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JUNE 2023

HEALTH

YOUR GUIDE
TO HEALTHY
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MEN'S
HEALTH
EDITION

After a Storm Renewal is Possible

A Story of Resilience and Restoration

Chageekee (which in Kickapoo means "all encompassing thunderstorm" or the biggest part of the thunderstorm) Owen Blackwood tells us about his journey to regain his health.



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to be Healthy

MEN

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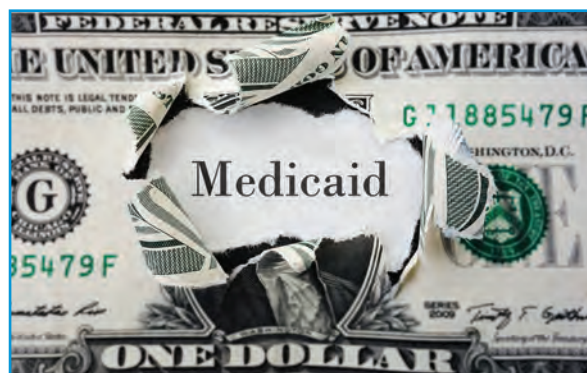
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Kansas City Indian Center

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This Men's Health edition is dedicated to my father, Walter Pearson, Sr. who died from heart disease when I was 14 years old. Back then, I was unsure about my future without him.



Men, It's All About You!

A recent article published in The Washington Post titled, "Men's Health Life Expectancy: A Silent Crisis in Men's Health Gets Worse", exposed the frank realities about how men, their healthcare providers and even the larger society see men's health. I'm sure I'm not the only one who has found myself urging and practically begging a male friend or loved one to go to the doctor for a preventative screening, or to get checked for something they wanted to believe was "not that bad." Come on, men! According to the article, a silent crisis in men's health is shortening the life spans of fathers, husbands, brothers and sons.

Black men have the highest cancer death rate at 227.3 per 100,000. Among Black women, the cancer mortality rate is 149 per 100,000.

In this issue I'm standing on my soapbox (magazine) and sounding the alarm to encourage ALL men to TAKE TIME TO BE HEALTHY. Now is the time. Our cover story spotlights Chageekee Owen Blackwood, a phenomenal Native American from our community who did just that. His story of resilience and restoration is eye-opening. All of the content in this issue is about encouraging and supporting men on their physical and mental health journey.

Congratulations are in order. John W. Bluford, III, founder of the Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute passes the baton of leadership to Spencer Hardwick, the newly appointed Executive Director (page 8).



Summer is just around the corner. Be healthy and safe and take care of yourself and your loved ones to make the world a better place for all of us.

Ruth Ramsey

Ruth Ramsey, Publisher and CEO



P.O. Box 5425
Kansas City, MO 64131
816.361.6400
kcourhealthmatters.com

PUBLISHER
Ruth Ramsey
ruthramsey@kcourhealthmatters.com

EDITORIAL & STRATEGIC PLANNING
Donna Wood
dwood@kcourhealthmatters.com

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Jeanene Dunn
jdunn@kcourhealthmatters.com

**HAVING AN EVENT?
HAVE QUESTIONS?**
info@kcourhealthmatters.com

WANT TO ADVERTISE?
info@kcourhealthmatters.com

CONTRIBUTORS
Chageekee Owen Blackwood
Randy Calstrom, CEO
Brandon Doerkson
Jasper Fullard, Jr., M.D.
Walter George, DNP, MP-C
Spencer Hardwick
Doug Langner
Justin Nichols, BSN, RN
Tom Petrizzo, CEO
Calvin Porter
Anton Washington
Robert Woods Jr., MS



WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Send us your suggestions for health topics you would like to see in *Our Health Matters*. Also share what you enjoy about the magazine. Email us at info@kcourhealthmatters.com or write to us at

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A LOOK AT KANSAS CITY'S HISTORY & A CHECK-UP

M O D E R A T O R



Ruth Ramsey
Publisher & CEO
"Our Health Matters"

G U E S T P A N E L I S T



Jeron Ravin, JD
President & CEO
Swope Health



Carla Gibson, MPA
Vice President of Programs
REACH Healthcare Foundation



**Sharla A. Smith,
PhD, MPH**
Associate Professor
KU Medical Center



Michael Wells
Senior Collections Librarian
Kansas City Public Library



Men are Less Likely to Share Mental Health Concerns

Check in with the men in your life about how they're really doing.

