



Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Report









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Introduction

The coronavirus did not create racial inequities in health. It has just uncovered and revealed them. These disparities have long existed in the U.S., and persist across leading causes of death, from the cradle to the grave."

- David R. Williams

sociologist, and chair of the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Harvard School of Public Health

Since its inception in 1999, the African American Health Program (AAHP) has been committed to improving health outcomes for Black/African American residents in Montgomery County by reducing health disparities in six focus areas: diabetes/heart health, maternal and infant health, sexual health, mental health, and oral health. Under the leadership of McFarland & Associates, through the fulfillment of a five-year contract with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), AAHP began Fiscal Year 2021 with a heightened sense of urgency. The health disparities that persist in everyday American life were intensified and further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. While COVID-19 threatened and claimed the lives of so many, the virus took its toll on the mental and emotional health of so many more. AAHP staff, like health care workers everywhere, were tasked with providing a high level of care amid the biggest global health threat of our time, while also trying to protect themselves against that

threat. Undoubtedly, COVID-19 disrupted life on many levels, but disruptions are often also opportunities. Amid this tragedy, AAHP seized on opportunities to innovate and expand on its mission to promote and advance the health of Blacks/African Americans in Montgomery County.

In March 2020, Montgomery County's health officer issued Executive Order 082 – 20, which mandated social distancing as part of Phase 2 of the County's reopening plan. While this certainly complicated the delivery of services, AAHP continued to actively create new pathways for communication and engagement with health promotion efforts in full force. AAHP staff and volunteers distributed thousands of health education materials and supplies at food distribution events throughout the County; AAHP's website and social media platforms provided a wealth of information on health topics within the six focus areas as well as on COVID-19 testing, prevention, and vaccination; and wherever possible, classes met online and events occurred virtually. As a result, AAHP program staff continued to record high program performance metrics despite the requirement for social distancing.

AAHP's value to Montgomery County extends far beyond simply providing health and wellness education and services; Black/African American residents look to AAHP for guidance and support, especially in a time of crisis and during some of the most vulnerable moments in life. AAHP's social worker served on the front lines during the COVID-19 pandemic, helping to provide emotional and mental health support along with professional referrals to those in need. In various engagements throughout the fiscal year, AAHP facilitated the donations of clothing, toys, baby supplies, food, and other essentials for clients.

Despite the unprecedented challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, AAHP sustained its focus on lessening the harm and improving well-being for Black/African American residents and their families. This annual report documents AAHP's efforts and triumphs in delivering free, high-quality health promotion and wellness services and programs to overcome the impact of years of health disparities and the more recent pandemic.



Figure 1. AAHP staff at Grab N' Go/HIV testing event in May 2021



Fighting COVID-19 Together

The fiscal year 2021 saw the rapid development and deployment of health information and services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. AAHP worked collaboratively with DHHS and local partners and stakeholders to assess mental and physical health risk, allocate resources and implement the delivery of services during the COVID-19 pandemic. AAHP launched a robust information campaign that included a new page on the AAHP website offering a wealth of local and state resources such as listings of food distribution events, financial assistance opportunities, special resources for seniors, testing and vaccine information, and a wide array of other health and social services that quickly emerged based on new funding streams. Montgomery County's campaign consistently encouraged the adoption of protective measures like wearing facemasks, frequent handwashing and practicing social distancing to reduce opportunities for transmission. This information was also shared on AAHP's social media platforms.

As a means of engaging and educating AAHP's target audience and clientele, AAHP produced eight informative, culturally relevant, high-quality videos on a variety of health topics to serve as educational resources on AAHP's website and social media channels. They include a series of six videos for the SMILE program providing information on the different stages of pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and postpartum life; one video on how African American women are impacted by breast cancer along with strategies for breast cancer prevention and management; and

one video on sexual health for adolescents and parents/caregivers on appropriate sexual behaviors, STI prevention, and healthy interpersonal relationships.

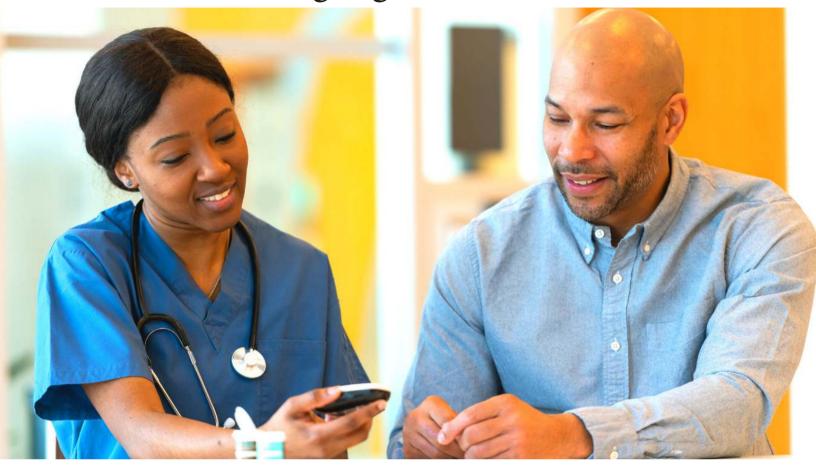
On Saturday, May 22nd, from 9 am to 12:30 pm, AAHP and its community partners hosted its flagship event, the 8th Annual AAHP Community Day. Hosted by Micheline Bowman, news coordinator for WTTG-Fox 5 News, the fun and informative virtual event featured cooking demonstrations, sessions on self-care and container gardening, a walking tour with Girl Trek, an interactive panel featuring medical professionals, and more. AAHP staff prepared and distributed more than 200 "swag bags" to event participants at the Community Day drive-through event two days before the main event. While Community Day 2021 may not have matched the level of activity and involvement as live events in previous years, it was indeed a very special celebration. It was a celebration of life and strength, a bold statement that the show must go on.

The 8th Annual AAHP Community Day was held in conjunction with the inaugural Black Wellness Health Week, an observance intended to promote healthy living and to call attention to various health issues impacting the Black/African American community.



Figure 2. AAHP staffmember conducting a health screening in full personal protective equipment

Focus Area Highlights



Chronic Disease Management Program (CDMP)

We have all learned new things that we need to address regarding our high blood pressure and diabetes. We appreciate the information on eating the right foods to help us maintain good health. Once we change to healthy foods, we no longer crave fast food."

- J. W.

