

April 15, 2020 Update

EDUCATION

- College of Education (COE) tutors have not been asked to do onsite service. They intend on resuming our HISD literacy tutoring—virtually.
- This week COE is piloting the virtual process with Blackshear using Microsoft Teams. The Blackshear teacher would start the Teams session, invite the UH tutors and Blackshear students into the online rooms. Then our tutors will work with individual students while the teacher is able to see and listen to the activity. COE expects to roll it out to our other schools over the course of next week.
- Working with the Barbara Bush Literacy Foundation (BBLF), COE has been video-taping our students conducting read-alouds. Michael Verma, UH BOV, completed one last week. Additionally, we connected BBLF with the city representatives and the Mayor who also completed one. These videos are being shared via Facebook and the City of Houston channels.
- COE built out (grant approved) remote service activities, professional development and life after AmeriCorps activities for the tutors to complete. This work is funded by a federal grant and COE has worked diligently to keep all tutors paid within ever-changing federal guidelines.

HEALTH

- The UH Healthy Start staff has been working diligently both before and during the pandemic to provide community outreach and enrollment for women, infants and fathers living in zip codes identified as high risk for infant and maternal mortality and morbidity. Project Director Gillum is spearheading an effort to make hundreds of masks to be distributed to their families. The masks will have UH as part of the design.
- In the month of March and April, Healthy Start staff has continued to work remotely and provides education and home visits through zoom or other video methods. Healthy Start has enrolled 36 women and they continue to accept new referrals into the program.
- The work of UH Healthy Start and programs like it are more important than ever, particularly in light of recent news that African Americans are being impacted by the pandemic more than other groups. They are overrepresented both in the number of cases and the number of deaths relative to their percentages of the population, illustrating what advocates have long known.

- On April 14th Dr. Buck and Dr. Elwyn participated in a Healthy Start zoom staff meeting. Dr. Lee had previously reached out to project Director Gillum to share information on food distribution sites and nearby free testing venues that would be helpful to their clients. Gillum was extremely grateful for the information and said she would make sure it reached the families with whom they are working.
- Birth Equity Webinar -- On Thursday April 16th, Drs. Reiko Boyd and McClain Sampson (UH Healthy Start Project Lead) will present on "The Impact of Structural Racism on Black Maternal Health" for the March of Dimes, Birth Equity Webinar. Nationwide and local data indicates that Black women experience pregnancy complications and death related to pregnancy at roughly triple the rate of White women. UH Healthy Start, normally housed at the Third Ward Multi-Service Center, works to improve the lives of families most at risk by providing FREE education and home visits for women who are pregnant or postpartum.
- NSI is spreading information on (1) free testing, (2) free food distributions, and (3) sources of possible loans and grants.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

- The SURE Academy is proceeding virtually. Entrepreneurs were given the option of dropping out with assurances they would be accepted in the fall. Some did but 95 remain.
- SURE participants have been sent information on how to secure government loans/grants and other resources such as free food and free testing.
- Dean Pavlou, Dr. Khumawala, Dr. Lee, Charlie Becker and the Director of the Small Business Development Center met with the leadership of the Emancipation Economic Development Center (EEDC) to discuss way we might collaborate. The meeting was very productive.
- SURE used a grant from Wells Fargo to provide 16 entrepreneurs with \$850 grants each. These were SURE Fellows, entrepreneurs who have already graduated but have come back for additional training on Saturdays.
- The BOV Economic Empowerment Task Force met and decided on action items for the future. (1) a tour which will have to be done virtually now, (2) developing a workshop on web development; and (3) developing a workshop on restaurant management in conjunction with the UH HRM College. Dean Pavlou and Dean Ambler have agreed to assist.

ART & CULTURE

- As with many programs in the college, KGMCOTA has paused the Cultural Loop Fellowships for Undergraduates. The projects and the events associated with this fellowship originally scheduled for the end of this month will be pushed into the fall as much as it is feasible. As Rick says, "It's ironic that my career and the classes I teach rest on the belief that power comes through social engagement and now the best way to manifest power is to disengage."
- KGMCOTA is continuing to have check-ins with the PRH/KGMCOTA Fellows, but is encouraging a responsible and respectable approach with community right now.
- PRH is moving ahead with the Summer Studios program scheduled to begin in June with an exhibition in August. The Fellows are scheduled to be the mentor artists, and they expect to have two to three UH arts majors as residents in the round.

- In terms of the impact on the Fellowship timeline, KGMCOTA is considering how they can extend their research timeline, but will respond to what is feasible once it is safe to relax social distancing rules.
- In terms of cancellations, so many events have been cancelled from the Mariachi Pumas recital, the Counter Culture Festival, the Texas Music Festival and so many others. However, there was nothing specific to the Third Ward Initiative arts plan, outside of the work with the undergraduate Cultural Loop Fellows that we had to cancel.
- Potential Third Ward Cultural Center--Dean Davis and Rick Lowe secured an appointment and meeting with Commissioner Rodney Ellis' top staff and pitched their idea of converting the old Negro Nursing school building into a cultural center. This would complement the efforts of Project Row Houses to have the greater Third Ward designated the Third Ward Cultural District by the Texas Commission of the Arts. PRH has secured a consultant, Lord Cultural Resources, to help prepare the application. Dr. Lee and Sixto Wagan participated in a zoom meeting with the consultant at which they discussed what should go into the application.
- One of Rick Lowe's student has installed a public art memorial at Bastrop and Stuart Street to honor Anthony Mills "Zin", a noted third ward figure who in 2014 founded All Real radio which can be accessed online and via an app. All Real radio is housed in a shotgun house owned by Project Row Houses.
- Rick Lowe has also started an internship program with Station Museum (located at Alabama & Labranch two blocks from SHAPE center's Alameda building). His intention is to grow the internship from 1 to 5 internships that offer students all aspects of operating a museum.

Elwyn Lee
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