June marks Men's Health Month, a national observance to raise awareness about healthcare for men and boys with a focus on encouraging healthy living decisions. Men are less likely to seek help for mental health concerns like depression, substance use and stressful life events due to gender stereotypes, social norms and stigma. These factors can make it harder for men and their healthcare providers to recognize when they might need mental health support. Men who don't—or feel that they can't—speak openly about their feelings might have a more challenging time recognizing the symptoms of mental health conditions in themselves.

During Men's Health Month, we encourage you to check in with the men in your life about how they're really doing. You can use this tool we call **ALEC** to help the men start a conversation:

A: ASK. Start by asking how they're feeling. You could prompt the conversation by saying, "You haven't seemed like yourself lately — are you feeling OK?" or "I've noticed you haven't been replying to the group chat lately, which is unlike you." It's okay to ask about recent changes in behavior and/or mood.

L: LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGMENT WHILE VALIDATING THEIR EMOTIONS. Practice active listening and give them your full attention. Ask probing questions like, "How long have you felt this way?"

E: ENCOURAGE ACTION. You could, for example, encourage them to take a mental health screening and share their results with a loved one, mental health provider or primary care provider.

C: CHECK-IN. Find a time to check in, whether that be via text, call or an in-person get-together. You could send a message like, "I just want you to know I'm here for you whenever you feel up to talking."

Movember, a leading charity, has created a helpful tool called "Movember Conversations" to help you have conversations with the men in your life who might be struggling. You can't fix someone's problems, but you can be there for them — by starting the conversation.

If you need mental health support or resources for yourself or a loved one, call Johnson County Mental Health Center 24/7 at 913-268-0156 or text 741-741.

Source: Johnson County Mental Health



**ENDING GENERATIONAL POVERTY
ONE PERSON, ONE FAMILY, AND ONE
COMMUNITY AT A TIME.**

EXCELLING IN FINANCIAL MATTERS

After working in the banking industry for more than 13 years, Marilyn Chappell discovered a problem that was not being addressed. Many potential customers were being denied loans without receiving any help or guidance to prepare for future approval. In 2016, Marilyn Chappell founded Exceeds Expectations, Inc. (EEI), a minority and woman-owned 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to increasing financial literacy and job training. EEI serves the Kansas City Metro area with an emphasis on low-income adults, families, and formerly incarcerated individuals.

EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM:

Girls ages 11-18 are introduced to financial literacy, leadership, and career professionals. Girls will learn to see money as a tool and learn to be good stewards of the money they earn.

ADULT FINANCIAL STABILITY PROGRAM:

Participants learn about financial psychology, budgeting, establishing credit, banking, identity theft, and insurance.

ELECTRICAL APPRENTICE PROGRAM:

Graduating high school seniors can enroll in an apprenticeship that includes paid on-the-job training, 12 weeks of financial literacy and a scholarship to the Associated Builders and Contractors KC for an electrical apprenticeship.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Exceeds Expectations welcomes your support:

- Donations to support programs and staffing
- Donated vehicle or van to transport participants to programs
- Volunteers



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Spencer Hardwick Selected to Lead the Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute

John Bluford, Founder and President of the Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute (BHLI), and the Board of Directors have announced the appointment of Spencer Hardwick as Executive Director to oversee the day-to-day operations of the organization. Hardwick will further expand BHLI's footprint and continue developing pathways for executive leadership in healthcare careers. Spencer shared the following with *Our Health Matters (OHM)*.

OHM: Tell us about yourself and how your career experiences have prepared you for this new role.

I was born and raised right here in Kansas City, MO and started my career by becoming a founding teacher at a charter school in Dallas, TX. That experience provided valuable exposure to one of the most important professions in the world.

After a few years, I decided I wanted to work in the finance and investment field and took a position as a financial analyst at Goldman Sachs (GS), in New York. I knew how important it was for me to gain exposure to a variety of industries at such a nascent point in my career. At GS, I learned a great deal about how financial markets work. And while it was an extraordinary experience, I

also felt a constant pull to return to the classroom.

After two years on Wall Street, I returned to Kansas City and joined the faculty at the Ewing Marion Kaufman School. Returning to education was one of the best decisions I've made, and it revealed just how connected I felt to our students. I have also served as Chief of Staff at Teach for America Kansas City—an education non-profit, where I learned about the nuances of school system governance, philanthropy and operations management.



Spencer Hardwick



OHM: What does becoming the “new” executive director of BHLI mean to you?

It's a tremendous opportunity to support scholars in new ways through an institution with a demonstrated track record of excellence. I am also excited at the prospect of learning what it means to lead and steward

“Spencer’s educational background, financial acumen, understanding of the educational process including evaluation tools and familiarity with philanthropy make him an excellent choice to join our team. The plan is that he ultimately lead the Institute as it furthers the work of creating healthcare career pathways that will eventually eliminate healthcare disparities among minority and vulnerable patient populations”.

