

***Community Empowerment
through
Popular Education***

***An Innovative Approach to Promoting
Healthy Housing Practices***

Presented by:

Our Kitchen Table

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Founder and Executive Director***

Overview



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- WHO IS OUR KITCHEN TABLE?
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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



Take Aways

**A Different Approach To
Connecting Environment
And Health Disparities
To Healthy Home Practices**

**Shared Power Lends Itself
To Community Ownership
And Sustainability**

**The Best Way To Approach
Healthy Home Practices Is
Through Hands-On
Demonstration and Practical
Experience**

Who is “Our Kitchen Table?”



Began in 2003 as a call to action

Women led advocacy group

A multi-racial, intergenerational group of women and youth

A grassroots, nonprofit membership organization

Serves urban communities of greater Grand Rapids, Michigan

Supports existing community resources.

A participating organization in the Building Movement Project

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Our Kitchen Table is to promote social justice and serve as a vehicle to empower female parents/caregivers and others to improve the health outcomes of their children through information, community organizing, and advocacy.



MODELS:

Building Movement Project

Collaborative Problem Solving Model

Popular Education and Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Triple Bottom Line

CEHRC – Children's Environmental Health Resource Center



Most initiatives begin and end with one's individual behavior.

Ours begins by acknowledging the self-interest that may bring a participant to the table,

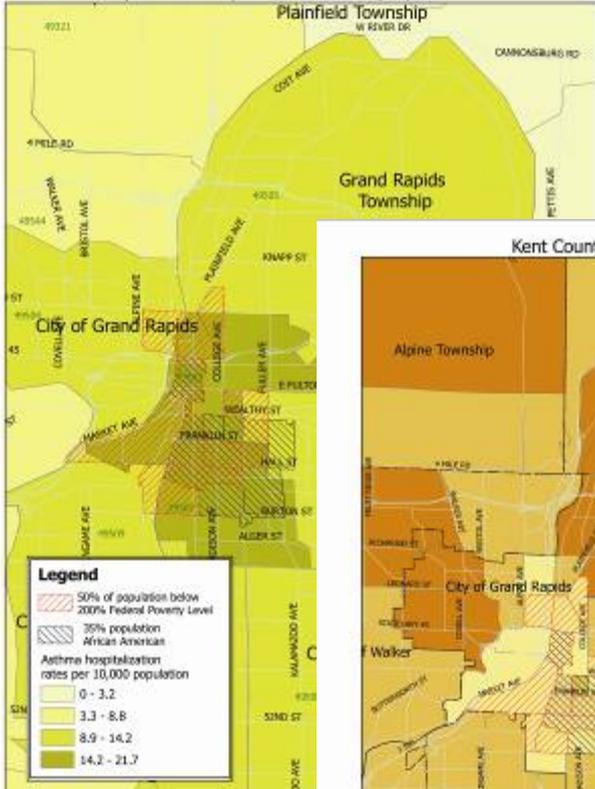
it then progresses through a look at systemic behavior and

ends with the development of a holistic neighborhood improvement plan of action that includes justice and advocacy around public policy.

