



GRAND RAPIDS

African American Health Institute

MEDIA ALERT

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GRAAHI and Grand Rapids Parks Launch Little Libraries to Advance Sickle Cell Awareness

New park-based book stations and community readings will give children and families accessible, age-appropriate resources that build health literacy, understanding and empathy.

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — The Grand Rapids African American Health Institute (GRAAHI) and the City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department will launch a new Little Libraries initiative focused on sickle cell education. GRAAHI will place book stations in Martin Luther King Park, Garfield Park and Ken-O-Sha Park to give families age-appropriate materials that build awareness, support young readers and encourage conversations about sickle cell disease.

"Sickle Cell Disease education among youth is an opportunity for growth for our community. Sometimes, when kids come with questions about topics that can be a lot to take on, it can be hard to know where to start a healthy dialog in a way they will understand. That belief is what inspired the Little Libraries project," said Olivia Driscoll, program coordinator for the community health initiatives and engagement center at GRAAHI. "When we create projects that are digestible for our community's young people — about conditions they may live with or see in the people they love — we set our community up to be filled with empathetic, health-literate individuals who will ultimately be the ones to change and grow our healthcare system in the future."

The project will begin with a community reading at 6 p.m. Aug. 24 at the Garfield Park pavilion. The Little Libraries will stay in the parks through October.

Parks and Recreation Director Laura Cleypool said she looks forward to offering families a new way to learn together. "We're thrilled to partner with GRAAHI on this educational initiative," she said. "These are an important community resource, and we're looking forward to having them in our parks where kids and families will be able to access materials and learn together."

Families can join outdoor readings at Garfield Park on Aug. 24, Sept. 28 and Oct. 26, with winter sessions at HUB 07 on Nov. 16 and Dec. 7.

For more information about the initiative, reading schedule or GRAAHI, visit graahi.org.

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About GRAAHI:

The Grand Rapids African American Health Institute is a leading organization devoted to achieving healthcare parity for African Americans. Driven by research and committed to education and advocacy, GRAAHI aims to eradicate health disparities by influencing health policy and practice through community engagement, advocacy, research, and education. Learn more at graahi.org.