

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Artwork by African American Figurative Artist, Alonzo Adams

Above, piece name: Strong Steady Hands

To the right, piece name: Mama's Pearls

Background

In February, we honor the sacrifices and contributions of African Americans that cultivated the nation. Heritage, triumphs, and adversities throughout U.S. history have been celebrated this month officially since 1976. President Gerald Ford formerly recognized Black History Month and called upon the nation to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.” The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) announces the annual theme of Black History Month. The mission is to broaden the nation’s consciousness and commemorate the ‘black past.’ African Americans have shaped, challenged, and strengthened America. Next year’s theme will be ‘African Americans and Labor.’



2024 Theme – African Americans and the Arts

African American culture has been a paramount influence in all forms of art - visual, performance, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, architecture, culinary, etc... Unfortunately, these contributions to the arts and American history have been denied or minimized by many for centuries. Preserving Black history and community memory not only empowers people of African descent, but it also ensures the past and present richness of African, Caribbean, and Black American influence as a pivotal force in political, social, technological, and cultural spaces. They set the standard for popular trends around the world in all artistic and cultural movements: the Black aesthetic continues to nurture styles of music all races and ethnicities appreciate. Leaving behind oppressive systems such as ‘Jim Crow’ laws contributed to a surge of creative enterprise (artists, writers, composers, and musicians), scientific and technological advancements, and unparalleled economic growth in the United States. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, critical groundwork was laid to assert pride in Black life and identity; new waves of artists will proudly further those efforts.

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BETTER HEART HEALTH



Behind the disparity

Heart disease is the number one killer of Black women. The Jackson Heart Study, the largest study of cardiovascular health in Black Americans found that black women report unusually high levels of chronic stress. It is a consistent, overwhelming, and prolonged feeling of pressure or strain - chronic stress is known to be debilitating. This symptom is known to be associated with higher blood pressure therefore increasing incidences of heart attack, stroke, and other disease. Most women put their health last, and it takes a toll; when women do seek medical attention symptoms of heart disease can present atypically and can be missed (a sometimes-fatal mistake). Individuals can only do so much, action is needed at the local and national levels to reduce their risks of premature death.



Hypertension in Black Women

High blood pressure or hypertension is a common condition that affects the body's arteries causing the heart to work harder to pump blood. The rate of hypertension in the female, black community is approximately 50% higher than non-Hispanic white women. Several risk factors increase a black woman's chances of developing heart disease. According to the American Heart Association,

black women are more likely to die of heart disease, including at younger ages compared to white women. Comorbidities such as obesity, diabetes, physical inactivity, smoking are some of the major risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease. Medical providers need to do better at and be more vigilant in screening their patients for these risk factors and teaching them how to lower those risks.