— John W. Bluford, III
Founder & President, Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute



an organization effectively. A big reason I was attracted to the position was the ability to learn from one of the true giants of industry—John Bluford. His reputation, in and outside of the healthcare field, precedes him. The opportunity to learn through osmosis from one of the best was a big dimension of importance.

OHM: What can scholars and healthcare system leaders expect from your leadership?

I hope to emulate much of what I’ve already observed from Mr. Bluford’s management style: servant leadership. By empowering the folks around you and taking stock of the appropriate conditions that will help them be successful, we can accomplish transformational things. I also believe in the importance of leading by example and through humility.

OHM: What are BHLI’s goals for the next three to five years?

From the early discourse I’ve had, continuing to provide a high-quality program for our scholars, alumni, and supporters is paramount. Beyond that, I will continue to build on the incredibly strong foundation established by our staff, Cynthia Cargill and Montoya Collins, to ensure that we are best positioned to eliminate healthcare disparities in the coming generations.

OHM: What do you need most to ensure that you are successful?

I welcome the continued trust of the community that has helped BHLI become what it already is today. If I can do that, I will feel good about what that means for what we can do going forward. But in order to move ahead in a meaningful direction, it’s critical that I deeply understand where we’ve been, who we are, and how we got here.

One hundred-one or 90 % of the BHLI’s 112 scholars who have completed their undergraduate degrees to date are now serving in the field of healthcare or earning related graduate degrees. The remaining graduates are serving their communities in the fields of banking, education, finance, informational technology, and law.

BHLI scholars are employed at leading healthcare systems and organizations across the country including the following:

- Amgen: Thousand Oaks, CA
- Aon Risk Services: Chicago, IL
- Atrium Health: Charlotte, NC
- Augusta University Health: Augusta, GA
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina: Raleigh, NC
- Children’s Mercy Hospital: Kansas City, MO
- Deloitte: Atlanta, GA
- Emory University Hospital: Atlanta, GA
- GEHA: Lee’s Summit, MO
- HCA Healthcare: Nashville, TN
- Henry Ford Health System: Detroit, MI
- Netsmart Technologies: Overland Park, KS
- Northwell Health: New Hyde Park, New York
- Novant Health: Charlotte, NC
- Prisma Health: Greenville, SC
- Texas Children’s Hospital: Houston, TX
- University Health: Kansas City, MO, and additional sites across the country.

For more information visit blufordinstitute.org

The Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute (BHLI) is a 501(c) 3 leadership development program whose mission is to cultivate a pipeline of diverse, culturally competent talent for healthcare leadership who will work to eliminate health disparities among minority and vulnerable populations.

Medicaid

Missouri's Medicaid Has Expanded to Insure More Families

Eligibility requirements have expanded for Missouri's Medicaid (MO HealthNet) to include adults between the ages of 19 and 64 who qualify for help. MO HealthNet provides health insurance for low-income children and parents, seniors, pregnant women, and people with disabilities. It allows Missourians to see a doctor when they are sick, get checkups, buy medications, and go to the hospital. This provides greater assurance that more people will be able to care for their healthcare needs.

Who is eligible?

Non-disabled adults between the ages of 19 and 64 may now be eligible for coverage through Missouri's Medicaid program (MO HealthNet) if they:

- Live in Missouri and are a United States citizen (or qualified non-citizen)
- Make less than the annual income limit for their household size (visit: mydss.mo.gov to view the income levels chart.)
- Are not eligible for or receiving Medicare Part A or B, MO HealthNet for Families, MO HealthNet for Pregnant Women, or Non-Spend Down MO HealthNet for the Aged, Blind & Disabled

How do I apply?

There are many ways you can apply for MO HealthNet benefits, depending on what works best for you. Visit mydss.mo.gov to learn how you can apply and the steps to submit your application.

What happens after I apply?

Once your application is processed, you will get a letter that lets you know if you are eligible for healthcare coverage or not. If you are approved, you will receive a MO HealthNet Identification Card and information explaining the type of coverage you have. You will need to follow the instructions in the letter for your coverage to begin.

I already have MO HealthNet. Will my coverage change?

The Family Support Division will reach out to you directly if there is a change in your coverage for any reason. If your contact information (phone number, address, etc.) has changed, please be sure to report it as soon as possible so we can update you, as needed. You can report a change online any day, any time on the website.

Who should I contact with questions?