Chronic Disease Management Program Classes

In Fiscal Year 2021, Black/African American County residents continued to benefit from AAHP's Chronic Disease Management Program (CDMP)'s services and resources aimed at preventing and managing chronic diseases. With an innovative, evidence-based curriculum for online health promotion classes, intensive programs and courses for weight management and diabetes prevention and control, as well as blood pressure cuffs, weight scales and other devices for monitoring biometric progress through a Remote Patient Monitoring Program, the CDMP consistently met and surpassed its goals related to the health outcomes of its participants. Countless testimonials from CDMP's participants expressed joy and satisfaction about the weight they lost, their reduced blood pressure, their lowered HBa1c levels, and all the many positive ways the CDMP changed their lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for health literacy and health promotion interventions for Blacks/African Americans, who are considered at higher risk for serious illness and death from COVID-19 due to higher rates of comorbidities and more opportunities for exposure in the workplace and community settings. To that end, the CDMP's weekly online classes were instrumental in helping Black/African American Montgomery County residents understand their health risks and improve their overall health and/or management of chronic disease, which in turn provided further protection against severe sickness and death from COVID-19.

CDMP's online health promotion classes provided an in-depth yet foundational education on a diverse array of topics on health and chronic diseases. These health promotion classes included a Health and Fitness component, consisting of Zumba classes on Tuesday mornings and yoga classes on Wednesday mornings. Taught by professional instructors, both classes emphasized the importance of physical activity in preventing and managing chronic disease and reducing stress. Each class provided 30-45 minutes of exercise, satisfying recommendations from health officials to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day. The CDMP's Health and Nutrition classes took place Thursday afternoons and focused on the benefits of a vegan, plant-based diet and included cooking demonstrations of delicious, plant-based foods, as performed by a nutritionist and Food for Life instructor. Examples of plant-based meals included calypso cauliflower, iced "ban apple" turmeric smoothie, and vegan risotto with miso and spring vegetables.

On Wednesday and Thursday evenings, the Kick Start Your Health (KSYH) I and II class series focused on a monthly health topic and featured a dynamic collection of guest speakers who shared their unique insights and experiences. These special guests included:

• Mr. Presley Nelson, president and founder of Positive Deposits, Inc., a nonprofit organization that focuses on supporting cancer survivors by encouraging positive messages that build hope and inspiration. A two-time cancer survivor at the young age of 37, Mr. Nelson shared his personal experience with both lymphoma and liver cancer, and the importance of early screening and lifestyle behavioral changes.

• Shay Sharpe of Shay Sharpe's Pink Wishes Organization, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that educates, advocates, mentors, supports, shares resources, and grants wishes to children and young women under the age of 40 who experience terminal breast cancer. As a special presentation in observance of Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, Ms. Sharpe discussed her journey of acceptance and healing of breast cancer.

 Donna Green-Goodman, an affiliate of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, talked about her personal experience with a diagnosis of Stage III breast cancer in July of 1996. Her lecture asserts that her plant-based diet helps to effectively manage her breast cancer.

Other notable KSYH classes included November's series on the physiology, prevention, management, and treatment of diabetes in recognition of National Diabetes Awareness Month. The Wednesday classes presented information on how diabetes can be controlled through



Figure 3. Social media graphics advertising featured speakers for KSYH classes

four healthy lifestyle behaviors: evidence-based health education, proper exercise, a plant-based diet, and stress reduction. The Thursday classes focused on gestational diabetes, the impact of diabetes on Alzheimer's Disease and dementia, and the role of fitness and different types of exercise in reducing the risk of diabetes.

December's KSYH classes focused on Hypertension and Heart Health. The curriculum included an overview of the human heart and how it works to supply blood and oxygen to the body and the importance of our vasculature system. The curriculum also covered hypertension and its prevalence, risk factors, complications, treatment, and prevention.

January's KSYH classes focused on cancer and included a combination of live health education and videos. The curriculum included an overview of cancers and definitions as well as information on the prevalence, risk factors, and complications from different types of cancers. Participants learned how to reduce risk, the best ways to cope with a cancer diagnosis, and cancer teams. There were also in-depth classes on lung, breast, and prostate cancers. A highlight was the team incorporating AAHP's breast cancer awareness video and live testimony to help participants better relate to the changes in lifestyle behaviors presented in the curriculum.

The graphs below show the increases in CDMP class attendees.

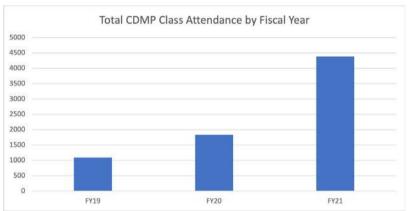


Figure 4. CDMP class attendance by fiscal year

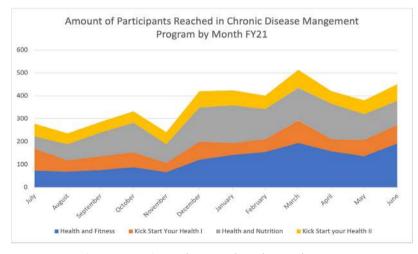


Figure 5. FY21 CDMP class attendance by month

dMeetings

99

It's been easier than expected to stay on the path to a healthier lifestyle thanks to the programs offered by AAHP. I'm grateful to the person who shared the info about AAHP with me!! I've been doing the same—telling others about the great classes offered."

- CDMP student

In Fiscal Year 21, AAHP continued to offer online diabetes education courses. The nine-session course includes videos, discussions, and self-evaluations that help diabetics reach their health goals. By June 2021, dMeetings had enrolled 184 participants with 96 earning certificates of completion!

The following charts present the number of dMeetings participants across FY21 and the number of participants in FY21 compared to FY19 and FY20.

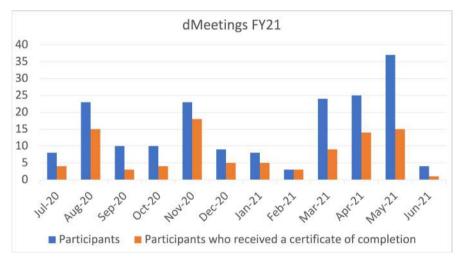


Figure 6. dMeetings participants in FY21

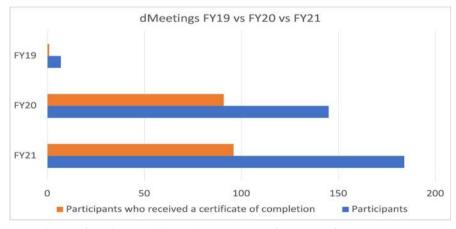


Figure 7. dMeetings participants in FY21 compared to FY19 and FY20

Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP)

In January, CDMP launched the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), a structured lifestyle change program modeled after the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP). AAHP's DPP addresses the increasing burden of prediabetes (borderline diabetes) and type 2 diabetes among Blacks/African Americans in Montgomery County, MD. The NDPP indicates that people who have prediabetes can lower their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 58% if they participate in programs that are focused on preventing the disease. People over 60 years old can reduce this risk even more, at 71%. DPP's curriculum focuses on healthy eating and physical activity, targeting individuals diagnosed with prediabetes who generally have A1C levels between 5.7 and 6.4 or score above 5 on a Risk Assessment Screening Test.

