

2023

IMPACT REPORT



WHO WE ARE

Since 1986, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation has worked to improve health throughout the state by building healthy generations so families, young people and seniors can achieve their healthiest life.

Our mission is to build strong community partnerships to advance racial and health equity. We live this mission through our trusted relationships and deep collaboration with community organizations, and our work toward a common goal of addressing the root issues of health inequities, including racism, discrimination and marginalization of communities.

A MESSAGE

FROM CAROLYN LINK AND BUKATA HAYES

Reflecting on 2023 gives us the opportunity to highlight the incredible work of our grantee partners and the progress we've made together toward advancing racial and health equity in Minnesota.

2023 was the first year of our new, four-year strategic plan — a plan that grounds all our work in building healthy generations so families, young people and seniors can live their healthiest life. This plan and the work that flows from it is the result of a rigorous planning process that assesses the current state of health in Minnesota and centers the voices of those most impacted by racism and health inequities.

We're proud of the progress we've made in partnership with our grantees. Our work is interconnected, and we celebrate the collective impact we've had — an impact made possible through our trust-based relationships and strong collaboration.

As we celebrate the efforts of 2023, we also look forward to the work ahead. Deep inequities persist in our state, and inaccessible systems leave health out of reach for many Minnesotans. We'll continue working to create better outcomes for the communities we serve, in collaboration with our grantee partners, so everyone can achieve their healthiest life.



Carolyn Link

President, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation



Bukata Hayes

Vice President of Racial and Health Equity and Chief Equity Officer, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

Board Chair, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation

OUR IMPACT

BY THE NUMBERS

\$4.8M
in total
funding

62
grants
awarded

Our grantee partner organizations

61%

are BIPOC-led

31%

are located in
greater MN

13%

are both BIPOC-led and
located in greater MN



Supported navigators who connected with more than **75,000 people and helped nearly 20,000 with applications** for health insurance coverage



Expanded the Equitable Care and Coverage program to support efforts related to oral healthcare and birth equity, granting **more than \$600,000**



Supported more than 3,000 Minnesota families in child care settings, in collaboration with our grantee partners



Provided \$200,000 in grant funding to support family home visiting and early childhood screenings as part of the Healthy Start program's expanded focus



Partnered with 29 community organizations across Minnesota to help build strong community connections and reduce social isolation



Celebrated significant legislative policy successes, including **\$2B in new funding** supporting Minnesota children and families, the expansion of healthcare coverage to undocumented Minnesotans, and continuous healthcare coverage for children