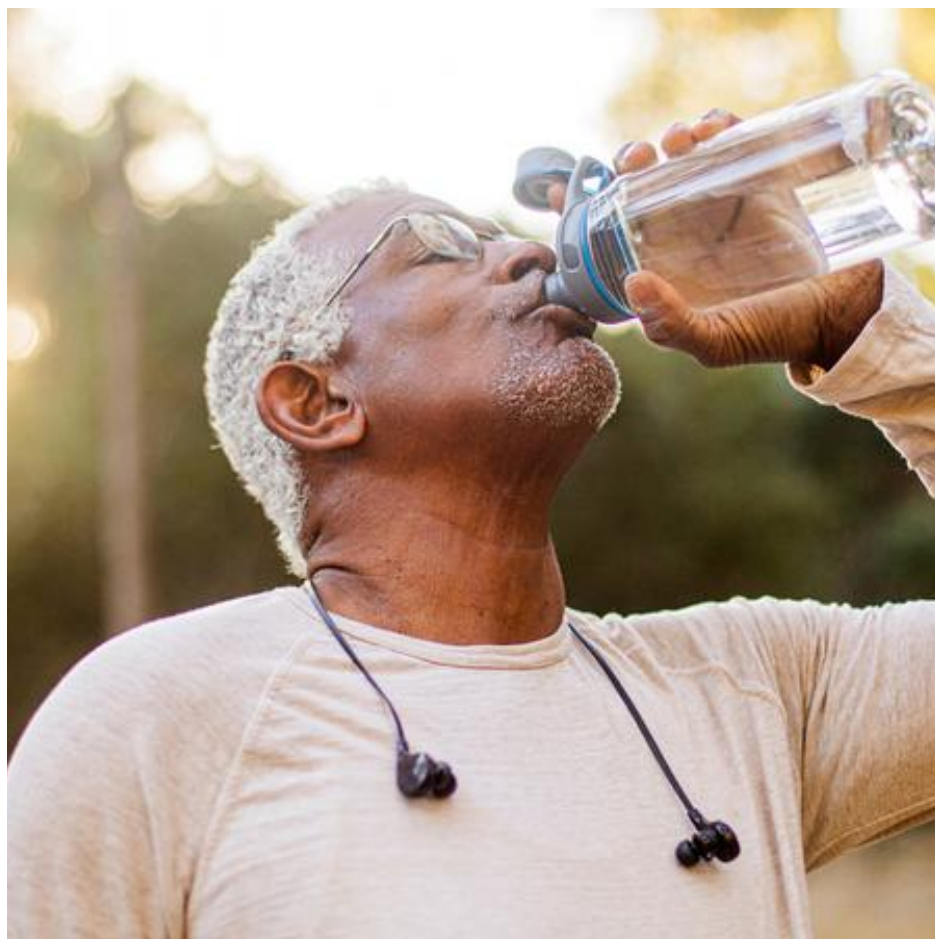
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KIDNEY DISEASE



Chronic kidney disease (CKD)

It is a major public health problem that disproportionately affects minority populations. In Texas, CKD is a highly prevalent disease that carries a heavy price tag for health services consumers and providers. The health issue has reached epidemic proportions; when left undetected and untreated CKD leads to premature death due to cardiovascular disease. Unfortunately, the disease progresses to end-stage renal disease (ESRD) where dialysis or an organ transplant is necessary to sustain life. Only about 1 in 4 Texas patients on the waiting list received a kidney transplant in 2020. Statewide public health approaches are desperately needed to address the critical issue - we must increase awareness and education of primary prevention. Early detection to control disease progression is also key to improving and ensuring quality of life.



Improving health outcomes

The primary medical reasons for chronic kidney disease in the African American community are diabetes and hypertension. Both of these diseases affect this population disproportionately. It is important for individuals to seek and adhere to medical advice for effective treatments of both diabetes and hypertension. To prevent complications with kidney-protective medications that

slow the progression of kidney disease and help to prevent people from going on dialysis. Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) like losartan lower blood pressure by relaxing vessels, while SGLT2 inhibitors such as canagliflozin help to decrease blood sugar levels in patients with Type 2 diabetes. Medical providers, social workers, and pharmacists can work collaboratively to address barriers to care especially for patients with limited resources.

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CULTURALLY COMPETENT CARE



Distrust in the medical system

Limited access to healthcare, underutilization of healthcare services, poor quality of care, and inadequate health insurance coverage are determining factors or drivers of healthcare disparities. African Americans are more likely than whites not to trust what their doctors advise - this is a major problem that must be addressed and corrected. Black participation in clinical cancer research is statistically low; it presents a challenge for researchers assessing evidence-based practice in relation to safety and effectiveness of cancer care in this population. Patient-provider communication is essential to high quality service delivery and the reduction of health disparities amongst ethnic groups such as the Black community.



What is cultural competence?

In the realm of health and human services, providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services requires an understanding and appreciation of effectively operating in varying cultural contexts and altering practices of diverse groups. The five essential elements that contribute to an agency's ability to be culturally competent include: valuing diversity, having the capacity

for cultural self-assessment, being conscious of the dynamics when cultures interact, having institutionalized culture knowledge, and developing adaptations to service delivery reflecting the cultural contexts of communities they serve. It is important to note cultural competence is a continuum - a developmental process that evolves over an extended period.