Instructed by AAHP's clinical director, DPP classes met Tuesday evenings at 6 pm on zoom. Throughout FY21, classes were well-attended and maintained a high retention rate. AAHP staff checked in with each participant at the end of the week and filled out the daily DPP Lifestyle Coach Log with the person's weight and activities.

DPP class topics included, but were not limited to the following:

- Finding time for fitness
- Keeping your heart healthy
- Taking charge of your thoughts
- Tracking your food
- Burning more calories than you take in

Participants in the Diabetes Prevention Program achieved high levels of success. Ninety percent attended all classes during the 26 weeks, and four participants who completed at least 15 sessions reversed their prediabetes state.

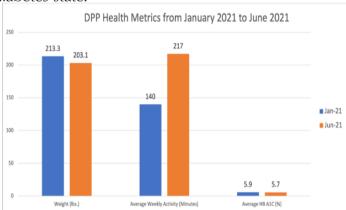


Figure 8. FY21 RPM participants activve days

Remote Patient Monitoring Program (RPM)

In FY21, CDMP initiated the Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) Program to empower CDMP participants with tools for self-monitoring and self-management of their blood pressure, glucose levels, and weight. The goal is to improve awareness of the ABCs: (Hemoglobin A1c, Blood Pressure, and Cholesterol). To encourage daily, weekly, and/or monthly self-monitoring, CDMP staff issued diabetes and hypertension self-management supplies to participants including glucose meters, lancets, strips, and blood pressure monitors. CDMP staff encouraged all participants to monitor their health with these devices and to report their biometric measurements with staff and share it with their primary care physicians. Participants were also offered the option of a "brown

bag" session, a personalized consultation with a pharmacist, physician, and/or nutritionist during which they could ask general health-related questions or specific questions about their nutrition needs and/or medications and receive recommendations for behavior changes or medication within the month.

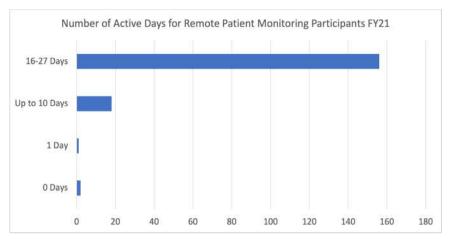


Figure 9. FY21 RPM participants active days

Weight Management Program

Beginning February last year, I was 236 pounds. I am now 186.2 This is me one year later... today: 186.2 pounds, [blood pressue] is normal and no diabetes! I am 50 pounds lighter and healthier. I exercise four to five times a week between one and one-and-a-half hours doing weights for my arms, frog kicks for my gut, [and I] walk a mile and other exercises to tone my body. I am no longer on hypertension meds, my back disease is under control with regular therapy stretches and a NO salt or sugar or starch diet!!!"

- L. G.

AAHP's weight management program rounds out the CDMP's suite of health intervention programs to directly address a central issue in disease prevention. Because of the close but complex association between obesity and the leading causes of death, maintaining a healthy weight is a core facet of health and wellness. The program incorporates weight-loss strategies, self-coaching techniques, and individual and group support and counseling to help participants transform their minds and their bodies. Weight management program participants were a majority female intending to lose weight however, one male was enrolled to gain weight.

In FY21, the Weight Management program helped most of its participants lose weight and keep it off. Enrollees include a former postpartum SMILE mom, and seven participants came from AAHP's food distribution site recruitment efforts. One was from a staff referral. The demand for the weight management program remains high so the program was modified from its initial format to accommodate more people. A total of 34 people were enrolled in the weight management program during the fiscal year.

The Weight Management support group session launched on Friday, December 18th, and continued to meet every other Friday. During the group sessions, participants shared their

successes and roadblocks to support one another. Participants are also supported by an "AAHP Weight Management Inspiration" email sent every weekday morning between 8 am and 9 am as well as a Weight Management memo sent the third Wednesday of every month.

In FY21, a total of 34 people were enrolled in the weight management program. On average, 19 clients were enrolled in the program each month. From July to November 2020, participants in the Weight Management program lost an average off 3.6 lbs per month.

Cancer Prevention

African Americans have the highest cancer mortality rate and the lowest survival rate compared to all other racial/ethnic groups. AAHP's cancer focus area works in conjunction with the CDMP program to emphasize nutrition, physical activity, weight maintenance and stress reduction to reduce cancer risk and eliminate the cancer health disparity. CDMP classes devoted to cancer covered the full spectrum of cancer prevention and management, from cancer screening and self-exams to medications and support after diagnosis. CDMP classes focused on the specific cancers that afflict Blacks/African Americans disporportionately, such as prostate, lung, breast, and colorectal.

In FY21, AAHP produced and published a video on Black/African American women and breast cancer. The video explains how Black/African American women can reduce their risk and demonstrates how to conduct a breast self-exam. The video also emphasizes the importance of yearly mammograms when women turn 40, as recommended by the American Cancer Society.

Because cancer screenings were largely put on hold to prioritize urgent needs and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in healthcare settings, many women opted out of having mammograms during the pandemic. On October 6th, AAHP teamed up with Breast Center for Washington to bring their "Mammo-van" to The People's Community Baptist Church to conduct mammograms.



Figure 10. AAHP staff with the Mammo-van on October 6th

Thanks to these efforts 15 women signed up and 11 completed their screening. As a safety measure, the van only allowed one patient at a time, and surfaces were disinfected after each screening. Each woman screened received goodie bags filled with culturally appropriate health information as well as hand sanitizers, pillboxes, masks, and jewelry.

Prostate cancer continues to be major issue facing Black/African American men as they are twice as likely to die from prostate cancer than White men. While the reasons behind this grievous disparity are largely unknown, it is well documented that lifestyle behaviors such as eating a nutrient-rich diet, being physically active, maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, and drinking only in moderation reduce cancer risk. At AAHP's Brother 2 Brother Symposium on November 7th, guest speakers discussed prostate cancer prevention and screening and advised that Black/African American be screened for prostate cancer more proactively. Forty-four men attended this event



Figure 11. Social media graphic on cancer disparity



Maternal and Infant Health

ee

We truly view Nurse Saundra as another mother. The feedback she would give would be so timely. Her attention to detail was amazing and she was such an avid listener. I had no question that my children were getting the best care. Nurse Saundra has been such an amazing resource that I have provided her information to others in hopes that they would also take advantage of the free resources available to Montgomery County residents."

