

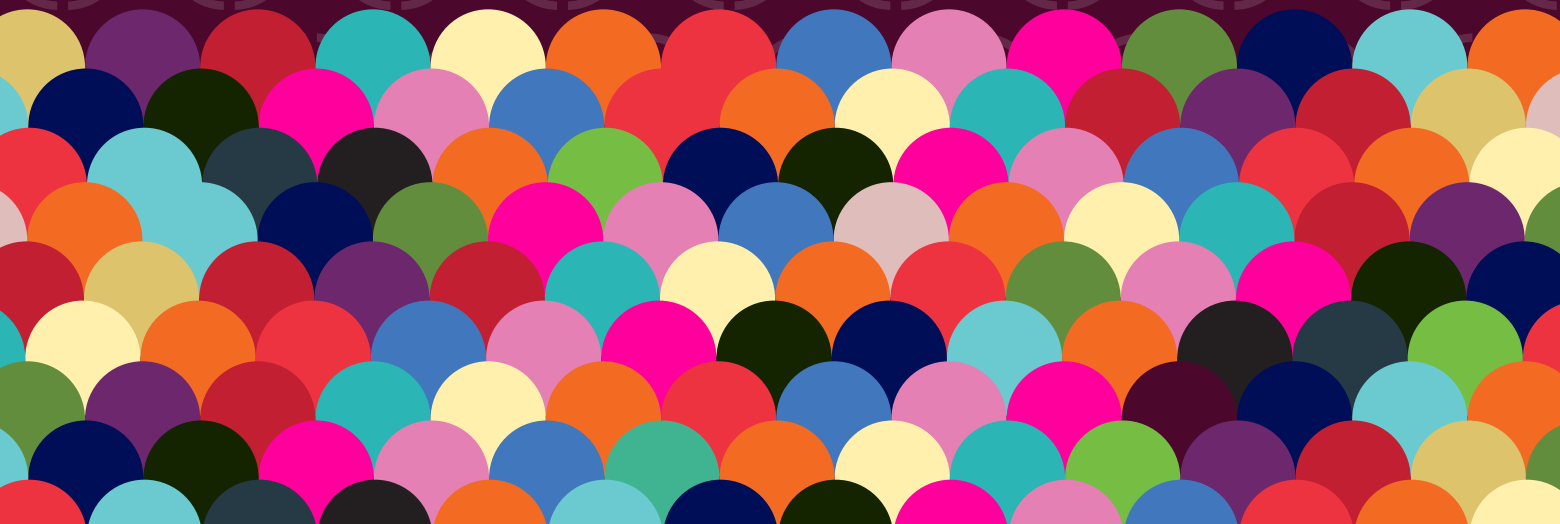
2023  
END OF  
YEAR  
REPORT

# CREATING WHOLE COMMUNITIES

**UMSL** | Social Work  
University of Missouri–St. Louis

**UMSL** | Economic and  
Community Development  
University of Missouri–St. Louis

 **Extension**  
*University of Missouri*



Creating Whole Communities (CWC) is a collaboration between the University of Missouri–St. Louis, University of Missouri Extension and Missouri neighborhoods to build civic capacity, the collective strength of people in a place to respond to challenges and pursue thriving, whole communities.

CWC aims to build civic capacity through...

## RESEARCH

Supporting place-based research on community building practice and policy issues, and sharing research for practical application with community leaders.

## CIVIC DIALOGUE

Providing training opportunities and technical assistance to support leadership development and community building.

## LEADERSHIP & CAPACITY BUILDING

Creating space and opportunity for community conversations, exploring what works in creating whole communities.

# RESEARCH

In 2023, CWC awarded one **Research and Implementation Grant (\$8,000)** that will support UMSL faculty and their community partner in using a Community-based Participatory Research framework to address issues critical to local neighborhoods and municipalities.

## 2023 RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENTATION AWARDEE

**Dr. Adriano Udani, Public Policy**, will work with Migrantes Unidos on their Research and Implementation project, *Picture This: Visualizing Neighborhood Resources That Mitigate Injustices and Mobilize the Public*. After three years of intensive community building, a group of 64 asylum seekers (named Migrantes Unidos) have collectively decided to increase public awareness of the negative health impact of surveillance. In the proposed project, asylum seekers will be invited to participate in participatory and visual research called photovoice. After conducting a thematic analysis to analyze the verbal data in the context of their paired photographs, Dr. Udani will illuminate how asylum seekers engage in their neighborhood resources for coping with the harmful effects of surveillance.

