



Rush Office of Community Health Equity and Engagement

2020 Impact Report | Committed to Community

Next page: Rush volunteers kneel for 8 minutes and 46 seconds to acknowledge the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

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Committed to Community

The Office of Community Health Equity and Engagement (CHEE) at Rush University Medical Center helps Rush fulfill its commitment to improving the quality of life for people in its diverse neighboring communities. Our team creates a wide range of initiatives and builds partnerships for assessing and addressing our communities' health needs.

For decades, under-resourced communities, like some of the West Side neighborhoods that lie between Rush University Medical Center and Rush Oak Park Hospital, have coped with systemic racism, poverty and lack of access to quality education and family-supporting jobs. Inequities like these give rise to illnesses that shorten lives, including diabetes, asthma, heart disease and depression — and as we have recently seen in the starkest of terms, underlying conditions that are caused and exacerbated by health disparities make people more vulnerable to illnesses like COVID-19.

We strive to help everyone attain equal access to the building blocks of good health: safe housing, quality education, family-supporting jobs, reliable transportation, healthy food and other essentials. Equal access gives rise to health equity, where everyone has a fair opportunity to attain their full health potential and no one is prevented from achieving it. In the pages that follow, you'll see snapshots of some of CHEE's programs and their impact on community health and economic vitality in fiscal year 2020.

Darlene Oliver Hightower, JD

Vice President, Community Health Equity



COVID response: Protecting Chicago's most vulnerable

Public health data shows that Black Chicagoans are dying from COVID-19 at a higher rate than any other racial demographic, and the COVID infection rate among Latinx Chicagoans is higher than any other racial or ethnic group in the state. The social and economic factors that contribute to these disparities were at work for decades before the pandemic hit — and the pandemic has made it clear that we have to invest in the people who live in Chicago's most vulnerable areas.

Held personal protective equipment drives with **33** West Side churches and community organizations that equipped community members with:

10,000+ masks

150
face
shields

50
boxes of
gloves



Convened more than **100** Rush staff, faculty and students in a **Community Command Center**, meeting 3x/week to plan relief efforts



Hosted twice-weekly **Ask a Doc webinars** to educate community members about COVID-19

1,000
community
members
attended

97%
of attendees said the
information was “very helpful”
or “extremely helpful”

Connected approximately **1,500** community residents with **healthy food** through a partnership with Top Box



Education: Closing the gaps

In communities with more equitable access to education and jobs, life expectancy gaps are smaller — so the Rush Education and Community Hub (REACH) works to close access gaps with programs for students from preschool through college in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning. REACH helps prepare young people for college, high-demand health care jobs and STEM careers.



3,000+

students, parents, educators and community members served

250+

high school and college students had paid **internship** and **apprenticeship** opportunities through the MedSTEM Explorers and MedSTEM Pathways programs

100%

of participants who went on to college completed their first year and enrolled for their second



88%

of Pathways interns

100%

of Explorers

earned one or more industry-recognized credentials: CPR, first aid/basic lifesaving, ECG technician

Community-Based Practices: Providing accessible, affirming care

We pay particular attention to serving vulnerable people in our communities who face barriers to accessing care and can benefit from extra support to achieve physical and mental health. The Rush Community-Based Practices team provides essential primary, sexual and reproductive health care and mental health services for West Side youth and inclusive, affirming care for the LGBTQ+ community.

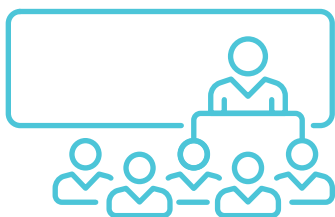
Affirm: The Rush Center for Gender, Sexuality and Reproductive Health

Affirm provides a bridge to affirming care and services with providers who understand how to care for LGBTQ+ patients. Patient navigators act as advocates who accompany patients through their care journey and connect them with community services, if needed. The team also trains providers to address health and socioeconomic disparities experienced by LGBTQ+ patients and their loved ones, so we can close the gaps and ensure that health equity really is for everyone.



