

2019 Creating Whole Communities End of Year Report

Creating Whole Communities (CWC) is a collaboration among MU Extension, University of Missouri–St. Louis (UMSL) and our region’s neighborhoods to develop research, leadership and capacity building and civic dialogue by:

- Conducting place-based research to support practice and policy and sharing research for practical application with community leaders
- Creating space and opportunity for conversations about strengthening communities
- Providing training opportunities and technical assistance to support community building



RESEARCH

CWC provided 3 Research Fellowship grants in 2019 to support the following research:

- Napoleon Williams IV, PhD candidate in the UMSL Department of Public Policy researched the Role of Municipal Governance in Stabilizing Inner-Ring Suburbs in St. Louis.
- Beth Hubener, Professor in the UMSL Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice researched Neighborhood Responses to Gun Use with the goal of understanding the scope of gun use in St. Louis using ShotSpotter acoustic gunfire technology. Using data from ShotSpotter, she wants to consider if residents are calling the police in response to hearing shots fired.
- Lee Slocum, also a professor in the UMSL Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice conducted research to look at Civic Engagement and Concentrated Enforcement Activity in St. Louis Communities. Her research describes how police enforcement actions (i.e., arrests for low-level offenses, bench warrants, and felonies) differ across neighborhoods and then examines whether rates of civic engagement (e.g., voting, calls to the citizen service bureau, participation in the U.S. Census) are dampened in neighborhoods with higher levels of concentrated enforcement.

All CWC research faculty fellows are required to present work to the broader community with the goal of increasing practicality and applicability within the St. Louis region. Williams will partner with the Anchor Initiative at UMSL to produce a public forum in Spring 2020. Slocum and Hubener will present to residents involved in the St. Louis Violence Prevention Commission in February 2020.

CIVIC DIALOGUE

In its fifth year, CWC partnership continued fostering civic dialogue with nearly 300 people attending our free public events and conversations throughout the year. Public issue engagement involves research-informed community forums, breakfast conversations, and facilitated dialogues on topics such as gentrification and immigration.



In 2019, CWC's annual What's Brewing breakfast series focused on the intersection of Health and Community Development. The communities of Pagedale and Forest Park Southeast hosted breakfast, conversation, and informative presentations from UMSL Des Lee Professor of Community Collaboration and Public Policy Administration Todd Swanstrom and panelists of neighborhood stakeholders. These events drew 32 and 34 people, respectively, to hear and learn from revitalization stories.

This year, CWC launched a new event series called "What's Cooking" to be the dinner compliment to the "What's Brewing" breakfast series. The first in the series was held in the West End neighborhood and led a group of 30 people through a process of discussing gentrification and opportunities for inclusive development.

CWC also sponsored 2 public forums to foster dialogue about critical local issues. The first was a forum about Colin Gordon's new book, Citizen Brown: Race, Democracy and Inequality in the St. Louis Suburbs, that included a presentation and panel discussion. There were 144 people who registered for that event. The second forum was the Politics of Race, Immigration, & Ethnicity Consortium (PRIEC) in St. Louis and had 58 people registered.

LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The Neighborhood Leadership Academy (NLA) remains a marquee CWC program, graduating over 350 residents since its beginning in 2002. In 2019, NLA had 29 residents register for the program this year, the highest number in the program's history. All graduates receive a Chancellor's Certificate in Neighborhood Leadership through the University of Missouri St. Louis. Projects developed throughout the 10-week course include a youth advocacy program, a community garden directory, a tenant association, and a black history museum. Graduates of the NLA have gone on to become Mayor, Alderman, State Representative, board chair for the Missouri Foundation for Health, Extension County Council members, and more.

CWC held the 2nd annual Neighborhood Leadership Fellows (NLF) program from January to September with the mission of increasing the underrepresented voices at the civic decision-making tables in order to produce more equitable regional policies for neighborhoods. All graduates receive a Chancellor's Certificate in Civic Leadership through the University of Missouri St. Louis.

This 9-month fellowship prepared 23 community leaders to serve on committees, boards or in public office. In our 2019 class, we had 3 individuals successfully run for city council positions, 2 individuals selected to be on the Washington University Gephardt Institute Community Council, 3 people elected to serve on the Extension County Council, and 1 person selected for a national women's fellowship. NLF also held 4 alumni workshops covering topics including Ripple Effects Mapping, and Defining Equity in order to maintain connections with graduated Fellows.



CWC Leadership Team Members: Riisa Easley, Assistant Teaching Professor UMSL School of Social Work; Karl Guenther, UMSL Director of Anchor Initiatives; Claire Rippel, MU Extension City Engagement Specialist; Tonnie Smith, Community Member; Todd Swanstrom, UMSL Des Lee Community Collaborations and Public Policy Professor

CWC UMSL Administrative Partner: UMSL School of Social Work