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BLACK LEADERS IN PUBLIC HEALTH



Dr. Joycelyn Elders

When asked her source of inspiration, Dr. Elders always says it is to improve the lives of children. And she has most certainly dedicated her life to such efforts. As the first African American and only the second woman to head the U.S. Public Health Service: in 1993 President Bill Clinton appointed Dr. Elders as U.S. Surgeon General (serving 15 months). In the face of great opposition, she used her ambition and knowledge to advocate for specialty clinics and sexual education. She viewed teen and unwanted pregnancies as a continuation of slavery as black women were disproportionately affected due to a lack of access to education and contraception. Dr. Elders has fiercely fostered a bigger and stronger generation of ambitious women in the fields of medicine and other sciences.



Dr. Charles Bell

The native Texan, Dr. Bell received his undergraduate degree from the University of Dallas, his medical degree from UT Southwestern Medical School, and his master's in healthcare administration from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. He is currently semi-retired and works with the Texas A&M Health Science Center as a medical advisor of the KSTAR program and medical director for LeFleur Transportation.

Most recently, Dr. Bell was President of the Diabetes Health and Wellness Institute in Dallas from January 2013 to March 2016. He also served as Deputy Executive Commissioner at Texas Health and Human Services Commission from March 2003 to August 2011. All should know of the outstanding work of Dr. Bell for the state of Texas; as he has held many positions pertaining to internal medicine, sexual health, and disease prevention.

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THE EMBODIMENT OF ABUNDANCE



Black Life

Black culture is incredibly diverse and complex; it has been shaped by the experiences of African people throughout the world's history. Traditions and practices have been influenced by the uniquely, rooted struggles and triumphs we have all come to know through music, art, literature, or cuisine. Black traditions and values have played and continue to have an important role in shaping the identity of men and women worldwide. The everlasting movement to celebrate and honor Black heritage inspire future generations of all backgrounds to help create a more inclusive and equitable society. The many facets of the culture evince the powerful legacy of Black Americans this month and beyond.



The Richness of Culture

Celebrating 'Blackness' creates joy in all communities. The majority of Black Americans are proud to be who they are, and it is important to their sense of self. Black adults who have this sentiment are more likely to feel connected to their social support system(s) - the people around them. This sense of connectedness promotes health and quality of life. In the field of public health, we refer to social connection as a protective factor.

There is significant evidence that social support and feeling connected improve cancer survival, decrease cardiovascular mortality, mitigate posttraumatic stress and depressive symptoms. Abundance is the embodiment of 'we are better together.' Black culture is synonymous with resilience, joy, and power. Acknowledging the Black community's abundance yields action, problem solving, opportunity, and freedom.

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NATIONAL BLACK HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY



Intersectional stigma

Overwhelming evidence suggests people with diverse backgrounds experience intersecting forms of stigma that influence their mental, physical health, and corresponding health behaviors. Health-related stigma is related to personal experience characterized by exclusion, blame, or devaluation that results from an adverse social judgment about a person or population identified with a health problem. The impact of intersectional stigma is as complex as the individuals themselves. Stigmatized identities, knowledge gaps, and affected behaviors generate a broad range of vulnerabilities and risks. For example, racial discrimination amongst adults living with HIV is associated with decreased HIV disclosure and medication adherence.



HIV Research & Prevention

Current researchers are investing in finding a cure for HIV; their main focuses are sustained viral remission and eventually, viral eradication. The path to finding a cure to HIV involves achieving sustained viral remission without ART - antiretroviral therapy. It allows people with HIV to live longer and in better health, but it does not cure it. Treatment with ART can enable infected individuals to have undetectable level of HIV in

their blood. This suppression leads to a decrease in the severity of symptoms and complications as well as significantly reducing the risk of transmitting the virus. Further advances in HIV prevention and treatment are needed including resources to diagnose all people with HIV as early as possible and increasing access to proven interventions - pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

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NATIONAL CONDOM WEEK 2/14 - 2/21/2024



Safe feels good

Condoms can prevent pregnancy and protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). There are two types: external (male condoms) and internal (female condoms). They are designed to stop semen from coming into contact with a sexual partner. When used correctly during sex, male condoms are 98% effective meaning 2 out of 100 people will become pregnant in 1 year when the male condom is used as contraception. Water based lubricants are safe to use with all condom types. They need to be stored in places that are not too hot nor cold. Putting a condom on yourself or having a partner do it for you can be an enjoyable part of sex. Let's trust protection, use it for a night to remember, not regret.