PICTURED: Community awareness event on the use of digital surveillance in asylum processes. The photovoice project encourages asylum seekers from Latin America to take photographs of their lives in their communities while they await decisions on their asylum cases. This was a special event in Forest Park. Many people – including immigrants themselves – often do not view public parks for immigrants.





## THE EXTENSION FACULTY INNOVATION FUND (EFIF) AWARDEE

In 2023, CWC launched a new research and innovation opportunity, **The Extension Faculty Innovation Fund (\$5,000)**. The goal of the fund is to enable MU Extension Community Development and Regional Economic Development faculty to innovate and strengthen their work through small dollar capacity-building grants and facilitated partnerships with UM System academic resources. EFIF seeks to support new research-based pilot projects, evidence-based improvements on existing programs, engaging partners/stakeholders/researchers for community development field-building, or other innovative community development-focused initiatives.

The inaugural funding for EFIF was awarded to **Dr. Lisa Overholser, Field Specialist in Community Arts**, for her project, Art in Storefronts, a collaboration with MU Extension and the MU School of Visual Studies “Art on the Move” program. The funding helped Art in Storefronts refine processes and understand the role and impact of short-term storefront art exhibits in developing community vitality through two pilots in Ferguson and Frenchtown, Missouri, and how the MU Extension Community Development Program and other community arts programs think about community vitality.

Three other projects were selected to receive funding in December 2023 and will execute their projects in the year to come:

**Show Me Neighborhood Art Week** (David Burton, Lisa Overholser, Elena Stephenson, Deana Dothage, Ashley Allen Brown) proposed a statewide community development initiative that fosters a sense of place and belonging in Missouri neighborhoods. Kicking off in 2024, individuals in neighborhood communities all across the state will be invited to create their own yard art that will be displayed over two weeks in June 2024.

**The Publications Challenge** (Darla Campbell) proposed a statewide effort to produce 15 new Community and Economic Development guide sheets for 2024.

**The Public Boards Curriculum Revamp** (Darla Campbell, Jackie Spainhower, Tracie Moore) proposed a strategic formalization and branding of the Extension Public Boards curriculum that enables colleagues to learn and teach the curriculum confidently.

# CIVIC DIALOGUE

In 2023, CWC focused efforts on building civic muscle among neighborhood leadership alumni and community members by offering spaces for engagement on current topics, knowledge sharing and collaborative idea formation in order to respond to local challenges.

## NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP FELLOWS ALUMNI SOCIAL EVENT

FEBRUARY 2023

CWC held a 6 month-post graduation social for the 2022 NLF graduates. Alumni events serve to maintain and strengthen the network within the NLF cohort and offer spaces to share updates, achievements, and to seed collaborations. There were 15 alumni in attendance.

15

ATTENDEES

## COMMUNITY ENGAGED RESEARCH SERIES

FEBRUARY – APRIL 2023

CWC partnered with UMSL's Public Policy, Nursing, and Economic and Community Development departments to hold a five-part Community Engaged Research Training Series with a goal of building the capacity of researchers and community stakeholders and to develop long-term, collaborative community partnerships in the St. Louis region. This year, the workshop content was updated to include information on how engaged research can affect systems-level change through policy. A total of 24 researchers and community partners participated in the series.

24

ATTENDEES

***“The activity and practical examples were tremendous.”***

### SESSION TOPICS

Radical Collaboration: Community and university working to develop policy for social change

Exploring Different Models of Engaged Research: The Basics

Trust Building: Developing authentic partnerships between university and community for long-term relationships

Translating Data: Storytelling to build toward policy change

Funding for Engaged Research





16  
ATTENDEES

## NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP FELLOWS THINK TANK BOOK CLUB

JUNE, SEPTEMBER, DECEMBER 2023

The NLF Book Club held another series of robust discussions on critical topics offered in social justice and community-focused books. The book club served as a valuable way for neighborhood leaders to connect as well as to encourage, motivate and inspire each other as they collaborate in efforts to address challenges raised in these books. The book club supports a group of changemakers in continuously strengthening themselves through discussions in which they can network, share knowledge and resources, and create ideas. There were 33 attendees over three virtual book club sessions, and CWC sponsored 115 total books for the year, including for alumni who could not attend but still wanted to engage with the book.