- If you have questions about applying for MO HealthNet, visit <https://mydss.mo.gov/healthcare/apply> or call 855-FSD-INFO (855-373-4636).
- If you already have MO HealthNet and you have questions about your health plan, covered services, or your plan's health care providers, please reach out to your Managed Care Health Plan and also visit <https://mydss.mo.gov/contact-health-plan> •

Source: Missouri Department of Social Services
dss.mo.gov/mhd/healthcare-benefit



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Score a Home Run for Health

For the seventh year in a row, a survey of 1,000 men in the U.S. showed that more than half of them skip regular health screenings.

As a Senior Nurse Practitioner at University Health Community Care Linwood, I want guys to know it's time to reverse the trend. I know the pattern very well. Young men feel invincible, middle-aged men are busy with life, and those in their golden years feel it's too late. But it's not too late, especially since the expansion of Missouri Medicaid means more men can get regular checkups. So, let's break it down, baseball style!

A primary care provider is the person who oversees your care, or the team General Manager. (Never forget, you are the team owner and have the right to request another provider.) Your primary care provider might be an M.D. (medical doctor), D.O. (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine), NP (nurse practitioner) or PA (physician assistant)—all of whom receive extensive training to see the big picture when it comes to your health and wellness.

Get to know your team.

If you need extra care in a specific area, your primary care provider sends you to a specialist, or batting coach. Specialists can be physicians, NPs, or PAs with extra education/training on a specific body system. Examples of specialty care include cardiology (diseases and abnormalities of the heart), gastroenterology (diseases of

the esophagus, stomach, small intestine, colon and rectum, pancreas, gallbladder, bile ducts and liver), or urology (diseases of the urinary tract system, the reproductive organs including kidneys, adrenal glands, ureters, urinary bladder, urethra, and male reproductive organs).

No matter your type of appointment, the following tips help:

- Write out your questions so you don't forget to ask.
- Know each and every medication you take. Don't forget supplements. Write them down or take a photo with your phone.
- If you monitor blood pressure or blood sugar, bring recent results.
- Ask which screenings you're missing (colonoscopy, cholesterol, etc.)

And finally, remember that teamwork depends on communication. Sign up with your provider's portal (a healthcare term for secure email) so you can see results and ask questions.

Make it a great season! •



By Walter "Chip" George, DNP, MP-C

Senior Nurse Practitioner
University Health
Community Care Linwood



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The phrase 'girl dad' was popularized by NBA star Kobe Bryant in honor of his four daughters. It is a phrase used to refer to dads who have daughters and is often used to capture the love between fathers and their daughters.

It is important for dads to start and continue establishing a healthy relationship with their daughters from birth and throughout their daughters' lives.

A Salute to "Girl Dads"

Fathers play a very important role in the life of their daughters.

By Ruth Ramsey, Publisher

Our Health Matters

I accompanied Calvin, who is a "girl dad" and my nephew, to the park with his daughter, Tatyana. She wanted to play on everything. He was quick to remind her that she isn't big enough to safely experience all the playground equipment. This was a perfect example of how dads can offer early life lessons. I asked Calvin to share his thoughts with us.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR DAUGHTER? I like seeing her smile and experiencing new things. My wife, Alicia and I recently bought her a tricycle. She loves it. It makes her feel like a big girl.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES AS SHE GROWS UP? My hope for Tatyana is that she will put God first in her life and that she grows up to be strong, virtuous, successful, hopeful, humble, full of faith, full of knowledge, wisdom and understanding. That she will be independent and have a mindset of not giving up when things seem hard; also understanding who she is and not letting anybody knock her off her game.

WHAT VALUES ARE YOU TEACHING HER? First, I'm trying to lead by example so she can see it and know it can be done. Some of the values I'm teaching her are gratitude, love, communication, confidence, integrity, modesty, kindness, faith, humility and having a relationship with God.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER GIRL DADS? I would tell them, "Love your daughters unconditionally and encourage them to live a full and abundant life. As she gets older, show her how a woman should be treated (In a good way); be mindful of what you say and do around your daughters. Last thing, tell your daughter she is wonderfully and beautifully made and destined for great things!"

Happy Father's Day to all dads.

CREATING PATHWAYS FOR BLACK MALE EDUCATORS



REPRESENTATION MATTERS IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

Nationally in the 2020-21 school year, only 1.3% of public school teachers were Black men, according to the National Teacher and Principal Survey. Yet, Black children accounted for 15% of public school students that same year.

When a professional network of **Black Male Educators** focuses on representation in education careers, great things happen. More Black children—and ultimately all children—experience greater academic achievement.

One local organization, Brothers Liberating Our Communities (BLOC), is on a mission to place a Black Male Educator in the academic pathway of every student, to ensure their life trajectory is reflective of their talent. The BLOC is dedicated to advancing the connecting, development, and engagement of Black men working in education.