1,500+

Rush employees trained to provide inclusive care for LGBTQ+ people



Established Rush's global leadership in LGBTQ+ care with invitations to present our innovative patient navigation process and **system-wide approach** at three national and international conferences



279

LGBTQ+ patients worked with patient navigators: advocates who help them overcome barriers and **connect** with inclusive care and services at Rush and in the community

School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs)

In three safety-net clinics located inside Chicago Public Schools on the West Side, SBHC providers and staff connect with students where they spend most of their time: in schools. SBHCs address students' primary, preventive and mental health needs and connect them to beneficial resources.

Achieved **sixfold increase** in community-based organizations' referrals of youth needing child psychiatry services:

1,063

children and adolescents provided with care



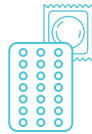
564

children and adolescents screened to identify mental health issues and provide needed crisis intervention

Adolescent Family Center (AFC)

Young people ages 12 to 25 choose the AFC for confidential, age-competent health care, including prenatal, sexual and reproductive care.

188 unintended pregnancies prevented by providing family planning services to more than **670** young people



Helped parents have healthier babies: AFC patients have a **28%** lower premature birth rate and a **47%** lower incidence of low birth weight than patients in our communities overall



Together, the SBHCs and AFC:

Addressed one of the largest care gaps faced by youth by providing **1,567** timely mental health care visits to adolescents and young adults

Connected **70%** of adolescents with mental health issues to services, compared to a **20%** connection rate nationwide



Community health and engagement: Making authentic connections

Connecting with West Side residents gives us deeper insights into health needs and improves health outcomes. The true experts on what a community needs to be healthy are the people who live there — so we work to build and sustain strong, reciprocal relationships with community members as well as community- and faith-based organizations.

Food security

Many members of Rush's "first community" of employees live on Chicago's West Side between the Medical Center and Rush Oak Park Hospital — a swath that includes several neighborhoods without full-service grocery stores that sell healthy food.

Served **700** employees through a partnership with Top Box Foods, a Chicago-based social business that provides affordable boxes of high-quality produce and meats



Connected **350** employees with free, healthy food and grew the partnership with Top Box to help meet West Side residents' food needs during the pandemic (see p. 2 for more)

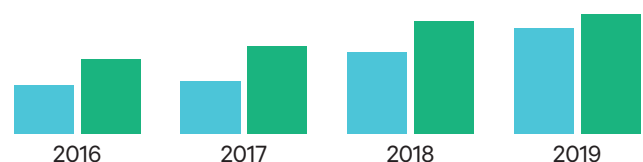


Adopt-a-Family

Through this longtime partnership with social service agencies and churches, Rush employees and outside organizations make the holiday season brighter for West Side families experiencing hardship by supporting them with everything from toys to clothing to toiletries.



Saw an increase of **118%** in donors and **60%** in families adopted since 2016



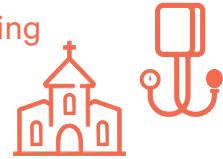
Faith-based initiatives

Churches are integral, trusted anchor institutions in West Side community life. Building relationships with leaders and congregations is one way Rush connects with residents to provide health education and screenings aimed at reducing health disparities in the Black community.

24 South and West Side clergy learned about hypertension and mental health self-care

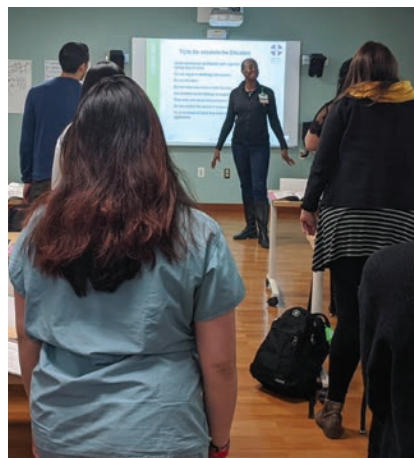


77 ALIVE hypertension pilot program participants in **7** West Side churches **reduced systolic blood pressure** by an average of **9.7** points, attracting a National Institutes of Health grant



West Side Walk for Wellness

Regular exercise builds physical health — and regular exercise with a group builds community. The popular West Side Walk for Wellness brings residents together with Rush faculty, staff and community partners each summer for walks and conversations about wellness.