-A. Y. H., PH.D., LN SMILE mom

Throughout FY21, AAHP's SMILE (Starting More Infants Living Equally healthy) program continued to provide high-quality support and care to Black/African American moms and expectant moms and their infants. It has been well-documented that Black/African American women are more than three times as likely to die as a result of pregnancy complications than White women and that Black/African American babies are more than four times as likely to die from problems linked to low birth weight compared to White babies. Multiple factors drive these disparities, including differences in healthcare quality, underlying health conditions, systemic racism, and unconscious prejudice. Maternal stress during pregnancy has been associated with low birth weight, preterm birth, and other negative health outcomes for infants. In a time marked by an unprecedented viral epidemic and intense political and social turmoil, stress was somewhat unavoidable, especially for moms facing additional concerns over being infected with COVID-19 while pregnant or breastfeeding. Thus, the SMILE program's services and interventions were immensely critical in FY21.

Despite suspending in-person home visits, the SMILE team strengthened its commitment to serving mothers and their infants with increased telehealth connections via phone calls and virtual meetings. These virtual face-to-face interactions provided opportunities for expanded conversations about prenatal and postnatal care and fostered new relationships among moms in dire need of companionship and social support.

On January 15th, the SMILE team hosted a virtual baby shower in collaboration with Amerigroup. Nineteen (19) moms were in attendance. The virtual baby shower featured a doula as a special guest and included items such as a mini refrigerator, infant playpens, car seats, diapers, clothing, snuggles, baby bouncers, diaper disposal, and gift bags.

FY21 saw the birth of the SMILE program's first set of triplets, two girls and one boy born on January 18th to 36-year-old J.P., who is married with four other children.

The stories of SMILE moms that experience depression and anxiety, neglect and abuse, undocumented immigration status, language barriers, unemployment



Figure 12. AAHP staff with SMILE baby

or underemployment, homelessness, and other complex social and psychological issues were brought to the attention of AAHP's social worker. Through intensive collaboration and rigorous efforts, the SMILE team and AAHP's social worker helped SMILE clients get housing, transportation, food, personal safety, and many other crucial needs. For instance, a 20-year-old homeless and pregnant woman was safely placed in a maternity home after being denied housing from a woman's shelter due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This course of events demonstrates the impact of AAHP's support and services during a crisis.



Figure 13. SMILE triplets and family

As AAHP pivoted its program offerings online in FY21, the SMILE team produced a series of educational videos that provided instruction and guidance for SMILE moms through their journey from pregnancy to the first few years of their child's life. Published on AAHP's YouTube channel and shared on AAHP's website, the SMILE digital library contains the following videos:

- Preterm Labor (PTL)
- Childbirth and Recovery
- Newborn Care
- Postpartum Depression
- Breastfeeding
- Developmental Milestones

The SMILE team also shared wisdom and information via live webinars. In July 2020, AAHP's consultants presented webinars about the importance of

oral health during pregnancy, tips on preventing COVID-19 infections, the health risks of depression, and the special challenges faced by Black/African American women. On November 24th, 2020, a SMILE nurse offered a webinar on Preconception Health. In April 2021, a graduate student intern from George Washington University conducted a webinar for preand post-partum mothers about the importance of managing finances during the pandemic. Her practicum presentation was entitled "Surviving COVID-19 Reasonably Under Budget" (SCRUB). The purpose of the webinar was to provide information to all SMILE participants about ways to manage financial matters and reduce stress caused by financial challenges that can affect mental health and well-being.

Despite the pandemic, in FY21, the SMILE program's average monthly caseload increased by 2%, from 141 in FY20 to 144 cases. The FY21 caseload included 58 infants and 86 mothers consisting of 29 prenatal and 58 postpartum cases. A total of 57 babies were born in the SMILE program in FY21, with 47 born healthy and at a normal weight. New prenatal cases were enrolled using the Health Related Social Needs screening tool developed by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid, which is now incorporated into all new SMILE clients' enrollment processes. Assessing psychosocial requirements is crucial in ensuring that clients can navigate medical appointments, get food on the table every day, and feel safe while traveling to places they need to be.

As the birth rate declined, in Montgomery County and nationwide, so did the number of DHHS recommendations. While fewer SMILE participants were anticipated, more potential Black/ African American mothers needed to be made aware of and benefit from the program. To address the decline in referrals, the SMILE team initiated a multi-pronged strategy to increase the number of new prenatal cases. The first step was reengaging with OB/GYNs and pediatricians who had cared for mothers enrolled in SMILE before the pandemic. This included hosting virtual meet-and-greets and sending updated informational packages about AAHP's services. Secondly, the nurses reached out to daycare centers throughout Montgomery County since their clients are likely to become pregnant in the future. Thirdly, the SMILE team connected with sororities and other woman-centered societies. One SMILE nurse began seeking referrals through her church and music ministries as well as LinkedIn to implement a strategic referral outreach strategy.

The following charts document the SMILE program's risk categories, ethnic distribution, and performance for FY21.

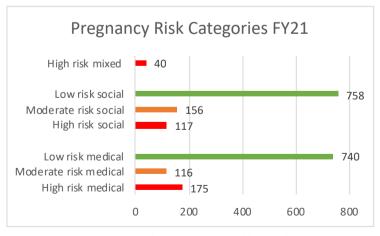


Figure 14. FY21 Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monthly Distribution Average

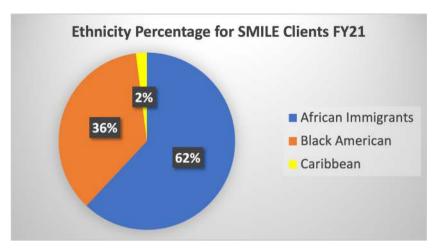
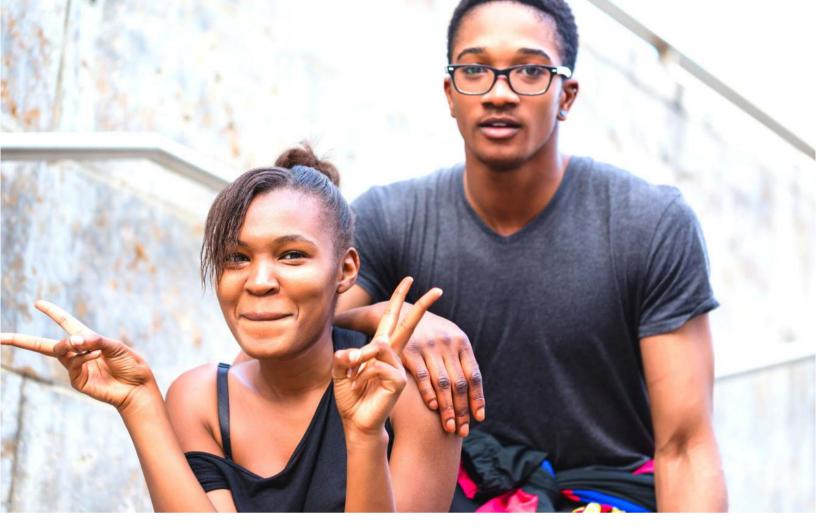