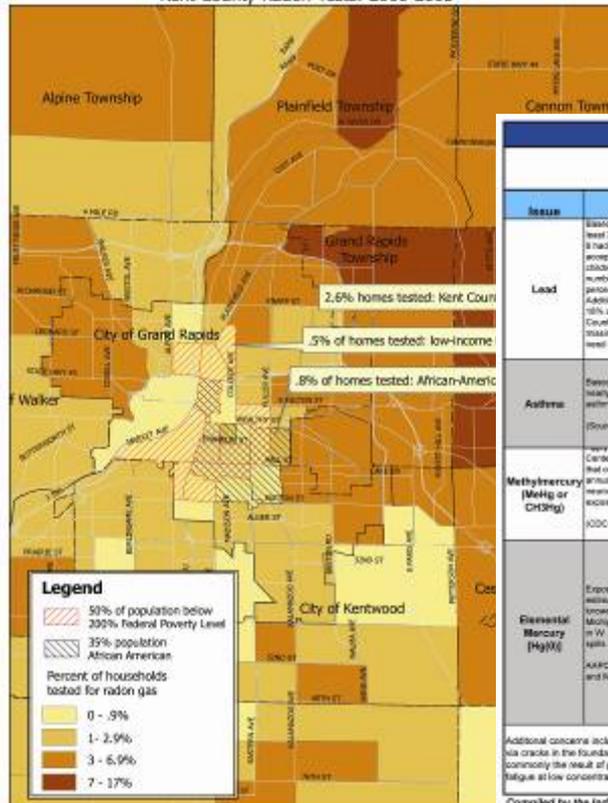
TAKE AWAY

Grand Rapidian Problem

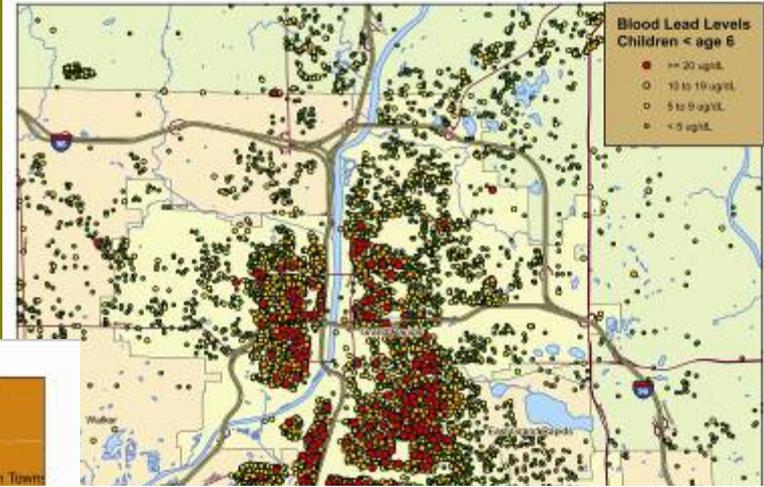
Kent County Asthma Hospitalization Rates by Zip Codes: 2000-2002