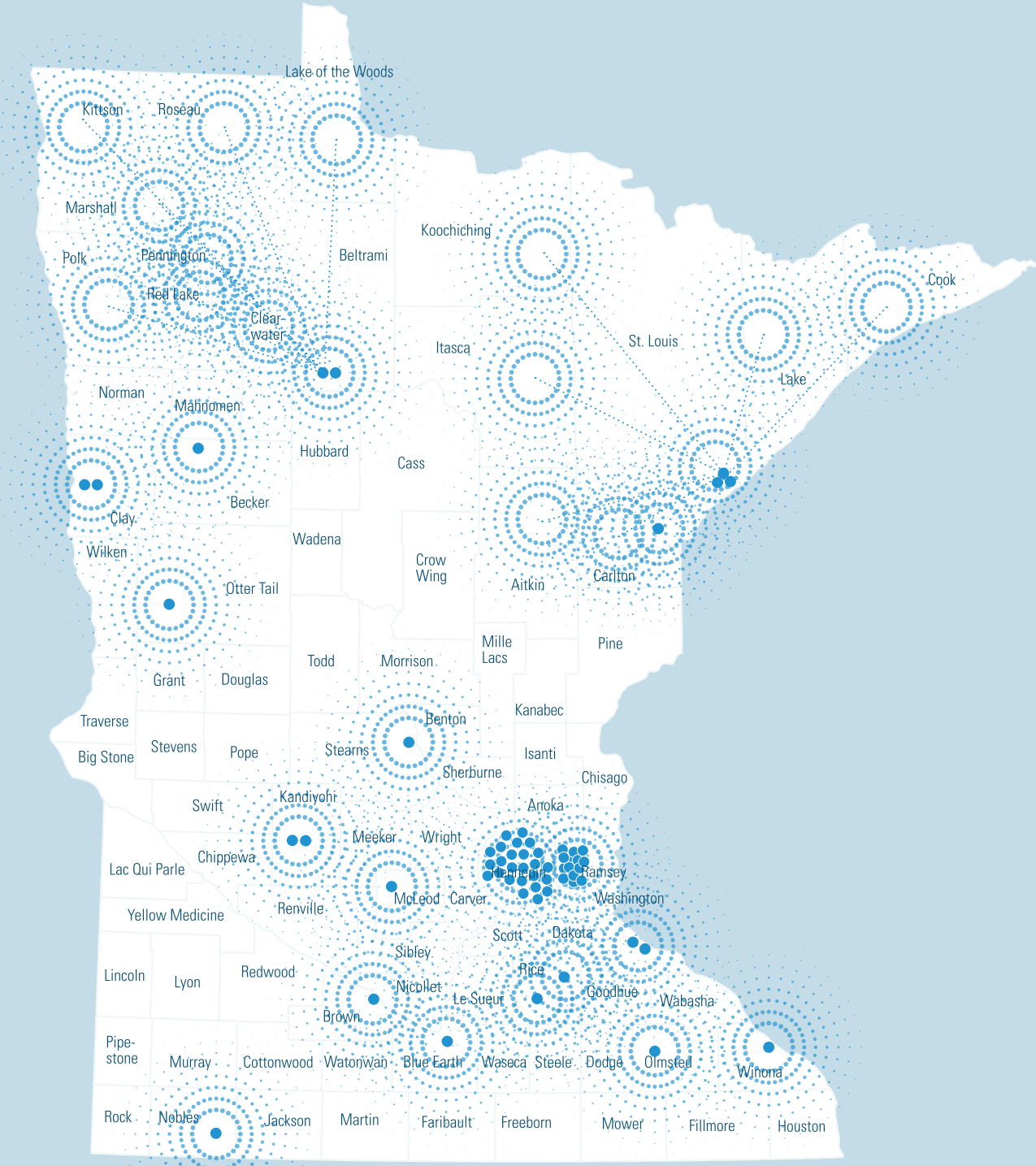
Contributed nearly **\$360,000 in matching funds** to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota's annual Community Giving Campaign and FoodShare drive



Convened **more than 100 community leaders** at our inaugural Building Healthy Generations event

OUR REACH

Through local organizations, regional nonprofit hubs, and statewide support and advocacy efforts, our grantee partners work tirelessly to improve the health of communities across Minnesota.



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

2023–2026

In the first year of our new strategic plan, we continued to **build strong community partnerships to advance racial and health equity**. Our efforts are rooted in three areas:



Equitable Care and Coverage

Expanding enrollment in public health insurance programs and ensuring access to culturally informed and patient-centered care



Healthy Start

Increasing access to quality early care and education, family home visiting and health and developmental screenings



Healthy Connections

Supporting connections within and across communities and generations to reduce social isolation

WITHIN EACH FOCUS AREA, WE APPLY THESE STRATEGIES:

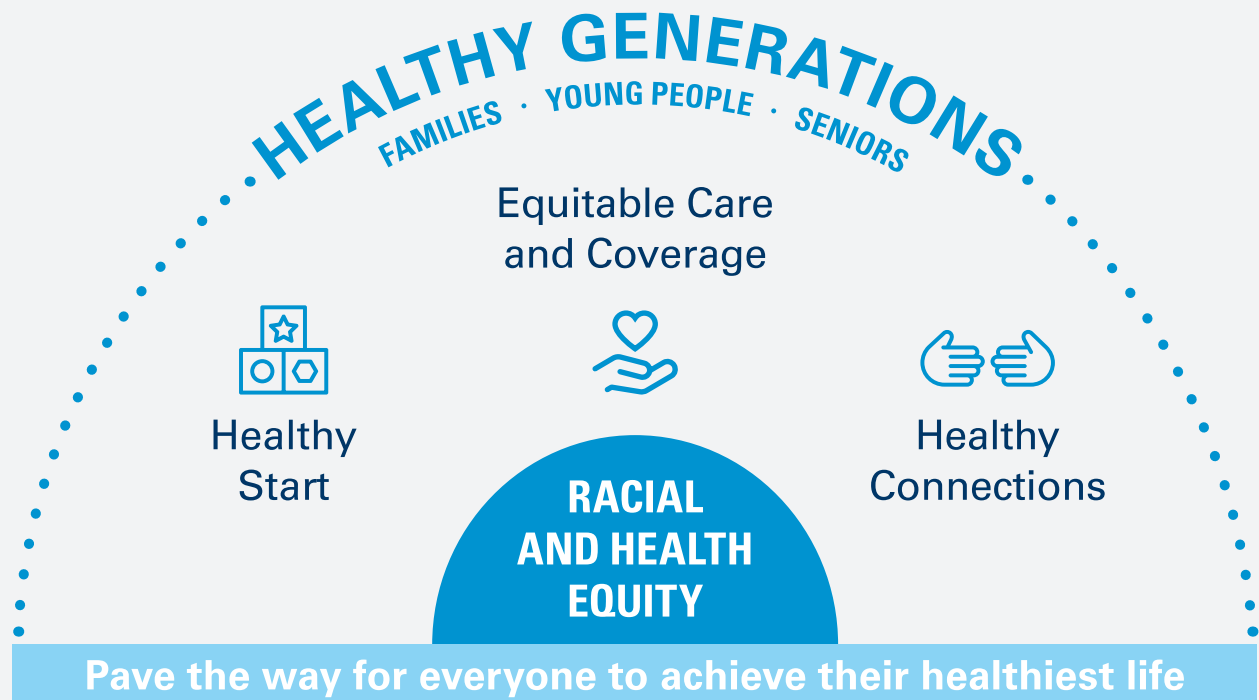
Grantee partnerships. Invest in and support grantee partners focused on advancing racial and health equity.

Advocacy. Advocate for policies that support healthy generations in collaboration with public and private partners.

Comprehensive approach. Support grantee success through evaluation, communications, operational excellence, governance and a mission-driven culture.

Our core focus is on advancing racial and health equity.

The elements of our strategic plan support building healthy generations so families, young people and seniors can achieve their healthiest life.





EQUITABLE CARE AND COVERAGE

Research shows that uninsured people are far more likely than those with insurance to delay healthcare or go without it entirely. The effects of this can be devastating, particularly when preventable or life-threatening conditions are left untreated or chronic diseases go undetected.

Through the Equitable Care and Coverage program, the Foundation partners with nonprofits throughout the state to increase healthcare coverage across Minnesota, support community solutions to accessing equitable care, build capacity in grantee organizations and increase awareness about communities most impacted by a lack of healthcare access.

In 2023, the Foundation's longtime emphasis on increasing access to equitable care and coverage intensified. Minnesotans enrolled in public program coverage under Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare needed to reenroll to keep their coverage for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Approximately 1.5 million Minnesotans were impacted by this process.

Throughout the year, the Foundation supported more than 20 grantee partners in their efforts to ensure eligible Minnesotans maintained their coverage and access to healthcare. These grantee partner efforts resulted in MNsure-certified navigators connecting with more than 75,000 people and assisting nearly 20,000 individuals with applications for health insurance coverage.

In addition to this important work, the Equitable Care and Coverage program also expanded in 2023, with the Foundation granting more than \$600,000 to support efforts related to oral healthcare and birth equity — areas critical to advancing racial and health equity.

Several major advocacy and legislative milestones related to our Equitable Care and Coverage work were also reached in 2023. MinnesotaCare eligibility expanded to undocumented Minnesotans, continuous eligibility for children was implemented, and Medicaid adult dental benefits broadened to include comprehensive care.



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

Northwest Indian Community Development Center

Northwest Indian Community Development Center (NWICDC) was established in 1989 with a mission to identify, coordinate and deliver resources that promote wellness and equity for American Indian families in northwest and north-central Minnesota.

In 2023, the Foundation continued its ongoing support of NWICDC's efforts to address health equity through health coverage outreach, application and enrollment assistance for low-income individuals and families.

The Foundation was also proud to support NWICDC's Maskawizi Wayeshkad program, which focuses on advancing infant and maternal health outcomes among Indigenous families by connecting them with prenatal care, cultural teachings and breastfeeding resources. The program also supports building a network of ongoing care for families with infants.