Figure 15. Average SMILE Client Ethnicity Percentage for FY21

Table 1. FY20 SMILE Performance Dashboard

	Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Ju							Jun	n Monthly				
	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	Average
A) Currently Active Moms	79	81	79	80	82	85	90	91	95	92	89	90	86
Prenatal (still pregnant)	24	26	27	26	27	28	31	37	35	30	27	25	29
Postpartum (Moms who have delivered)	55	55	52	54	55	57	59	54	60	62	62	65	58
B) All infants	55	54	52	54	55	57	60	57	58	65	65	69	58
Single births	55	54	52	54	55	57	57	54	55	60	60	64	55
Multiples	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	5	5	5	2
Case Load(A + B)	134	135	131	134	137	142	152	148	153	157	154	159	144
BIRTH OUTCOMES	Jul 2020	Aug 2020	Sep 2020	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Apr 2021	May 2021	Jun 2021	FY 2021 Totaz
Number of Births	2	4	3	3	2	5	4	5	7	11	5	6	57
Number of Pre-term Births	0	0	0	1	1	0	4	1	1	1	2	0	11
% Healthy Birth Weight (% of total deliveries)	100%	100%	100%	75%	67%	100%	50%	83%	88%	83%	57%	100%	84%
Number of Low Birth Weight (LBW)	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
Number of Very Low Birth Weight (VLBW)	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	1	2	2	0	9
Infant deaths (includes stillbirths)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Unfavorable Birth Outcomes (Congenital Anomaly, Fetal Demise, Miscarriage)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	3
Services	Jul 2020	Aug 2020	Sep 2020	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Apr 2021	May 2021	Jun 2021	FY 2021 Total
Total Home Visits	0	0	0	2	1	2	3	0	0	1	0	0	9
Telephonic Consultations	117	124	113	173	178	185	207	202	221	222	197	194	2133
Community Referrals Made	27	21	5	25	27	21	12	19	22	23	43	18	263
Classes/Presentations Completed	4	3	4	5	6	9	2	4	7	17	20	22	103



Sexual Health



This is a public health crisis and while this mirrors national trends, it is critical that we provide prevention information so that adolescents and young adults can make safe decisions."

- Dr. Travis Gayles

Montgomery County health officer on the rising rates of gonorrhea and chlamydia in Montgomery County

In FY21, the HIV/AIDS/STI focus area remained committed to its mission to promote sexual health and reduce the spread of STIs by providing sexual health education, resources, and testing services to Black/African American Montgomery County residents. According to the CDC, the number of new HIV infections has stabilized or decreased, but the number of new cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis has steadily increased over the past ten years. Nationwide and in Montgomery County, Blacks/African Americans remain the demographic most affected by HIV, AIDS, and other STIs, with the rate of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis three to five times higher among Blacks/African Americans compared to White Americans. This disturbing data calls for a clear, strong, and precise response.

With restrictions in place for in-person events and testing services, AAHP's sexual health team's response focused on crafting compelling sexual health education materials and online

engagement opportunities. Under the leadership of the HIV navigator and with the assistance of AAHP consultants, the sexual health team developed "Sexual Health for Adolescents," an upbeat video featuring AAHP staff offering unflinching insights on a range of sexual health topics including consent, condom negotiation, decision-making, and more. The video aims to inspire conversations between parents and teenagers on these topics, as well as bust common myths that might deter them from engaging in safer sex practices. The final video was completed and published on AAHP's website in January.

The sexual health team also collaborated on the creation of a Kahoot trivia game to entice young people between the ages of 13-20 to learn about sexual health in a fun manner. The team spent several weeks developing and testing the game while the event was promoted heavily throughout Montgomery County. Over days (six sessions), members of AAHP's sexual health team hosted the game, with each session lasting 20-25 minutes and involving 25 participants.

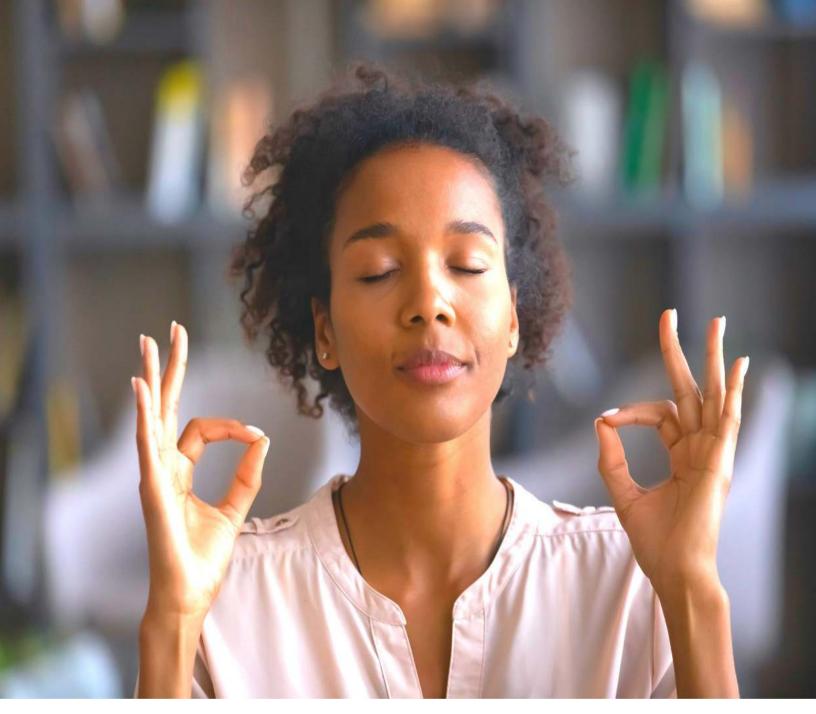


Figure 16. Social media graphic promoting teen sexual health event

In August, AAHP resumed HIV/AIDS testing at Progress Place, the Men's Homeless Shelter, and the Dennis Avenue Health Clinic. This was an important step because lack of access to STD testing and prevention services can contribute to increases in STIs. Resuming HIV testing services while also enforcing and encouraging safety measures like social distancing, mask-wearing, and frequent handwashing can serve to protect against both COVID and HIV.