Kent County Radon Tests: 2000-2005



Grand Rapids Area Children Tested for Lead Poisoning, 2001-2005



Important Public Environmental Health Concerns for Children

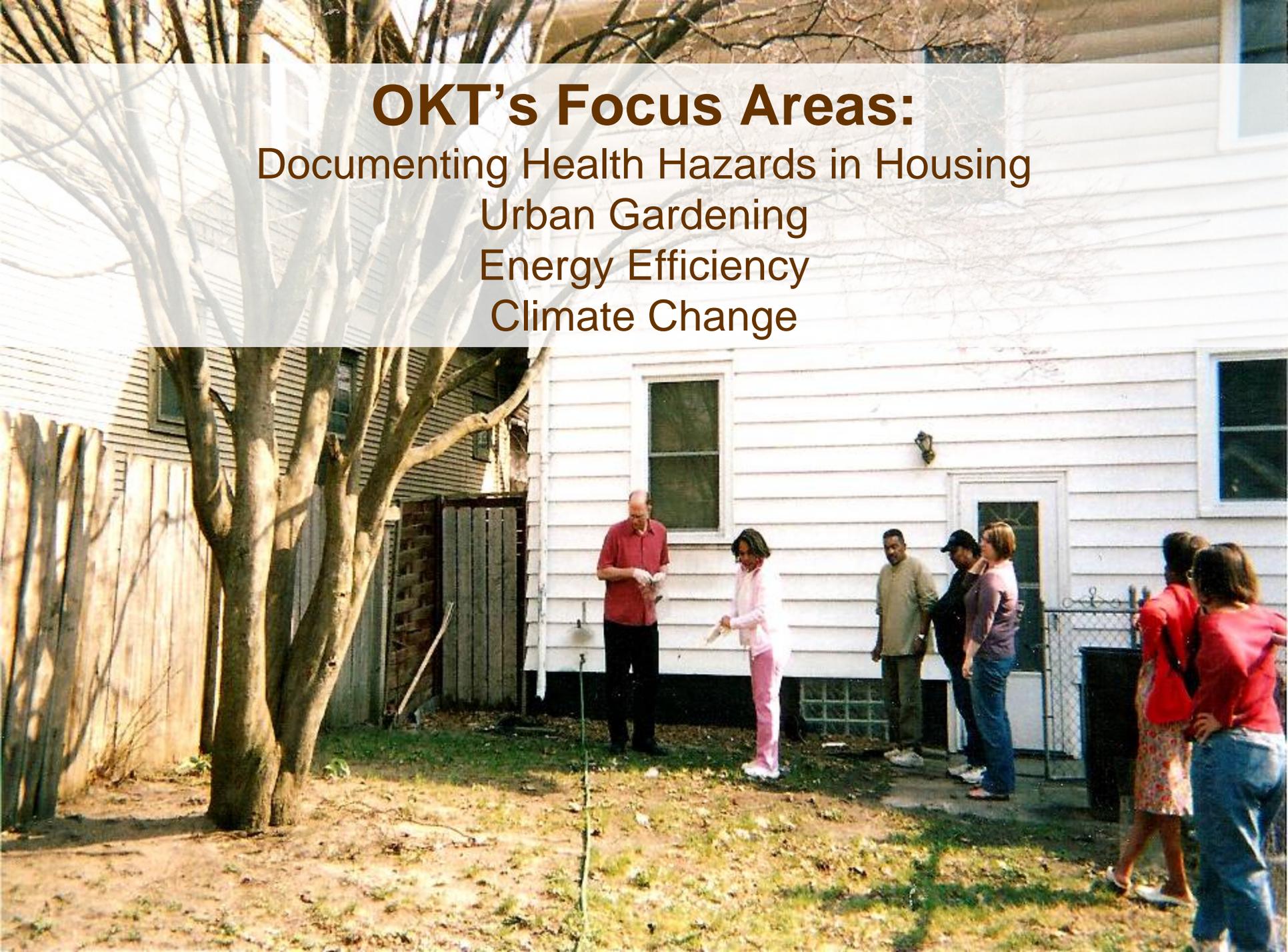
Issue	Prevalence of Disease	Potential Health Outcomes	Populations Most at Risk	Sources of Exposure	Community Resources
Lead	Based on the most recent data available, at least 233 children in Kent County under age 6 had Blood Lead Levels higher than acceptable (≥10ug/dL). The percent of children with high lead compared to the total number tested in Kent County is a higher percent than for Michigan as a whole. Additionally, those tested averaged just 18% of all children less than 6 years in Kent County. This lack of testing could result in missing children with high blood lead who need care.	Primary health effects of elevated blood lead levels in children include impaired neurologic development and learning problems, learning disabilities, and mental retardation. Other effects include long-term damage to bones, kidneys, and other organs.	Young children, fetuses, and women who are pregnant.	Main sources include paint, soil, and imported goods (toys, cosmetics, etc.)	Kent County Health Department (www.aceasthma.com/lead.html) Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan (www.healthyhomescoalition.org) Michigan Department of Community Health (www.michigan.gov/lead)
Asthma	Based on the most recent data available, nearly 10,000 children in Kent County had asthma. (Source: Asthma Initiative of Michigan)	Poor air quality can trigger asthma attacks and asthma the symptoms including shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing, and tightness of chest even in those who have not been diagnosed with the condition.	Children, minority and low income populations.	Indoor and outdoor air pollutants.	Asthma Network of West Michigan (www.aamwmi.com/asthma.html) Asthma Initiative of Michigan (www.aamwmi.com) MIU, Department of Environmental Quality (www.mdeq.state.mi.us) Kent County Environmental Health Department
