

# VACCINATION FOR ADULTS



**STRATEGY INTRO:** Increase demand for, and access to flu, COVID-19, and other adult vaccinations via 40 pop-up community clinics at the places that cultural groups feel comfortable and connected, and increase regularity of vaccine promotion in priority communities; and increase the percentage of pan-Asian and pan-African seniors who are up-to-date with recommended adult vaccinations.

## BLOG DISCUSSION #4

### INTERVIEW WITH MS. KELLY ROBINSON FOR BLACK NURSES ROCK

*Interviewed by Ange Hwang and written by Erin Uy*

**PREFACE:** Since late last year, Asian Media Access has been actively interviewed BIPOC members for issues related to vaccination hesitancy, in order to better design our vaccination mobilization effort. Please follow up us, with a new story every month.

**Kelly Robinson** began her career 27 years ago in Atlanta, Georgia where she worked in Post-Op Orthopedics, Oncology, Pain Management, Operating Room, Psychiatry, and Research. She relocated to Minneapolis in 2009 to work as a Corporate supporting the implant of medical devices for Pain Management. In the Twin Cities, she served as Health Care Coordinator for her place of worship, collaborating with the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, Minnesota Diabetes Association, and the Stairstep Foundation. She is currently on the board of Second Chance Outreach, which provides healthcare awareness during sponsored plays, gospel concerts at Bethel University, and community events, collaborating with KMOJ and the Herman Melville YMCA Youth Enrichment Center. As president of the Black Nurses Rock Twin Cities Chapter, Kelly's work is grounded in the national organization's vision of inspiring and empowering innovative leaders that will serve and educate vulnerable communities. The local chapter does this by engaging black nurses to provide health education, screenings, and access to health care in underserved communities. Kelly is an inspirational leader and a credible voice in decision making, finding strategic partners to provide resources while establishing black nurses as "trusted messengers" in the community.



**Kelly Robinson, RN**

Nurse and Founder of the Black Nurses Rock - Twin Cities Chapter, Minneapolis, MN



Black Nurses lead and empower communities through respect and connection.

During the COVID pandemic, the Minnesotan Black community had a distinct experience with multiple crises colliding. Black community leaders recognized the need to connect with people deeply impacted by the pandemic and who were hesitant to trust US healthcare systems that had reinforced and perpetuated inequities. The community needed a healthcare response that recognized them and their circumstances and cared for their wellbeing.

The efforts that showed to be effective during the pandemic also proved to be best practices that can help close the gaps between communities of color and healthcare systems. The height of the pandemic has passed but healthcare providers still apply those solutions to repairing healthcare supports for communities of color.

## **ENGAGE WITH RESPECT AND CARE**

Many communities have preexisting experiences with governmental and medical institutions that affect their access to and relationships with health care. Community influencers felt it was very important to inform COVID outreach efforts with this background. They saw they had an important role as trusted messengers.

In Minnesota, various challenges swirled during the pandemic, said Kelly Robinson, founder of the Minnesota chapter of Black Nurses Rock, Inc. a national organization. Black Nurses Rock jumped in on multiple fronts to try and reduce the impact of COVID in which Black Minnesotans died from COVID at more than twice the rate of white Minnesotans.

The nurses sought to prevent the spread in the community, many of which gathered amid the social unrest around George Floyd's murder. Black Nurses Rock distributed masks and sanitizer, and across communities, and served as temperature checkers at his funeral. "It was a time to show up and listen. There was a deficit in so many people's lives," Robinson said.

Core in its mission to inspire, empower and educate the community, Black Nurses Rock focused on connection through listening and respect. As trusted messengers, nurses sought to inspire people to value their health and themselves. That often started with health care professionals demonstrating that they value people they are serving, Robinson noted. "Nurses will have to say and show 'I think you are important so I will take the time to talk to you and answer your questions. Now you know you are important and now I'm going to encourage you to do things.'"



### **GO FORTH BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY**

To connect with people, health care professionals must meet them where they are. During COVID Black Nurses Rock engaged with the community in their gathering spots outside of health institutions and facilities and during nontraditional service hours. This required providers and partners to step outside of their comfort zones, expanding their resources and responding to community needs. “We’ve gone places others will not go. Most importantly, we show up. When you commit you have got to go all the way,” Robinson said.

To engage with hard-to-reach Black communities, Black Nurses Rock collaborated with a variety of partners including the Minnesota Health Department, grassroots organizations and community based providers to bring services and resources directly to community. In Northern Minneapolis, the organization brought nurses and vaccine facilities to local barber shops on buses. Culturally, Black men would socialize while waiting for their barber chair in what they affectionately call the situation room. The men caught up and talked about issues in the community. Nurses met with them inside and outside of the shop to answer questions and educate the patrons about COVID prevention.

To reach unhoused families, Robinson organized nurses at rest stops and food shelves. Families stopped at those locations to clean up, rest and restock their goods. She also met unhoused women at their ritual Sunday dinner gatherings.

Places and events of celebration are also effective access points to reach communities. Black Nurses Rock met families in parks and set up a booth at as

steppers ball on a Saturday night. Wherever the event, the key is to connect with a meaningful, initial engagement to establish trust and relationships. From there, health care professionals can reach the community on many platforms.



## **LEAD AND EMPOWER**

To have a meaningful impact and improve public health for all communities, leaders must collaborate to remove boundaries that limit people's access to services and resources. This requires systems and organizations to create bridges, expand services and meet communities where they are and when they are there. This applies to all aspects of health supports including preventive care, insurance coverage, direct services and more.

Robinson is committed to empowering more health care leaders and providers to making an impact in systems and community. *"How do I succeed in the mission that I've been granted because everybody doesn't walk in this path. I want to empower people; as I am walking through it and taking folks with me because if they don't share and empower others, then you have to think, why are you doing what you are doing. It is not for us to keep. It is there for us to share our knowledge and help others."*