Table 2. FY21 Testing Data

African-	Americans			
	Age Group	Male	Female	Total
	1947 - 1969	31	35	66
	1970 - 1989	70	37	107
	1990+	49	41	90
Total		150	113	263
All Othe	ers			
		Male	Female	Total
	1947 - 1969	12	2	14
	1970 - 1989	24	13	37
	1990+	17	21	38
Total		53	36	89
GRAND TOTAL		203	149	352



Mental Health

The start of Fiscal Year 2021 was accompanied by increased anxiety and stress as COVID-19 continued to ravage the country. Waves of political and racial unrest also took their toll. With the mental health of many Blacks/African Americans on the brink, AAHP's social worker provided invaluable care and mental health support across all program areas by having telephonic consultations for people who needed assistance or referrals for a professional therapist. She also set up hours dedicated specifically for personalized one-on-one sessions.

Each month, AAHP's social worker provided mental health support to many County residents on an ongoing basis. To determine how their needs could best be met, clients were screened utilizing AAHP's online mental health assessment, which proved to be an excellent preliminary tool to guide users on the right path for help and healing.

In FY21, 228 people took a mental health screening test with the results below.

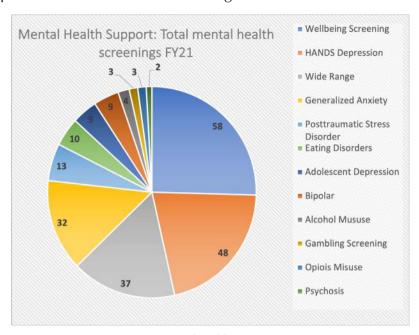


Figure 17. Mental Health Screenings FY21

AAHP's social worker participated in several webinars and virtual events throughout the fiscal year. On April 24th, AAHP's social worker joined the National Council of Negro Women (Montgomery County, MD Section) for a presentation on "The African American Woman & Stress." The discussion involved the risk factors and protective factors for mental illness, racial bias in providing care, the health impacts of chronic stress, and resources for additional support.

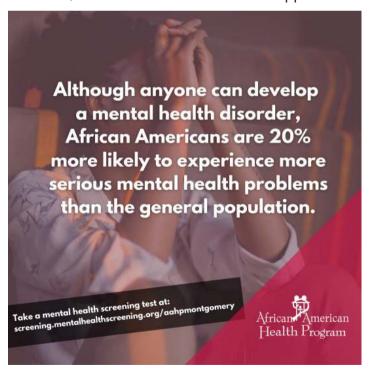


Figure 18. Social media graphic promoting AAHP's



Men's Health Initiative

AAHP's Men's Health Initiative engages Black/African American men in Montgomery County with conversations and opportunities focused on improving their physical, mental, and emotional health. Black/African American have the lowest health status and the shortest lifespan compared to all other demographics. Far fewer men than women attend AAHP's CDMP classes, so the Men's Health Initiative forges a more direct pathway to guidance on health promotion.

During August, the staff surveyed community stakeholders to gather information about health and well-being topics of special concern to Black men in Montgomery County. The survey was distributed through email to approximately 200 men. One hundred and thirty of these men were individuals AAHP encountered during COVID-19-related outreach earlier in the calendar year.

Also, the AAHP staff contacted representatives of men's ministries at 15 churches to determine their level of interest in developing and implementing health and wellness virtual meetings through June 30, 2021. This outreach and the subsequent discussions kept health issues other than COVID-19 on the table.

Additionally, outreach discussions were conducted with the chair from the Guide Wright Program, a mentorship program that helps young Black/African American men prepare for college and the professional world including health care.

The series of collaborative Men's Dialogue and Prayer Meetings at People's Community Baptist Church continued. AAHP supported the workgroups that responded to the concerns raised in the areas of Coalition Building and Youth, Voter Mobilization, Economic Development, Policing and Wellness.

On Saturday, November 7th, AAHP partnered with the Gaithersburg-Rockville Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi to host a 3-hour Brother 2 Brother virtual symposium. AAHP's clinical director, CDMP instructor, and oral health consultant all presented on the overall health status of Black/African American men in Montgomery County and offered strategies for diabetes prevention, cancer, maintaining good oral hygiene, and protecting oneself against COVID-19.

In keeping with the theme of community education and collaboration, the African American Health Program conducted a webinar with Medstar Health and the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity on ways to improve cardiovascular health.

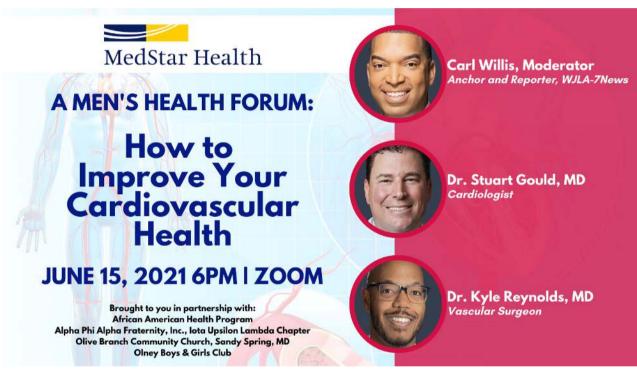


Figure 19. Social media graphic promoting MedStar Health's Men's Health Forum



Healthy Aging

The advent of COVID-19 coincided with AAHP's second fiscal year providing special services and resources to protect and promote the health of Black/African American residents over the age of 55. Because 90% of severe sickness or death occur in persons aged 65 and older, the initiation of AAHP's new platform for seniors was timely. On AAHP's website in Senior's Corner and on the COVID resources page, seniors could access a wealth of resources such as listings of grocery store senior shopping hours, food distribution sites, and COVID-19 testing sites as well as information on AAHP's CDMP classes, which offers opportunities to socialize along with health promotion education.