Methylmercury (MeHg or CH3Hg)	Children's exposure to methylmercury in Michigan annually are potentially at risk for neurodevelopmental deficits due to methylmercury exposure. (CDC, 2004)	Young children and young children are primary effect is impaired neurologic development. Specifically, this includes effects on cognitive thinking, memory, attention, language, and fine motor skills. http://www.epa.gov/mercury/effects.html	Pregnant women, fetuses, and young children. Wildlife are more sensitive than humans to methylmercury (EPA, 1988).	Fish Consumption. Sources that contribute to elevated mercury in the environment include coal-fired power plants, disposal of products containing mercury, manufacturing activities, etc.	Kent County Environmental Health Department Michigan Department of Community Health (http://www.michigan.gov/lead) Delta Children's Hospital-Pediatric Control Center 1-800-222-1222 (http://www.aceasthma.com/lead.html) Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (http://www.michigan.gov/mercury) Environmental Protection Agency (http://www.epa.gov/mercury/pressroom/mercury.html)
Elemental Mercury (Hg⁰)	Exposure from spills has increased, but an estimate of effects from this exposure is not known. For the most recent year, in West Michigan ~150,000 gallons occurred at homes in W. Michigan. There have been over 5,000 spills in Michigan for the year 1980-2008. AARC's Toxic Exposure Surveillance System and NIOSH NHRES data.	Short-term exposure can result in chest tightness, fever, weakness, stomach upset. Single-term exposure can result in decreased vision & hearing, nerve and kidney damage. Furber, 1989.	Pregnant women, fetuses, and young children.	Exposures can occur either directly from certain Hg ⁰ are broken such as thermometers, fluorescent light bulbs, and fluorescent light and the Hg ⁰ vapors inhaled.	Delta Children's Hospital-Pediatric Control Center 1-800-222-1222 (http://www.aceasthma.com/lead.html) Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (http://www.michigan.gov/mercury) Environmental Protection Agency (http://www.epa.gov/mercury/pressroom/mercury.html)