Throughout the year, NWICDC connected with more than 1,000 Tribal members to discuss health inequities and coverage options, determine program eligibility, and support application and enrollment efforts. In addition, NWICDC continued working to change the narrative about health inequities in Indigenous communities — shifting away from the normalization of disparities and encouraging community members to imagine a more equitable future.



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

Apple Tree Dental

Oral healthcare is a critical component of overall health. Unfortunately, many Minnesotans do not have reliable access to quality dental care.

Apple Tree Dental works to address these barriers within vulnerable communities through education, prevention and restorative dental services. Apple Tree has nine Centers for Dental Health in Minnesota and operates year-round, on-site care programs through partnerships with Head Start centers, schools, group homes and senior assisted living programs.

The Foundation supports Apple Tree's family-centered initiative that delivers on-site dental services to targeted preschools and schools in Twin Cities communities with high social vulnerability, serving children who are uninsured, underinsured or covered through state Medicaid. The Foundation also helped fund the expansion of Apple Tree's pediatric team, its efforts to deepen staff cultural competence to provide care for children with complex needs, and its telehealth services.

Throughout 2023, Apple Tree Dental provided more than 90,000 dental visits and screenings to patients, 80 percent of whom were uninsured or underinsured.

Read more about the Foundation's support of Apple Tree Dental.



Apple Tree Dental



HEALTHY START

The Blue Cross Foundation's Healthy Start program focuses on improving access to and quality of early childhood care and education supports, particularly for marginalized communities, vulnerable young children and their caregivers. These supports include quality care, family home visiting and early health and developmental screenings.

The strong connection between health and quality early childhood care and education is well established. What happens in the first five years of life sets the stage for lifelong health — and children from low-income families show the greatest gains.

Children who have access to quality early childhood care and education go on to:

- Achieve higher levels of education
- Have increased employment and income in adulthood
- Have decreased crime and incarceration rates
- Have lower BMIs and rates of obesity

These are all indicators of lifelong health, and they highlight why the Blue Cross Foundation has been committed to increasing access to early childhood care and education for more than 20 years.

In 2023, the Foundation continued its longtime support of early childhood care and education programs and providers, while also expanding our focus to support grantee partners that provide family home visiting services and early childhood screenings.

We were also immensely proud to collaborate with our partners to achieve unprecedented gains for children and families through advocacy efforts and legislative successes. These efforts resulted in \$2B in new funding to support Minnesota children and families through increased access to child care and early learning, support for early care and education professionals and the workforce, community wellness and mental health support, and more.



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

La RED Latina de Educación Temprana MN



La RED Latina de Educación Temprana MN

An essential component of increasing access to quality, affordable and culturally relevant early childhood care and education is supporting child care providers.

La RED Latina de Educación Temprana MN (The Latino Network of Early Education) has been a driving force in the early childhood arena, creating a model for a family, friend and neighbor (FFN) child care provider network that helps facilitate provider trainings rooted in Latine culture and language.

A longtime grantee partner of the Foundation, La RED recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary. In that time, La RED has grown from one network based in Richfield, to four based in Shakopee, Hutchinson, Mankato and the Twin Cities. It's also been instrumental in increasing FFN child care visibility and securing legislative funds for FFN providers statewide.

As part of establishing three new networks in 2023, La RED conducted 12 monthly provider trainings, engaged with 10 partners across the state and served more than 350 FFN child care providers.

Learn more about La RED's impactful work over the last 10 years [here](#) and [here](#).

Minnesota Coalition for Family Home Visiting



Minnesota Coalition for Family Home Visiting

Research shows large and statistically significant differences between Black families and non-Hispanic white families when it comes to pregnancy complications, death rates among birthing people and babies, anxiety, depression, and child emergency medical care.

Home visiting programs can help reduce these racial and ethnic health disparities — particularly programs with an antiracist focus. Home visits provide parents

with screenings, case management, family support, and referrals that address a family’s physical, mental and health-related needs.

With support from the Foundation, the Minnesota Coalition for Family Home Visiting provides free trainings to family home visitors on the impact of bias and racism on maternal and child health. To better meet the needs of families throughout the state, the coalition also works to increase coordination and collaboration among home visiting and maternal and early childhood services.

In 2023, more than 100 family home visitors participated in the coalition’s antibias training focused on improving maternal and infant health outcomes and stabilizing supports to families, particularly within Minnesota’s Black and Indigenous communities.