In FY21, AAHP and Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service (MCFRS) were awarded a 2020 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo). The Senior Home Safety

Visit Program addressed the increased risk of dying in a fire that African Americans face compared to the general population. In this partnership, AAHP and MCFRS conducted hour-long home visits that included health screenings administered by AAHP and fire and injury prevention evaluations administered by MCFRS. Health screenings included blood pressure, blood glucose, weight, and other measures. The fire safety evaluation included checking smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and developing an individualized fire escape plan. This prestigious award recognized the success of the Senior Home Safety Visit Program and acknowledged the hard work of AAHP and MCFRS in helping African American seniors in Montgomery County prevent injury and death in their homes.

AAHP's social worker participated in the American Muslim Senior Society's virtual conversations on social isolation to address the health risks faced by seniors in the County, an effort which helped raise awareness of services needed by County residents.



Figure 20. AAHP staff and Montgomomery County Fire and Safety at Senior Home Inspection Event

Partnerships

AAHP's success in engaging diverse populations within the Black/African American community is due in large part to its partnerships with faith-based groups, non-profit organizations, local agencies, universities, and community leaders. These collaborative relationships have allowed AAHP to expand its scope, increase its visibility, and build trust, therefore contributing to a thriving network of mission-oriented people and organizations bound by a shared vision and goodwill.

A selection of AAHP's fruitful partnerships in FY21 follows:

The American Muslim Senior Society (AMSS) is an organization that equips caregivers with culturally sensitive tools and resources to improve their quality of life. As previously noted, AAHP's social worker participated in their virtual conversations on efforts to help raise awareness of services needed by County residents. AAHP's social worker also assisted AMSS as they prepared for their Equity and Social Justice Event, an event that celebrated the AMSS's third anniversary.

The Silver Spring Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, is an African American women's service organization. On March 7th, AAHP's social worker participated as a panelist for "Teen Talk: A Conversation About Teen Mental Health," providing excellent remarks that were praised as "thought-provoking, educational, and lively" by event organizers. The Links also sponsored AAHP Community Day.

Manna Foods is an organization whose mission is to end hunger through food distribution, education, and advocacy. Manna Foods donated food at many AAHP events, including the SMILE program's virtual baby shower and AAHP's health screenings.

Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) is a federal initiative launched by the County health officer on World AIDS Day. AAHP's HIV Navigator collaborated with EHE's program manager to implement the EHE's vision to improve access to high-quality care for people living with HIV and to provide culturally informed, judgment-free, HIV prevention services to communities.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is a civil rights organization formed in 1909. NAACP has served as a sponsor or contributor to many AAHP events, including AAHP Community Day and AAHP's sexual health team's outreach to teens.

The Patcha Foundation is a multinational not for profit organization that provides comprehensive healthcare services. The Patcha Foundation co-sponsors AAHP's health screenings.

University of Maryland-College Park Kidney Disease Screening and Awareness Program (KDSAP) provides free kidney health



Figure 21. AAHP at Patcha Health Screening

assessments as well as kidney health education. Representatives from KDSAP served as guest speakers for the CDMP's Kick Start Your Health class.

Assorted fraternities and sororities in Montgomery County have contributed as partners, sponsors, and donors for various AAHP events and initiatives. These organizations include but are not limited to Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Xi Sigma Omega chapter and Theta Omega Omega chapter; Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Iota Upsilon Lambda chapter; Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Eta Pi Beta chapter, who all participated as partners for AAHP Community Day.

A more comprehensive listing of AAHP's partners can be found in the Appendix.

Food Distribution Events

To ease the economic burden and food insecurity brought on by job losses and furloughs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Montgomery County and local organizations began offering fresh produce and nonperishable groceries at food distribution events called "Grab N' Go." These events not only fed families, but also provided valuable opportunities for AAHP staff to conduct outreach and publicize AAHP's services and programs to Black/African American residents. As people waited in their cars for food, AAHP staff handed out gift bags filled with information on diabetes, weight management, sexual health, nutrition, hypertension, and other health-related topics. Hand sanitizer and condoms were also included. Sites included The People's Community Baptist Church, The Windsor at Briggs Chaney/East County, White Oak Tower, Kings and Priests International Church, Kingdom Fellowship Church AME, Nourish Now, and Montgomery County Public Schools. AAHP staff continued to track encounters with individuals at food distribution sites, making follow up calls and referrals to other County-supported programs as needed.



Figure 22. AAHP staff distributing AAHP's health education materials at a food distribution event

Online Outreach and Promotion

In FY21, AAHP's website, e-newsletter, and social media channels continued to provide valuable content that creatively expressed AAHP's mission and vision; offered relevant health information and resources; promoted AAHP's classes, services, and programs; and inspired readers to improve their health and well-being by making health-promoting lifestyle choices.

Website

As AAHP's "digital home," AAHP's website (www.aahpmontgomerycounty.org) improved and expanded in FY21, increasing its value and relevance to Black/African American Montgomery County residents. Clients look to AAHP's website as trusted source for advice and information to help them navigate the COVID-19 pandemic as well as their own personal health and the health of their loved ones. On AAHP's website's COVID-19 page, visitors can find up-to-date listings of food distribution sites, COVID vaccine and testing information, financial support and rental assistance listings, and more. The home page features a pop-up encouraging visitors to get vaccinated for COVID-19 and provides a number they can text for vaccine locations.

FY21 presented the special opportunity to expand AAHP's digital education resources while in-person educational events were suspended. AAHP's new digital library includes educational videos on maternal and infant health, adolescent sexual health, and breast cancer.

In December, AAHP published the AAHP cookbook on AAHP's blog as a special gift to the

African American
Health Program

AAHP
COOKBOOK

HEALTHY RECIPES FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FROM THE
AFRICAN AMERICAN HEALTH PROGRAM

The African American Health Program
1401 Rockville, MD 20852
WWW.ambrontognomeycounty.org
124-01 777-18333

Figure 23. Cover of AAHP's cookbook

AAHP audience. A collection of the featured recipes from Health Notes, the AAHP cookbook showcases a variety of plant-based dishes for any occasion. Recipes are updated on a regular basis.

In FY21, AAHP's website recorded approximately 2,000 visits per month.

Health Notes

To increase its visual appeal, AAHP's e-newsletter, Health Notes, received a "makeover" in FY21, and now boasts a sleek header with a vibrant, inviting picture that sets the mood for the featured content. Published on the first or second Wednesday of the month, Health Notes includes health tips, news, healthy recipes, videos, and information on health issues that disproportionately affect Blacks/African Americans. It also advertises for upcoming events and campaigns, providing registration links when available.