Additional concerns include the issue of radon and carbon monoxide. Radon is a occurs naturally through rocks and the soil, leaking into homes via cracks in the foundations and walls of homes. It has been cited as a leading cause of lung cancer. Carbon monoxide in the home is most commonly the result of poorly maintained or malfunctioning water heaters and furnaces. It is known to cause a whole range of health effects from fatigue at low concentrations to impaired vision and coordination, nausea, flu-like symptoms, headaches, dizziness, or death at high concentrations.

Compiled by the Indicators Work Group, a subdivision of the Greater Grand Rapids Children's Environmental Health Initiative

OKT's Focus Areas:

Documenting Health Hazards in Housing
Urban Gardening
Energy Efficiency
Climate Change



COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE: THEIR DATA

(Based on neighborhood Surveys during August and September 2005 and 2006)



Within a “healthy homes” framework, the top 5 issues that residents talked about were:

Asthma

Crime

Gentrification

Public resources for housing repair and maintenance

Renting vs. owning property

Safety

Sub-standard food choices in the community

Traffic calming devices

Trash and Litter

Utility shut-offs

Vacant homes and property maintenance

Youth violence

Recipient Vs. Empowerment

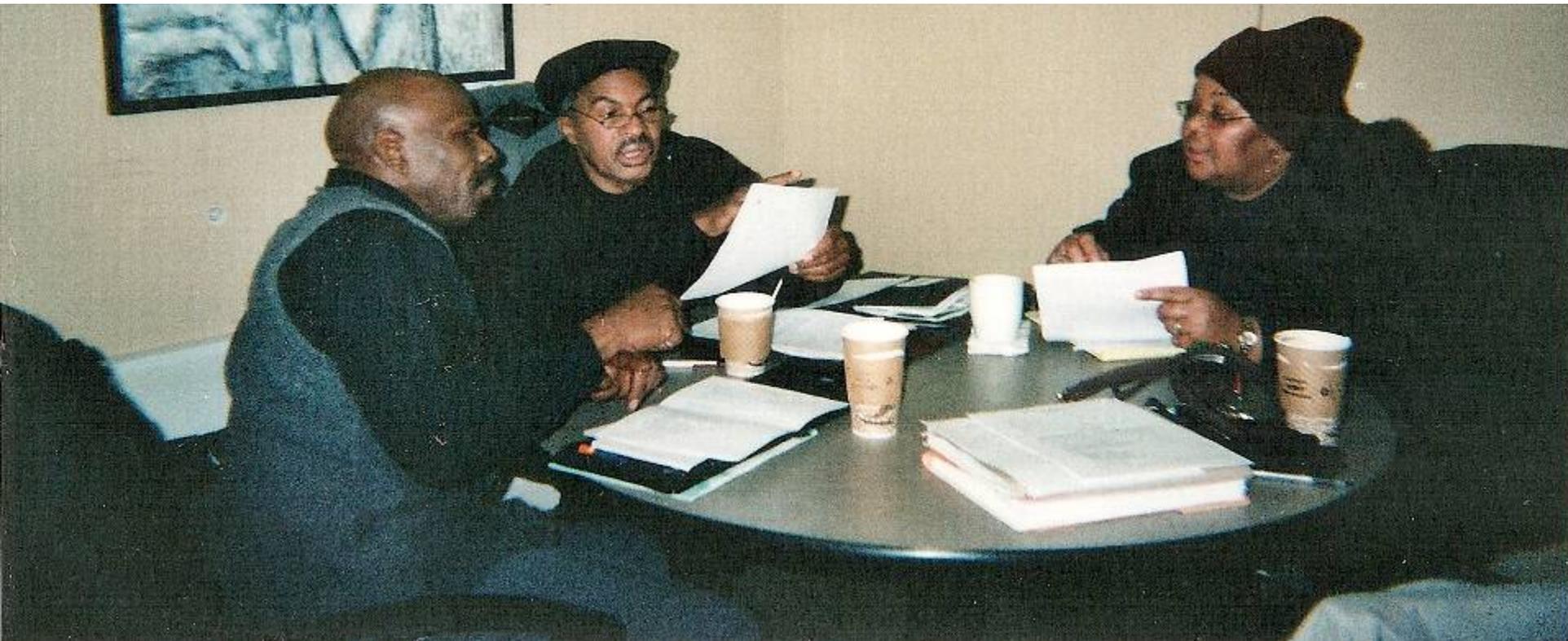
Who really benefits from the
community's involvement
in these initiatives?

TAKE AWAY

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Environmental/Social Justice is about progressive social change that aims to transform the underlying systemic problems that result in inequalities in the distribution of power and resources – inequalities and injustices that create conditions that impact poor and working class individuals and families.

Our Kitchen Table worked on an environmental justice project funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in June 2004



Popular Education

Popular education is a form of adult education that encourages learners to examine their lives critically and take action to change social conditions. It is "popular" in the sense of being "of the people." The goal of popular education is to develop people's capacity for social change through a collective problem-solving approach emphasizing participation, reflection, and critical analysis of social problems.

The popular education framework is based on the assumption that learning is most effective if participation is active, different learning styles are addressed, content is relevant to learners' lives, learners are treated as equals, and the learning process is enjoyable.

Based on Pedagogy of the Oppressed By: Paulo Freire

TAKE AWAY

Innovative Methods – How We Do Our Work

- House histories research
- Reality tours
- Attend neighborhood meetings
- Classes, workshops, and trainings
- Visual assessments from the layperson's perspective
- Examine local, state, and national policy
- Identify and interact with local and state elected officials
- Neighborhood surveys
- In home cooking demonstrations
- Urban gardening and eco-friendly landscaping
- Distribution of recycling bins
- Light bulb exchange programs
- Neighborhood collection sites

In addition to the above, we perform research of community report cards done by other community resources, academia, non-profits, etc. in order to have a well-rounded community profile.



Achievements and Challenges:

- *Created neighborhood surveys and created our own local database*
- *Developed a curriculum around healthy home practices called the Green Living Track*
- *Hosted several community events and forums*
- *Attended local, state, and national meetings/conferences*
- *Invited to national conferences as a presenter*
- *15 women completed the lead safe classes*
- *Planted 5 urban gardens for economic development purposes*
- *30 households use recycling bins*
- *12 households properly dispose of mercury related items*
- *Completed 20 home hazard assessments*