33  
ATTENDEES

115  
SPONSORED  
BOOKS

## THE UMSL FORUM FOR COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

OCTOBER 2023

During the UMSL 60th anniversary year, CWC partnered with the UMSL Office of Community Engagement and Outreach, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and Office of Economic and Community Development to launch the UMSL Forum for Community Dialogue, which seeks to bring members of UMSL and the greater St. Louis community together in order to enhance the capacity of groups and individuals to consider and evaluate multiple options and differing viewpoints about issues that impact our communities and move towards a common ground around which the community can plan for its future. The first session focused on Economic Vitality in which 16 UMSL and community members examined different ideas to potentially enhance economic growth and vitality in the St. Louis region. The next session in March 2024 will focus on Economic Justice.

## 2023 MISSOURI GOOD NEIGHBOR WEEK POPCORN PROJECT

OCTOBER 2023

Signed into law in 2022, Missouri Good Neighbor Week encourages citizens of Missouri to “participate in events and activities to establish connections with their neighbors.” In 2023, CWC partnered with St. Louis County Extension Council to hand out 100 bags of popcorn for individuals across the region during Good Neighbor Week to share with their neighbors as an introductory tool to connect and build a sense of belonging in their community.

# LEADERSHIP & CAPACITY BUILDING

2  
COHORTS

52  
SCHOLARSHIPS  
AWARDED



67  
PARTICIPANTS

## NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2023

In Fall 2023, Neighborhood Leadership Academy hosted two cohorts, one in-person and one virtual, accommodating different learning styles and allowing for a higher volume of participants. With both cohorts combined, there were 67 participants from the counties of St. Louis City, St. Louis, Livingston, Platte, Boone, Greene, Jefferson, Jackson, Cooper, St. Charles, Franklin, Nodaway and De Kalb. Additionally, NLA awarded 52 scholarships with a total worth of \$15,875, allowing individuals to participate in NLA at no cost and increasing access to individuals across the state looking to acquire skills and knowledge needed to bring positive change in their communities.

### 2023 NLA graduates shared the following feedback:

*"The most significant learning that I had during the NLA process was how to reach out to members in my community and how to develop relationships with different stakeholders. In the past several weeks, I have connected with 5 different non-profit and for profit organizations plus many more individuals that I will collaborate with to make my project become a reality."*

*"I am going to say every aspect of the class was simply amazing. One of the things that I thought was the richest was the ability to sit in the room with so much greatness."*

*"I learned a great deal from the curriculum, the facilitators, and my classmates. I got so much more out of this class than I expected: Knowledge and inspiration!"*

*"This program has been a game changer for me in confidence and understanding some of my own hardwiring. It has exposed me to resources that I didn't even know existed."*

*"This has been a wonderful experience and has left me feeling empowered to create real change in my community."*

## NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP ACADEMY MINI GRANTS

NOVEMBER 2023

NLA awarded mini-grants to a selection of 2023 NLA participants with a goal of ensuring that project ideas become reality and create positive change at the grassroots, neighborhood level. Participants had an opportunity to apply for a maximum of \$2,500. CWC received 38 applications and funded 20 projects across the state through a grant review committee made up of neighborhood leadership alumni. The total amount awarded was \$45,531.51.

38  
APPLICANTS

\$45,532

TOTAL AMOUNT  
AWARDED

20  
PROJECTS  
FUNDED

A sample of the funded projects can be found below:

**Streetlights**  
Greene County, MO

**Hyde Park Community Connection website**  
St. Louis, MO

**Youth Sports Equipment Library**  
Greene County, MO

**Tiny House of Benton Park West**  
St. Louis, MO

**BDNC-Physical Wellness and Educational Program**  
Jefferson County, MO

**Retain the Books and Butterflies**  
(Beautification Project)  
Greene County, MO

**STL Mini-Budget and Transparency Guide**  
St. Louis, MO

**College Hill: Vacant to Vibrant**  
St. Louis, MO

**Block Party in a Box**  
Greene County, MO

**Enriching the Tower Grove South Block Captain Program**  
St. Louis, MO

**Community CEOs**  
(Youth Empowerment And Growth Program)  
St. Louis, MO

**R.I.C.H. Mama's Club**  
(Social Emotional Wellness Initiative For Mothers)  
St. Louis, MO

**Promoting Safety Through Cognitive Engagement and Sustainability**  
St. Louis, MO

**Urban Agriculture Community Building**  
Franklin County, MO

**Master Naturalist Youth Mentorship**  
St. Charles, MO



# NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP FELLOWS

JANUARY – SEPTEMBER 2023

Neighborhood Leadership Fellows, an advanced leadership program focused on systems change, hosted 18 sessions over nine months in 2023 and graduated 22 St. Louis Promise Zone resident Fellows. These Fellows learned advocacy skills and strategies needed to gain access to civic leadership tables and halls of power.