MAKING AN IMPACT

With a goal of increasing the number of Black Male Educators in the Kansas City school system 30% by 2025,

BLOC will recruit, mentor, advance and equip Black Male Educators with the tools and resources they need to be successful in as educators.

BLOC consults with school systems to conduct equity audits and develops gap analysis and action plans to identify and eliminate systemic racism and bias that hinder the success of educators and students. BLOC has successful partnerships with Teach for America Kansas City, Kansas City Teaching Residency, WEB DuBois Center, and Kansas City Public Schools. They welcome more allies to further this mission.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
VISIT: THEBLOCKC.ORG
OR CALL 816-896-7784

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Photo by Ruth Ramsey taken in Penn Valley Park at the summit view of The Scout monument overlooking the city.

After a Storm Renewal is Possible



A Story of Resilience and Restoration

Chageekee (which in Kickapoo means “all encompassing thunderstorm” or the biggest part of the thunderstorm) Owen Blackwood tells us about his journey to regain his health.

All of us are on a health journey. At any juncture along the way, we may need to make a U-turn or recalculate the direction we will take. *Our Health Matters™* relishes connecting with our racially and culturally diverse community members.

This interview with Chageekee Owen Blackwood gave us an opportunity to get to know him and celebrate his journey.

OHM: Where you are from; describe your Native American affiliation; what is your Native American name and its meaning? What are some tribal traditions you and your family practice that supports your health and wellness — mind, body and spirit? Is there a native symbol that holds a special meaning to you?

Owen: I am originally from the Lawrence area, but have lived all over and worked in the Kansas City area throughout my life. I am a member of the Kickapoo Nation in Kansas, as well as Potawatomi and Cherokee. My Kickapoo name is Chageekee, which means “all encompassing thunderstorm” or the biggest part of the thunderstorm. Traditionally, we have certain foods that I was taught from a young age to pay certain attention to within my diet, such as berries and squash that I always understood as a way to share something with nature and be grateful for. In a similar manner, I was taught regularly to give special reverence to nature and everything around me, including my own health and state of being. Given that the Native American Church is a sort of spatial religion or belief, everything around me is something I consume, whether it be a part of my physical

diet, mental or emotional state, and should be something to be considerate of. The symbol of a thunderbolt or a thundercloud has always had special meaning to me, being the boldest thing about the thunderstorm and the most prominent thing that comes to mind when thinking of my name or the meaning behind it.

OHM: What happened that caused your health to spiral out of control and what are the realities that you faced?

Owen: What really caused my health to spiral out of control was ultimately my loss of control over alcohol and avoiding any sense of real accountability in my own life. I had years of unresolved trauma I wasn't addressing with tools like therapy, that I was masking or simply trying

"UPON GETTING OUT OF THE HOSPITAL THE SECOND TIME, I KNEW THAT IF I WAS TO EVEN HAVE A CHANCE AT SURVIVAL, I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO COMPLETELY REBUILD MYSELF IN WAYS I HADN'T EVEN CONCEIVED WERE POSSIBLE AT THAT POINT IN MY LIFE."

to ignore that caused me to become a destructive person, with actions rooted in fear and reactivity. I couldn't point to a single relationship with anyone interpersonally that was healthy or wasn't strained in some way because of this.

OHM: What was the turning point that made you want to shift and do something different?

Owen: What really caused me to make a change was when I ended up in the hospital about a year and a half ago. I was the epitome of bad health. I was eating anything bad you can imagine, drinking excessively, and was at an unhealthy weight of 440

pounds. I found myself spiraling further towards death at an alarming rate and got incredibly close. I got so sick that even in my state of denial and depression, I asked someone to take me to the hospital. Upon arrival, I was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and was actually in triple organ failure. The doctors didn't think that I was going to make it through the first night there, and I had to be medicated to stop having seizures due to alcohol withdrawal. After the first day, the doctors weren't sure how long I had left, and the odds I was given were less than 15% that I would survive at all, but not much longer than a month. I regularly had to go to the hospital and actually got readmitted a few weeks later. I was given poor odds of survival at that point and was in the process of getting on lists for organ transplants, if I survived. Upon getting out of the hospital the second time, I knew that if I was to even have a chance at survival, I was going to have to completely rebuild myself in ways I hadn't even conceived were possible at that point in my life.

OHM: What did you do to start your transformation?

Owen: Diet wise, I was very strict and cut out as much sugar and sodium as I could for awhile. I only ate egg whites, plain yogurt and oats, and plain baked potatoes with a lot of arugula and kale. Chicken was the only meat I ate. I would do yoga for an hour every day with weight training mixed in on alternating days, with nothing too heavy for awhile. I really focused on taking small walks daily trying to work my way up to a mile a day at first, with jogging a mile being the end goal.