HEALTHY CONNECTIONS

When people are connected to their community and feel a sense of belonging, they experience better health outcomes, such as lower blood pressure and stronger immune systems. A lack of connection, meanwhile, can potentially lead to loneliness, social isolation, increased stress and cardiovascular disease.

Many factors impact people's ability and opportunity to connect with each other, including structural racism, discrimination, age, physical ability and geographic location. This can particularly affect older adults, people who identify as Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color, and other historically marginalized communities.

Through Healthy Connections we work with our grantee partners to build connections within and across communities and generations, dismantling inequities that interfere with social connections and supporting efforts to address community trauma. This work helps create and nurture more connected, resilient and inclusive communities where all people experience a sense of belonging.

In 2023, Healthy Connections grantee partners focused on things like reducing loneliness among recent Afghan arrivals, building intergenerational connections between Latine elders and youth, fostering appreciation and understanding of different cultures and traditions, addressing feelings of depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation among LGBTQ youth, and using storytelling to build empathy and connection.



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

QUEERSPACE collective

In Minnesota, 43 percent of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered suicide in the past year, including 52 percent of transgender and nonbinary youth. In 2022, 17 percent of transgender and nonbinary youth attempted suicide.

Conversely, research shows that LGBTQ+ youth who have at least one supportive adult in their life were 40 percent less likely to report a suicide attempt in the last year.

This reality fueled the creation of QUEERSPACE collective, an organization committed to creating space for LGBTQ+ youth to feel safe and empowered to be their true selves. Through mentorship, training and advocacy, QUEERSPACE is working to build a constellation of community support in which LGBTQ+ youth can thrive.

In 2023, QUEERSPACE launched a group mentorship program with support from the Blue Cross Foundation. This program connects LGBTQ+ youth with LGBTQ+ mentors, community artists, activists, scientists and collaborators to learn new skills, gain a greater sense of self, and experience reduced social isolation by building a community of peers and mentors who have similar lived experiences.

[Read more](#) about QUEERSPACE collective.



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

Centro Tyrone Guzman



Centro Tyrone Guzman

Centro Tyrone Guzman's mission is to contribute to the wellbeing of Latine families through a holistic and intergenerational approach to education, health and wellness.

As the oldest and largest Minneapolis-based multiservice Latine organization, Centro works to create connections within and across the Latine community.

One of its primary initiatives is its Manos Montessori program, an intergenerational social enterprise made up of Latine youth and elders. Together, they provide the community with high-quality, handmade Montessori materials that are culturally relevant.

Supported by the Blue Cross Foundation, Manos Montessori addresses racial and health inequities faced by low-income Latines of all ages by engaging them in meaningful, authentic opportunities to contribute to their community as they make connections and build relationships across generations.

The Manos Montessori project continued to grow in 2023, with participants creating new types of Montessori kits focused on practical skills, sensory toys and gardening. These kits will be provided to community members to use in caring for and teaching young children in licensed child care facilities and among family, friend and neighbor child care providers.

COLLABORATIONS

Served on the **Minnesota Department of Health's Health Equity Advisory & Leadership Council**

Advocated for racial, cultural, linguistic, ability and geographic equity to be centered in the **Parent Aware system**

Participated in the **Minnesota Council of Foundations' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Governance, and Government Relations and Public Policy** committees and provided facilitation support for committee retreats

Recognized by **Unidos MN** with the "Leader in the Arena Award," in partnership with the Blue Cross enterprise, for research and advocacy efforts related to healthcare coverage for undocumented Minnesotans

Co-led the **Start Early Funders Coalition**, a partnership of nearly 20 funders across the state focused on improving early childhood equity in Minnesota

Joined the **Minnesota Oral Health Coalition**, a collaborative effort to strengthen Minnesota's oral health community through partnerships, resources and outreach

Convened and facilitated ongoing early childhood advocate meetings to identify legislative priorities and create a strategic plan to **advance child care affordability**

Engaged in the **Department of Human Services' Minnesota Medicaid Equity Partnership** action planning

Supported the launch of the **Department of Human Service's** newly re-formed Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregiver Advisory Committee

Joined "**This is Medicaid,**" a coalition focused on supporting 12-month continuous Medicaid eligibility for Minnesotans 0-19 years old

BUILDING HEALTHY GENERATIONS

What will be the product of our generation?