## NLF program outputs:

- Each Fellow created a 10-year Individualized Personal Leadership Plan.
- Fellows worked in groups to develop a policy-focused project aimed at addressing more equitable regional policies for neighborhoods. Groups were tasked with developing or enhancing a policy model/framework based on lived experiences, strengths and networks in addition to performing data research, advocacy and community engagement in order to work towards systematic change that would address an inequity in the Promise Zone.

18  
SESSIONS OVER  
9 MONTHS

22  
GRADUATING  
ST. LOUIS PROMISE  
ZONE RESIDENT  
FELLOWS

The groups presented their final projects at the 2023 Graduation Ceremony in September:

- **Show Me Peace**  
Reduce crime in the Promise Zone through the modernization of the St. Louis Citizens' Service Bureau.
- **Increase Economic Activity**  
Raise awareness on bill HR 4192 to protect vulnerable businesses seeking loans.
- **Future Forward Initiative**  
Increase the number of teachers receiving the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Missouri Read Lead Exceed training to improve literacy skills for students in kindergarten to grade 3.
- **Dream Builders**  
Increase financial literacy of single and low-to-moderate income households of underbanked and unbanked youth.
- **Crime Regulators**  
Reduce youth incarceration by increasing opportunities for young people of color in their neighborhoods.

## 2023 NLF graduates shared the following feedback:

*"NLF has given me the insight, knowledge and confidence to step into my role as a community leader. The level of invaluable skills and knowledge I have amassed over the course of the program have inspired me to take actions that will have long-lasting effects in both my personal and professional life. I look forward to the next phase, fully engaging my community in the most impactful way possible."*

*"I gained confidence, knowledge, and wisdom to go back to my community and effect change."*

*"Joining NLF is a game changer. If you are looking to be more involved in your community and need intentional, focused structure, this is right for you. Equally, if you are already engaging community and looking to expand your reach, strengthen connections, and gain new skills that will improve your position in community engagement and organization, this is also for you."*

*"This program helps you unpack all the amazing powerful parts of you. You get to turn those into actions for your community and I'm grateful for that!"*

## PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

NLF conducted a final evaluation and participants gave the program an average overall rating of

4.5/5



MISSOURI  
COMMUNITY LAB  
(LEARN. ACT. BUILD.)

JANUARY – DECEMBER 2023

Missouri Community LAB pulls together community development trainings into a single, organized platform that aims to increase participation in the community-building process by educating and supporting all in the quest to build strong, whole communities. There were a total of 145 courses featured on LAB from 49 local and national organizations.



ACADEMIC CREDIT  
FOR PRIOR LEARNING

Creating Whole Communities along with UMSL Social Work and Public Policy Administration developed and piloted a program in which individuals can apply UMSL Chancellor Certificates toward UMSL academic course credit. Individuals who hold Chancellor Certificates in the Fundamentals of Economic Development, Fundamentals of Planning and Zoning, Neighborhood Leadership Academy, and Neighborhood Leadership Fellows can earn up to six credit hours in the bachelors and nine credits hours in the masters program of Social Work or Public Policy Administration at UMSL. This program will support individuals in their future academic and career endeavors by honoring the time given and wisdom gained from earning Chancellor Certificates. This program also supports UMSL's strategic plan to create a stronger region through the enrollment of skilled community members.

GRANT AND SCHOLARSHIP  
COMMITTEE OPPORTUNITIES

Graduates of the neighborhood leadership programs continue to engage with CWC through leadership opportunities. These opportunities include sitting on decision-making committees to allocate funds or select participants.

The following committees  
all incorporated community  
resident voice in the  
leadership, deliberation  
and decision-making:



# CREATING WHOLE COMMUNITIES LEADERSHIP ADVISORY TEAM

The CWC Leadership Advisory team strives to be a model for collaborative university-community decision-making.

## CWC ADVISORY TEAM MEMBERS

Delesha George  
Tonnie Glispie-Smith  
Charlin Hughes  
Sarah Hultine-Massengale  
Janett Lewis  
Wilson Majee  
Pamela McLucas  
Riisa Rawlins  
Florian Sichling  
Shavanna Spratt  
Todd Swanstrom  
Adriano Udani  
Janet Wilding  
Patricia Zahn

## CWC SUPPORTING STAFF

Jennifer Batres  
Renisha Davis  
Tasnim Haq  
Tivoli Majors  
Claire Rippel  
Taylor Storz  
Rebecca Taylor  
Anna Russell Ziegler

## CWC ACADEMIC HOME

UMSL School of Social Work

## CWC ADMINISTRATIVE HOME

UMSL Economic and  
Community Development



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