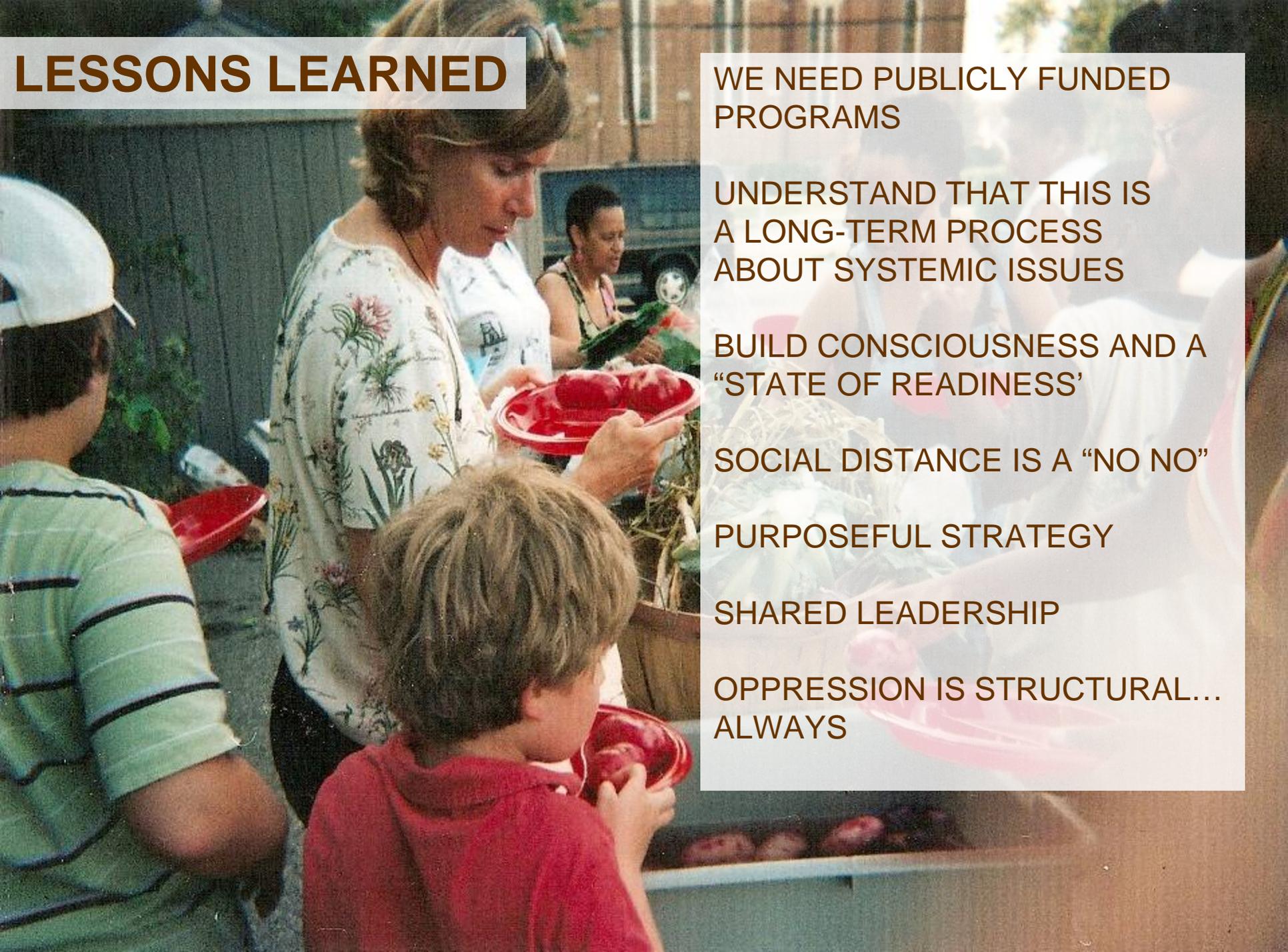


Achievements and Challenges, continued:



- *Moving a policy making agenda*
- *Building Social Capital and Long-Term Commitment*
- *Events Planning – More Diverse*
- *At the table as a equal stakeholder*
- *Funding*
- *Push Back*
- *Green Cleaning and Climate Change*

LESSONS LEARNED

A photograph of an outdoor market scene. In the foreground, a woman with sunglasses on her head, wearing a white floral-patterned shirt, is holding a red bowl filled with red tomatoes. To her left, a young boy in a green and white striped shirt and a white cap is looking towards the woman. In front of the woman, a young boy in a red shirt is also looking at the tomatoes. In the background, another woman is visible, and there are various market items and a wooden fence.