OHM: What have been the most difficult and the easiest parts of committing to improving your health and way of life?

Owen: The most difficult parts of committing to being actually healthy and leading a life of

wellness have been the mental and emotional aspects. Going to therapy and accepting myself and my mistakes, and who I was up to my turning point were and still are the hardest parts of growing into who I want to become. Forgiveness for myself and compassion towards the weaker parts of myself were the hardest lessons of them all, but easily the most rewarding and important. The easiest part of improving my life is definitely the physical aspect of wellness. For me, this involves getting enough sleep, making sure I get enough of the right nutrients, and physical activity, because it really is a gift to be able to treat myself the right way every day.

"ON THE DAYS WHEN THINGS ARE HARDER, IT CAN BE EASY TO LOOK TO MY ANCESTORS FOR INSPIRATION..."

OHM: Outside of your own self-determination, where did you find help and support?

Owen: Oddly enough, I actually found great support online through social media, where I was able to find like-minded people and build a network of friends and mentors in similar situations. I also found support and a space to grow in family around me, and among my closest loved ones.

OHM: Has your Native American heritage helped you succeed in your transformation to live healthier?

Owen: My heritage has definitely played a large role in motivating me to keep growing and pursuing what I feel is almost tradition not only to survive, but to really thrive. On the days when things are harder, it can be easy to look to my ancestors for inspiration to keep going and trying my hardest for those in my family in the past, and those in the Native community around me today. I want to be

the role model I desperately needed as a young Native American man.

**OHM: How long has it taken for you to arrive at a healthier place?
How are you today?**

Owen: It has taken me a year and a half to get to where I am today. I've lost 190 pounds, but gained so much in terms of emotional and mental wellness and ways to move through life as a healthy individual. I am healthier and happier than I've probably ever been in my life.

OHM: What advice you would give to others who may be facing some of the challenges that you have overcome?

Owen: The biggest piece of advice I have for others is that it's okay to not be okay, and it's okay to struggle. But please ask for help, and please keep trying. Whatever that looks like, please keep striving to grow and accept yourself for where you're at. If you can at least accept where you're standing, that's the best place to put your feet to step upward and onward.

OHM: What is your vision for your future?

Owen: For my future, I plan on opening and managing my own gym and overall Wellness Center someday. I plan on helping as many people as I can to reach heights they never imagined, whatever that looks like. I would also like to one day start a foundation specifically for Native Americans to feel safe and where wellness and health are accessible and attainable for them in a real way, and they have representation in the health community.

Owen is a certified personal trainer and fitness trainer at a national fitness chain. He helps clients focus on sustainable health for an overall sense of wellness.

Being Healthy is a Process

Ask yourself, “What do I need to do to live my healthiest life?”

As men, we tend to wait until something goes wrong to seek out help with our health. Three of the main parts to being healthy are physical health, emotional health, and spiritual health. What does being healthy in these areas look like to you? This year, for Men's Health Month in June, rather than wait for a problem to surface, I challenge each reader to look for something they can do to take better care of themselves.

It is important to take the initiative to get checked out and have a physical done yearly, because finding a problem early means it is easier to treat. The same is true for emotional and spiritual difficulties. If something is bothering you, reach out to a spiritual leader or health professional, even if it doesn't seem like a big deal right now.

Often we feel as though asking for help or getting checked out is a sign of weakness. I ask you to turn this mindset around and recognize that it takes strength to take care of ourselves; it takes courage to ask for help. Rather than waiting for something to bring you to a halt, help yourself so you can continue to play an active part in helping and strengthening your community.

Balance and the right attitude

For me, being healthy means seeking balance. Taking care of my body means exercising with a positive attitude. I do this by doing activities that I love but also being kind to my body. It is important to know when something is

too much. Nobody is going to be perfect at self-care, especially at first. It is a process of learning and growing that we all can take part in.

Justin Nichols is a Registered Nurse with the Kansas City Indian Center, a social services organization in midtown Kansas City, Mo. He has been a nurse for 10 years and has worked in both urban and rural settings, serving American Indian populations.



Justin Nichols
BSN, RN
Health Services
Coordinator
Kansas City Indian Center

The Kansas City Indian Center supports the social, educational and economic advancement of the American Indian community by promoting traditional and cultural values. Services include preventive health promotion, nutrition consultation, health screenings for blood pressure and A1C, vaccinations, monitoring chronic health conditions, programs for substance use, case management, food pantry services and cultural activities.

Men Should Set Goals

Goals are targets to which one aims their life's arrow.