What will we generate in this room and across this state for better outcomes?

These key questions were posed to more than 100 community and Blue Cross leaders at the Foundation's inaugural Building Healthy Generations event in September 2023.

Created to convene prominent Minnesota leaders in racial and health equity and to meaningfully contribute to some of the most critical conversations of our time, the event featured speakers who included:

- **Dana Erickson**, Foundation Board Member and President and CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota
- **Bukata Hayes**, Foundation Board Chair and Vice President of Racial and Health Equity and Chief Equity Officer at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota
- **Dr. Nathan Chomilo**, Medical Director for Minnesota's Medicaid and MinnesotaCare Programs
- **Sameerah Bilal-Roby**, Founder and Director of the African American Babies Coalition
- **Dr. Antony Stately**, President of the Native American Community Clinic



From left: Bukata Hayes, Dana Erickson, Dr. Antony Stately, Dr. Nathan Chomilo, Sameerah Bilal-Roby and Carolyn Link. Credit: Jason Daum



Building Healthy Generations event participants

"We can see what history has left us. Deep inequities. Inaccessible systems. Chronic failure in partnering with folks for their health. So I ask: What will be the product of our generation? What will we generate across this state for better outcomes?"

BUKATA HAYES

"The commitment to racial and health equity is the cornerstone of the Foundation's work. At the Foundation, and the Blue Cross company at large, we're deeply committed to ensuring everyone has what they need to live their healthiest life."

DANA ERICKSON

"We can't address health equity without addressing racial equity. And we can't address racial equity without engaging with community and being led by community. And that requires that we show up."

DR. NATHAN CHOMILO

"We're all in this together. The work of everybody in this room is to think as family and be kind with each other — because we need it and because the work is so hard."

SAMEERAH BILAL-ROBY

"When we do a good job of taking care of the people at the so-called 'bottom rung,' everybody benefits. When we take better care of our Black and Indigenous people — the people in our communities who are the most disenfranchised, who have the least — everybody benefits."

DR. ANTONY STATELY

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE EVENT?

[Watch highlights](#)

[View the full program](#)

[Read more](#)

2023 GRANTEE PARTNERS

EQUITABLE CARE AND COVERAGE

African American Babies Coalition	Hmong American Partnership	Portico Healthnet
African Community Senior Services	Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid	Rainbow Health
African Community Services	Minnesota Navigator Coalition	Roots Community Birth Center
Apple Tree Dental Clinic	Minnesota Seeds of Justice	State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC)
C.A.R.E. Clinic	Native American Community Clinic	United Community Action Partnership
Children's Dental Services	NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center	Voices for Racial Justice
Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio	Northwest Indian Community Development Center	
Generations Health Care Initiative	Open Door Health Center	

HEALTHY START

African Economic Development Solutions	Healthy Community Initiative	Somali Community Resettlement Services
All Nations Rise	La RED Latina de Educación Temprana MN	SPARK
Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals	Lakes & Prairies Community Action Partnership	Think Small
Children's Defense Fund	Minnesota Coalition for Family Home Visiting	United Community Action Partnership
Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio	MN Zej Zog	Voices for Racial Justice
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College	Northland Foundation	Way to Grow
Greater Twin Cities United Way (Start Early Funders Coalition)	Northside Achievement Zone	West Central Initiative
	Northwest Minnesota Foundation	Wildflower Foundation
		YWCA of Minneapolis

HEALTHY CONNECTIONS

Advocates for Human Rights

Alight

Centro de Trabajadores Unidos
en la Lucha

Centro Tyrone Guzman

Coalition of Asian American
Leaders

Esperanza United

Green Card Voices

Hispanic Outreach of Goodhue
County

Hope Community, Inc.

Immigrant Law Center of
Minnesota

Intercultural Mutual Assistance
Association

Irreducible Grace Foundation

Jewish Community Action
Minnesota

Lao Assistance Center of
Minnesota

Liberty Community Church

Men As Peacemakers

Northland Foundation

OutFront Minnesota

Project FINE

QUEERSPACE collective

Rabata

Reviving the Islamic Sisterhood
for Empowerment

RISE, Inc.

SEWA-AIFW

Southern Minnesota Regional
Legal Services, Inc.

St. Paul Youth Services

Tiwahe Foundation

United Way of the Brown County
Area

West Bank Community
Development Corporation



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