Mental Health First Aid

In community listening sessions, West Side residents told us that their neighborhoods lack sufficient mental health resources — a major contributor to health disparities. In response, Rush launched Mental Health First Aid training, which trains people to recognize signs and symptoms of mental illness, respond appropriately when someone needs help, support fellow community members and help remove the stigma that persists around mental health services.

Trained **109** community members
104 Rush faculty, staff and students

Anchor Mission: Building a stronger West Side

Improving neighborhoods' economic vitality is essential to addressing the root causes of poor health. As one of the largest employers on the West Side, Rush contributes millions of dollars to the economy each year through goods, services and payroll. Through our Anchor Mission Strategy, we direct this economic power in ways that help make West Side residents healthier: hiring locally, buying and sourcing locally, investing locally and volunteering locally.

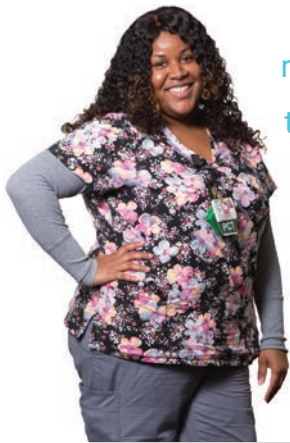
Hiring locally for jobs at Rush

Rush hires people from the West Side and helps them advance in their careers once they're here. The Rush Community Application Hub offers information sessions at partner organizations to present career opportunities at Rush.

Launched **7** cohorts of
medical assistant/patient care
technician pathway programs
with **61** participants



Hired **391** employees in fiscal year 2020 —
17% of all new Rush hires — from anchor
mission communities; established **16**
community employment hub locations



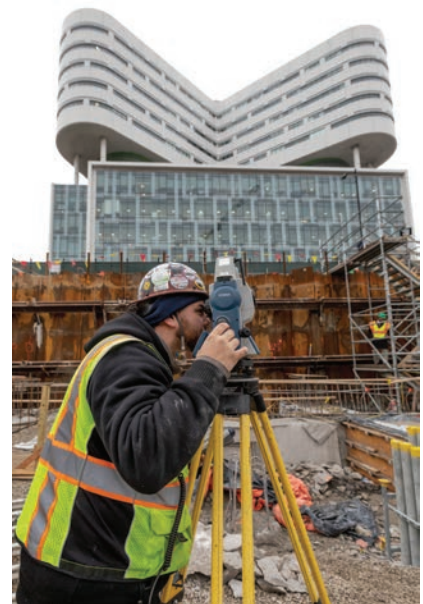
Employing residents and spending locally

Contracts for construction and capital projects at Rush University Medical Center now often include goals for local hiring, spending and hours worked by residents. We also work with West Side vendors to increase the amount we spend in the community: In fiscal year 2020, we moved millions in supply chain spending and foodservice spending to anchor mission communities.



Contributed **\$2.1 million** in
salary for anchor mission ZIP code
residents working on capital projects
through June 2020

Spent **\$1.5 million** with anchor
mission companies on the Joan and
Paul Rubschlager Building project



Investing locally in social impact projects and Rush employees

There are a lot of ways to build wealth in a community. For example, Rush partners with community development finance institutions to invest capital in community-based West Side projects such as affordable housing. And to help employees build their own household wealth, we automatically increase 403(b) contributions and offer free financial education.

Achieved **92%** employee retirement plan participation with **70%** saving at least **6%** of their wages

Provided **200** Rush employees with free financial counseling through the Working Credit program



Invested **\$6 million** in West Side community-based organizations and projects (since 2018)



Rush Employee Volunteer Program (EVP)

Rush volunteer projects help employees build connections with neighboring communities and their residents. For example, during the pandemic, EVP volunteers have called patients to help them connect with resources, distributed food at West Side food pantries and delivered meals to residents.



Held **20** events with **390** employee volunteers

Logged **1,600+** volunteer hours





**Community Health Equity
and Engagement**

www.rush.edu/chee