Brandon Doerksen shares about his health and offers encouragement to men looking to improve their own.

OHM: How would you describe your current state of health: Good, Fair, or Poor?

Brandon: I would personally describe my current state of health as good, but it could definitely be better. As far as my physical health goes, I am able to go through my activities of daily living and have no limitations in anything I do. I'm confident that if I wanted to do something strenuous, I could do it without any limitations. I don't have any current health concerns, but I know we all need to know our family history because that's major when it comes to one's health. I am happy with where I am at the current moment.

OHM: Describe your eating and exercise routine.

Brandon: I try to start my morning with a high protein breakfast and fruit. I don't put too much emphasis on a certain diet. I try to eat what I enjoy—food that tastes good. I slow down when I eat so I can taste and enjoy my food and it also keeps me from over-eating. My exercise routine consists of daily walks with my dogs and cycling at least once a week.

"I am happy with where I am at the current moment."

—Brandon Doerksen, Athletic Trainer

OHM: What can doctors do to help men become more committed to seeking regular checkups?

Brandon: I'm not great about getting regular checkups myself. I think stressing the importance of regular checkups and explaining the health conditions that could be hiding would drive more young men to seeing their doctors on a regular schedule. Another thing that could be done (if it's not) is scheduling our annual checkups before we leave the office. For example, the same as dental offices do; if it wasn't for scheduling my dental appointments in advance, more than likely I would neglect to make the time to see the dentist.

OHM: What are some additional points you think would be helpful to men?

Brandon: I think the most important thing men need in order to increase their health and overall wellbeing is having a goal. It could be as simple as losing weight, or to be more physically active to enjoy life with their children or grandchildren, or to be healthy enough to travel or go hiking. If there is something that you're pushing for, you are a lot more likely to work hard to achieve it.

Brandon Doerksen is the General Manager of Stretch Zone Prairie Village. He is a licensed and certified athletic trainer.



Remember to schedule your next appointment before you leave the doctor's office.



Live a Heart Healthy Life

Understand and Manage Your Heart Disease Risk.

Heart disease is a collection of conditions that affect the heart. Talk to your healthcare provider about the steps you can take to lower your risk.

Heart disease can impact men at any age. Heart disease remains a leading cause of death in men of all races. Knowing your risk factors can help you make healthier choices and make the changes you need to.

There are different types of diseases that affect the heart. The most common in the United States is coronary artery disease (CAD). CAD is caused by plaque buildup in the walls of the arteries that supply blood to the heart (called coronary arteries) and other parts of the body.

Plaque is made up of deposits of cholesterol and other substances in the artery. Plaque buildup causes the inside of the arteries to narrow over time, which can partially or totally block the blood flow. This process is called atherosclerosis (also referred to as “hardening of the arteries”).

The first clue for many people that they have CAD is a heart attack. Symptoms of heart attack include:

- Chest pain or discomfort (angina)
- Weakness, light-headedness, nausea (feeling sick to your stomach), or a cold sweat
- Pain or discomfort in the arms or shoulder
- Shortness of breath

Over time, coronary artery disease can weaken the heart muscle. This may lead to heart failure, a serious condition where the heart can't pump blood the way it should.

Who is at risk for CAD?

If you are:

- Overweight
- Don't get enough physical activity
- Have unhealthy eating habits
- Tobacco use
- A family history of heart disease also increases your risk for CAD, especially a family history of having heart disease at an early age (50 or younger).

To find out your risk for CAD, your healthcare team may measure your blood pressure, blood cholesterol, and blood sugar levels.

Left unchecked, each risk factor increases your chance of developing heart disease or a stroke. The more risks you have, the higher your overall risk. Annual checkups help you stay on top of any changes in your health so they can be addressed. And never forget to be an advocate for your own health.

Visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease.

**Sources: National Institutes of Health
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention**

MEN: GET CHECKED FOR PROSTATE CANCER

EARLY DETECTION HELPS SAVE LIVES



Jasper Fullard, Jr., M.D.
Retired, Internal Medicine practitioner

Did you know that all men are at risk for prostate cancer? It is the most common cancer in men, and the most treatable, if detected early.

According to the CDC, “out of every 100 American men, about 13 will get prostate cancer during their lifetime. About 2 to 3 men will die from prostate cancer.”

Who is at risk?

The risk for prostate cancer increases with age. Black men and men with a family history of prostate cancer are at a higher risk.

The incidence of prostate cancer among African-American men is 64% higher than among Caucasian men, and the mortality or death rate of prostate cancer is 2.3 times higher.

I recommend that Black men between the ages of 30-35 start getting screened for prostate cancer. After a certain age, prostate cancer screening should be part of every annual checkup.