Protection = Prevention

Comprehensive sex education programs are effective in reducing sexually transmitted infection rates and unplanned pregnancies. Health education is critical to public health; comprehensive sex education is proven to support social-emotional learning, positive communication skills, and development of healthy relationships. Decades of data have demonstrated the broad range of knowledge and skills

instilled in youth with effective programming. The development of safe and positive views of sexuality enables people to make informed, safe, and healthy choices about their sexual health and overall well-being. Condom usage is associated with improved sexual health outcomes and further translating into reduced risks of morbidity and mortality. Prevention keeps us healthier and in return lowers health care costs.

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DEMOGRAPHICS OF BELL COUNTY



Important Info

Demographic data provides an understanding of the communities as they are presently, where they've been and where are they moving to. It is a helpful tool for tracking changes and trends over time in relation to determining the needs and strengths of a community. This information is advantageous when developing policies, public health programming, and prioritizing cultural competence for service delivery. Demographics are needed to plan future investments, services, federal aid, business growth, and how votes count in the electoral college. It impacts nearly everything a community member does - how much one pays in property taxes, quality of education available in public schools, and access to grocery store chains.



Who lives here?

As of 2022, Bell County's population is estimated to be 388,386 residents. There are 11 cities within the county; Killeen is the most populated followed by Temple and Harker Heights. Females make up half of the population; persons 65 years and over make up approximately 12% of the total population. There were 49,403 veterans living in Bell County between 2018-2022. The U.S. Census dictates 65% (43% White, non-Hispanic) of the total population is White, 25% Black or African American, 27% Hispanic or Latino, 3.2% Asian, and 1.1%

American Indian or Alaska Native. Only 5% of people identified as two or more races. In terms of education, residents with a bachelor's degree or higher aged 25 years and over accounted for nearly 27% of the total population between 2018-2022. Persons without health insurance under the age of 65 years is 15.4%. In 2017, there were 730 minority-owned employer firms. 2020 census data indicates that the population per square mile is 351.7 persons per square mile. Bell County has 1,053.8 square miles of land area and is ranked the 59th largest county in Texas by total area.

Bell County Public Health Times



Environmental Health Office

4236 Lowes Dr. Temple, TX 76502
Monday-Thursday 8:00am-5:00pm
Friday 8:00am - 11:30pm
Phone: 254-532-9800

Immunizations Office

1605 North Main Street Belton TX 76513
Monday- Thursday 7:00am – 4:30pm
Friday 7:00am – 11:00am
Phone: 254-532-9800

Temple WIC

201 N 8th St. Temple TX 76501
Monday- Thursday 7:00am - 5:30pm
Phone: 254-532-9800

Fort Cavazos WIC

36000 Shoemaker Lane Fort Cavazos,
TX 76544
Monday- Thursday 7:00am – 4:30pm
Friday 8:00am – 12:00pm
Phone: 254-532-9800

BCPH Admin Office

4236 Lowes Dr. Temple, TX 76502
Monday- Thursday 7:00am - 5:30pm
Phone: 254-532-9800

Killeen Clinic

309 North 2nd St Killeen, TX 76541
Monday- Thursday 7:00am – 4:30pm
Friday 7:00am – 11:00am
Phone: 254-532-9800

Temple Clinic

820 North 31st Street Temple, TX 76504
Monday- Thursday 7:00am – 4:30pm
Friday 7:00am – 11:00am
Phone: 254-532-9800

Killeen WIC

116 E Avenue D, Killeen, TX 76551
Monday- Thursday 7:00am - 5:30pm
Phone: 254-532-9800

Copperas Cove WIC

213 W Avenue D, Copperas Cove, TX
76522
Monday- Thursday 7:00am – 5:30pm
Phone: 254-532-9800

Community Health Division

4236 Lowes Dr. Temple, TX 76502
Monday- Thursday 7:00am - 5:30pm
Phone: 254-532-9800