WE NEED PUBLICLY FUNDED PROGRAMS

UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS A LONG-TERM PROCESS ABOUT SYSTEMIC ISSUES

BUILD CONSCIOUSNESS AND A "STATE OF READINESS"

SOCIAL DISTANCE IS A "NO NO"

PURPOSEFUL STRATEGY

SHARED LEADERSHIP

OPPRESSION IS STRUCTURAL... ALWAYS

For additional information about the ideas and methodologies in this presentation, or to learn more about Our Kitchen Table, contact:

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- Building Movement Project: <http://buildingmovement.org>
- Greater Grand Rapids Children Environmental Health Initiative
- CEHRC – Children’s Environmental Health Resource Center – www.cehrc.org
- Collaborative Problem Solving Model
www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice.org



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BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR HEALTHY HOUSING

2008 National Healthy Homes Conference

“Environmental Education and Outreach Approaches to Healthy Housing”

**Leon C. Purnell, President
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ABSTRACT

- **The Environmental Justice Partnership (EJP) is a grassroots community organization which has evolved from being a research project to becoming a 501c3 organization.**
- **EJP's mission is to connect researchers and community members in an effort to provide education and outreach around environmental justice issues and concerns.**
- **Many community members in Baltimore City have little access to the relevant information necessary to understand the impacts of environmental hazards and to connect the environment to their health.**



INTRODUCTION

- The urban environment is unique in the diversity of exposure issues that impact its residents. The aspiration of the EJP is to develop relationships with Baltimore neighborhoods and businesses, particularly as they relate to issues of exposure to outdoor and indoor contaminants, because many community members in Baltimore City don't connect the environment to their health or have the necessary information or data to make informed decisions.
- In 2003 the EJP community board was a funded research project to provide education and outreach around environmental justice issues and concerns. This project received its funding initially from the Johns Hopkins Center in Urban Environmental Health (JHCUEH) NIEHS-funded pilot grants program. Also, the NIEHS ES-12085-02 grant provided additional funding for the project to continue. After the grant funding ceased, in 2007 the EJP applied for and received its 501c3 status to continue to address public health problems that impact East Baltimore residents by building a partnership of community-based organizations to educate residents, advocate for environmental justice, and represent the various East Baltimore community interests to governmental agencies, academic institutions, and private organizations.
- The overall objective of the EJP is to improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods.



OBJECTIVES

- To encourage partnerships between researchers and community members at all stages of research planning, implementation, and dissemination;
- To facilitate the dissemination of pertinent information regarding local environmental and other research impacts on the community, primarily through community education and outreach initiatives; and,
- To educate the local environmental and public health research establishments regarding the response, approval, and concerns of the impacted community to initiate change.



METHODS

- **We conducted surveys to gather information to “Break the Disconnect”**
 - We used qualitative surveys to assess the opinions of residents about research conducted in their neighborhoods.
 - From those surveys we found that most East Baltimore residents felt that they don’t benefit from research, because they never hear back from the researchers to put into action the results of the research.



METHODS

Engaging Residents at the Local Market



Students Learning About East Baltimore

Preparing for Toxic Tours



Using Chat & Chews¹ to Recruit New Board Members²



EJP Activities

- **EJP Day at the Market:**
 - Is an event that brings to the community a face to face experience of having researchers talk about their research findings;
 - Is conducted monthly at the Northeast Market located just east of the Johns Hopkins East Baltimore Campus;
 - Seeks out and includes direct service providers who come to the community instead of the community trying to find them; and,
 - Is a place to meet with other stakeholders who are looking to build collaborations around environmental and community issues.