Below is a listing of newsletter content by month in FY21:

 July – A feature article titled "Black Montgomery County Faces COVID-19," an additional feature on National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month and a video from a social media influencer on how going vegan changed her life

 August – A feature article on National Breastfeeding Month and Black Breastfeeding Week, a special article on children's mental health and a video on how Black/African American women can reduce breast

cancer risk

 September – A feature article on Infant Mortality Awareness Month, an article on cancer prevention in the wake of Chadwick Boseman's death, and a video on colorectal cancer

October – A feature article on Breast Cancer Awareness Month and

an oral health video on brushing teeth correctly

 November – A feature article on American Diabetes Month, a video on what yoga does to the body, an introduction to the SMILE digital

library, and promotion for DPP

 December – A feature article titled "Taking a Stand Against HIV/AIDS," in observance of World AIDS Day, a special feature on GirlTrek and Black Girls RUN, and an animated video on what sugar does to the body

 January – An article with notes for the New Year, a feature article on Cervical Health Awareness Month, and a video on how the COVID-19 pandemic diminished the quality of care for a pregnant

mom, leading to her death

 February – Feature articles on National Heart Month and Black History Month, a special article on the Moderna vaccine and one of its creators, Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, and a video on what COVID does to the heart

March – An article on quarantining with kids, an article about going

meatless, and a video about vegan meal prep

 April – A feature article on National Minority Health Month, a sexual health feature, promotion for National HIV Testing Day, and a video on African Americans and COVID vaccines

- May A feature article on Women's Health Month, a special feature on the SMILE triplets, a video on what exercise does to the body, and an advertisement for the AAHP Community Day and Black Health Wellness Week
- June A feature article on Men's Health Month with a video on "John Henryism" explaining how stress and racism affects black men, and promotion of MedStar Health Men's Health Forum

Health Notes added 69 new subscribers in FY21. The FY21 open rate of 21% was slightly lower than FY20's open rate of 23%. Both numbers are higher than the industry average of 20%. The FY21 click rate of 8% was higher than FY20's click rate of 6%. Both numbers are substantially higher than the industry average of 2%.



Figure 24. Health Notes screenshot

Social Media

AAHP's social media channels continued to grow their followings and increase in quality and quantity of content. Followers are informed on the CDMP classes for that day, including the topics covered and the recipes demonstrated during the Health and Nutrition classes. Followers can register for these classes directly from Facebook or Twitter and via the Linkin.bio feature on Instagram.

The most notable content addition in FY21 was AAHP's new Instagram Highlights, which serves as a menu to view posts on AAHP's COVID-19 resources, observances, services, and classes. The COVID-19 portal includes shared posts publicizing upcoming testing events and relevant news. The observances section shows all posts related to the current monthly or weekly observances. The services and classes menu items enable followers to access foundational information about AAHP, and includes posts showcasing all programs, services, and classes.



AAHP

AAHP is committed to eliminating health disparities and improving the health of Black residents of Montgomery County, MD... more linkin.bio/aahpmoco 1401 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland

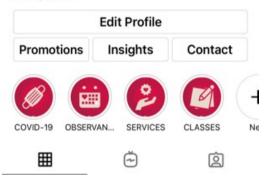


Figure 25. Screenshot of AAHP's instagram's page's highlights area



Figure 26. Screenshots of AAHP's instagram's page's highlights

1,961 subscribers, 62 new contacts

15,129 21% 8% click rate

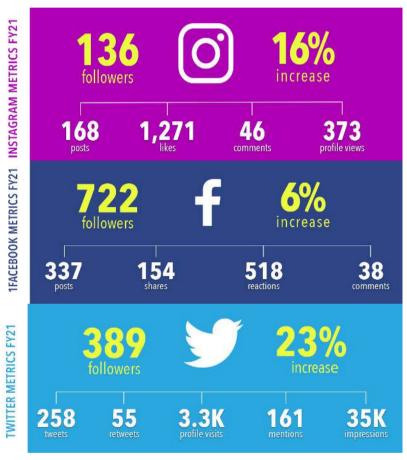


Figure 27. AAHP media analytics for FY21

APPENDIX Community Partners

In FY21, AAHP engaged with a broad range of Community Partners, including County agencies, other public health organizations, hospitals, churches, doctors, non-profits, associations, corporations, and educational institutions.

Adventist Health Care Center for Health Equity & Wellness

Adventist Hospital

Aetna's Community Development

Department

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity American Bone Health American Diversity Group

Anthem Health

Asbury Methodist Village

ASPIRÉ

Black Women's Health Imperative

Bones N Balance Clinical Solutions, Inc.

Colesville United Methodist Church

Cygnus Research Corporation Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

The Fatherhood Initiative

First Baptist Church of KenGar

Generation Hope

Howard University Cancer Center Howard University School of Divinity Kelly Collaborative Medicine, LLC

Kingdom Fellowship AME (KFAME) Church

Kings & Priest International Church

Know Your Lemons Lee's Little Leapers

Leisure World Association of African

American Culture Manna Food

Maryland State Office on HIV & AIDS

MobileMed

Montgomery College

Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth & Families

Montgomery County Department of Recreation

Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service Montgomery County Domestic Violence

Coordinating Council

Montgomery County Food Council

Montgomery County Housing Opportunities Commission

Montgomery County NAACP

Montgomery County Office on Aging & Disabilities

Montgomery County Office of Community & Family Engagement

Montgomery County Public Schools

Montgomery County School Health Services

Mt. Calvary Baptist Church Mt. Jezreel Baptist Church

My Active Senior

NÁACP Montgomery County Branch Parents'

National Center for Health Care Capacity Building

The People's Community Baptist Church

Plum Gar Recreation Center

The Prevention of Blindness Society of

Metropolitan Washington

Progress Place

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

Quality of Life Pharmacy & Health, Inc.

ResCare

Rockville Senior Center

Soroptimist International of the Americas

Sweets Girlz

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

University of Maryland School of Public Health

& Kinesiology Us Helping Us

United Healthcare

Upcounty Prevention Network

Washington Adventist Hospital Outpatient

Cancer Education Program

WISH (Wellness & Independence for Seniors at

Home)

White Oak Recreation Center



Contact Us

African American Health Program
1401 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
(240) 777-1833
info@aahpmontgomerycounty.org

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.aahpmontgomerycounty.org

OTHER RESOURCES:
www.knowyourlemons.com
www.cdc.org
www.cancer.org
www.komen.org

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Meeting Accessibility Policy: Montgomery County will provide sign language interpreters and other auxiliary aids or services upon request--with as much advance notice as possible, preferably within at least three (3) business days before the event. Contact Ms. Arlee Wallace, Program Manager for the African American Health Program at 240-777-1451 or send a request to arlee.wallace@montgomerycountymd.gov. Taking these steps will help us have sufficient time to best meet your needs.



