcast](#)

In the Spotlight

GRAAHI received prestigious recognition for its outstanding work. We were honored to be awarded the Eugene Browning Medical Service Giant Award, and our CEO, Vanessa Greene, was recognized as one of Grand Rapids' 50 Most Influential Women.



2024

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

2024 FINANCIAL HEALTH

Income

Grants	\$1,200,287
Underwritings	\$137,375
Donations	\$230,376
Contract Revenue, Fees for Services & Events	\$40,887
Total	\$1,608,925

Expenses

Salaries and Benefits	\$590,364
Consultant and Contract Labor	\$280,885
Programs, Services, Events	\$299,400
Supplies & Equipment	\$95,030
General Business/ Operations	\$7,872
Stipends/Scholarships	\$57,128
Total	\$1,330,679

STAFF

Vanessa Greene
Chief Executive Officer

Dr. TeAsia Jordan
Director of Education & Access to Healthcare Careers

Dr. Denise Kingdom, DMin
Program Manager

Ashley Starr
Post-Secondary
Engagement Specialist

Miguel Gonzales
Program Coordinator

Ashlie Jones
Health Initiatives and Community Engagement Manager

Calvin Nguyen
Community Health Navigator

Virginia Walton
Community Health Navigator

Dr. Vicki-Lynn Holmes
Grants & Consulting

Sharra Poncil
Finance and HR Manager

Karla Smith
HR Assistant/Executive Administrative

Barbara Lash
Marketing and Communications

BOARD

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Board Co-Chair Manager, Mktg & Comm. Health Programs, AmeriHealth Caritas

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Outpatient Psychiatrist, Holland Hospital

Dr. Khan Nedd, MD
Medical Director, CEO Infusion Associates

Eddie Rucker
Consultant

Laura Moody, RN
Retired Nurse and Faculty, Gand Rapids Community College

Dr. Tiffany Letts, MD
Pediatrics, University of Michigan Health

Gwen Johnson
Real Estate Agent Greenridge Realty

Brandon Davis, JD
Managing Dir. Office of Equity & Engagement Office of Oversight & Public
Accountability City of Grand Rapids

Syreeta Drake
Nurse & Educator, Grand Rapids Black Nurses Association

Rochelle Fuller, CPA
Senior Financial, Analyst Nestlé

Dr. Matt Biersack
President, Trinity Health

Misti Stanton
First Vice President, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer Mercantile Bank

Mia Gutridge
Human Resources Manager, Grand Rapids Housing Commission

Dr. Fatma Mili
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Grand Valley State University



OUR TEAM

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

**OUR
PARTNERS**



graahi.com/donate

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.



GRAND RAPIDS

**African American
Health Institute**

500 Lafayette Avenue, NE Grand Rapids, MI 4950
616-331-5831 info@graahi.org

graahi.org