EJP Activities

Signing up Community Members for Toxic Tours:

- **These toxic tours provide an opportunity for people to learn about the environmental hazards in Baltimore neighborhoods.**
- **The toxic tours have been instrumental in sharing with students from Hopkins and other universities the relationship between Johns Hopkins and the East Baltimore communities.**



EJP Activities

Using Chat & Chews:

- **This activity is used to showcase the accomplishments of the EJP through posters and presentations.**
- **It is used to recruit new board members.**
- **It is also used as an educational tool to discuss environmental hazards in our communities and how to protect ourselves from them.**



EJP Activities

- **Community Research Advisory Board (CRAB):**
 - EJP members work with the JHU Institutional Review Board/Research Ethics Committee as a liaison to researchers who want to do good research in East Baltimore.
 - Often researchers don't have a community partner, and we are available to be that partner or connect the researchers with other community members to give the community "voice".



EJP Activities

- **EJP Newsletter:**
 - Is a strategy EJP developed to fill the gap and the need to connect both community and researchers to each other;
 - Has been able to provide information and research results in lay language; and,
 - Provides an opportunity for clinicians, faculty and researchers to educate and disseminate their research findings.
 - Researchers want to share their findings, but their usual manner is to publish in scholarly journals.



EJP Activities

- **Educational and Outreach Products:**
 - Have been developed with the help of students from the Maryland Institute College of Arts (MICA) undergraduate graphic design class;
 - Include products that are reflective of the community's culture as they decide what works for them; and,
 - Include life-size exhibits, educational posters, pamphlets, and booklets.



RESULTS

- **Six new board members have come on board as a result of attending one of our Chat & Chews.**
- **There have been regular requests for Toxic Tours.**
- **Newsletters have been produced and distributed at community events.**
- **The EJP Day at the Market engages an average of 50-75 individuals monthly. These individuals receive answers to their questions around environmental and health issues. Related publications and other resource materials are disseminated.**



EVALUATION

- To track that community members even care about what we are doing, we ask if they would sign-in at our events and make comments about the information that they receive.
- One indication that the community is receiving our information is when they show up to events that we have told them about.
- Community members often revisit us at the Market to see what new information we have to share with them.
- Community members invite us to participate at their school, church or community events.
- Another indicator is when researchers, clinicians and faculty ask to join us at our events because they find the interaction meaningful and an effective venue for outreach, education and participant recruitment.



DISCUSSION

- **The potential for environmental injustice and health disparities in East Baltimore is apparent based on the following demographics of the population:**
 - **Neighborhoods are predominantly minority and socio-economically distressed.**
 - **The median household income for Baltimore City is just over \$30,000; and the median household income ranges from \$10-\$25,000 in 6 of the 7 neighborhoods in East Baltimore.**
 - **Less than half of the adult residents have completed high school.**



DISCUSSION (continued)

- Unemployment rates range from 11%-22%.
- High percentage (5%-32%) of vacant houses.
- The neighborhoods are surrounded by countless urban pollution sources, such as interstate truck traffic, chemical industries, petroleum storage tanks, waste incineration, and small businesses, such as dry cleaners and auto repair shops that dispose of toxic materials.
- Furthermore, these neighborhoods contain superfund and Brownfield sites adding to the community's load of environmental toxins.



CONCLUSION

- **Our strategy for dealing with the disconnect between researchers and communities is to build a trusting relationship through building capacity through conducting environmental education and outreach for populations that are underserved.**
- **This can be achieved by developing venues where community members embrace the opportunity to receive educational materials and dialogue to assist them in making informed decisions on how to reduce negative environmental impacts and to help community members make positive behavioral changes for healthy outcomes.**



CONCLUSION (continued)

- **EJP also wants to help researchers to embrace the importance of dissemination of the results of their research.**
- **EJP continues to collaborate with community members, community organizations, and local agencies to be partners working together to bring about benefits that the community can embrace.**



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- The EJP is especially grateful for the initial support from the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) ES-12085-02 grant; the (NIEHS) ES-03819 support from the Johns Hopkins Center in Urban Environmental Health (JHCUEH); and a grant from the East Baltimore Development Incorporated (EBDI).
- Special thanks to the faculty and staff of the JHCUEH, EJP board members, and the East Baltimore community members and stakeholders.