Screening can catch prostate issues early.

Most prostate cancers found by screening are small and slow growing and may not be fatal. If you are concerned that you may have a higher risk for prostate cancer, discuss it with your healthcare provider.

Two tests are used to screen for prostate cancer.

The Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) test measures the amount of PSA in the blood. The higher the PSA level in the blood, the more likely a prostate problem is present.

The problem may not be cancer. Other factors that affect PSA levels can include:

- Certain medical procedures.
- Certain medications.
- An enlarged prostate.
- A prostate infection.

Digital Rectal Examination (DRE)

Digital rectal examination (DRE) is when a health care provider inserts a gloved, lubricated finger into a man's rectum to feel the prostate for anything abnormal.

If you receive an abnormal test result.

The only way to determine if cancer is present is to do a biopsy. The procedure involves surgery to remove pieces of the prostate to study under a microscope. Your healthcare provider will discuss the biopsy results and determine the best course of treatment.

Need help remembering to schedule your checkup?

Consider scheduling your appointment on your birthday or another date that you will remember. During your visit, be sure to ask questions and share your concerns with your healthcare provider.

It's time to take control of your health.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)



It's Time to Talk About It: Men & Mental Health

By **Tom Petrizzo, CEO**, Tri-County Mental Health Services Inc.

Randy Calstrom, CEO, Wyandot Behavioral Health Network

While mental health is an important part of our overall health, among men, it often goes undiscussed. There are many reasons why: it feels risky to be vulnerable or we don't think talking about it will help. As cliché as it might sound, it is okay to not be okay. It's time that we, as men, start talking openly about our mental health.

We're taught from a young age that when something is wrong, we should shake it off, rub some dirt on it and get back out there. We are socialized to not be vulnerable or show—let alone talk about—our emotions. So how do we begin to reverse this generations-old idea that vulnerability and masculinity cannot co-exist?

Open conversations about mental health with men is one way to get started. It is encouraging to see some men taking conversations about mental health out of the shadows and into the spotlight. Take Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, for example. He has been open about his

decades-long battle with his mental health and seeking help for depression. Many of us would consider The Rock to be the picture of masculinity. But he is also an advocate for asking for help when you need it, saying that men “fall into this trap of being really adverse to vulnerability, because we always want to be strong and feel like we can take on the world.” The Rock called being able to ask for help “our superpower.”

If The Rock can talk openly about mental health, so can we. And those conversations can shed light on the many reasons men might experience a mental health challenge, especially as we age. As we move toward retirement, life changes in a major way. For many of us, a big part of our identity is tied to our career. When our careers end, we can lose our sense of purpose and our social connections that are essential for our mental health.

Middle-aged men experience some of the highest rates of suicide in the U.S. But there are protective factors that

can reduce that risk. That includes undergoing depression screenings and suicide risk assessments during yearly primary care visits. If you don't feel comfortable talking to a mental health professional, talking to your primary care doctor about mental health symptoms can be a great place to start. If that feels uncomfortable, consider talking to a faith leader.

When we are mentally healthy, we can show up more fully for the people who are important to us.

There are also things that we can do every day to invest in our mental health. Something as simple as arranging a weekly round of golf or a book study with our buddies can do wonders for our mental health. That sense of connection and routine can give us a reason to get up in the morning. It's also important to have a sense of purpose. For many of us, that sense of purpose is tied to work and family. But as we age, it can begin to change or fade. When we find a project or cause to give our time to, it can help us feel like we are contributing to something in a meaningful way.

While it might feel risky to open up about mental health, asking for help is a sign of strength. (The Rock himself said so.) When we are mentally healthy, we can show up more fully for the people who are important to us. And we can also be an example for other men by talking about our struggles and seeking help when we need it.

Caring for the Men in your Life

You can help look out for the men in your life, whether that's a partner, friend or colleague.

- **KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS.** It's important to be able to recognize the warning signs that might indicate someone is experiencing a mental health challenge. These can include changes in mood and sleep patterns, changes in work performance, alcohol

and/or drug misuse and risky behaviors.

- **CHECK IN REGULARLY.**

Make it a point to reach out and ask how they're doing and what is on their mind. You never know when you might intervene at a critical moment.

- **ASK ABOUT ACCESS TO GUNS.**

If you are worried that someone might be dealing with a mental health challenge, ask if they have access to guns and work with them to safely store or remove them.

- **ASK DIRECTLY ABOUT SUICIDE.**

If you think someone might be thinking about suicide, always ask the question directly: "Are you thinking about suicide or hurting yourself?" This will not put the idea in their head or make them more likely to attempt suicide. It will actually do the opposite and serve as a protective factor.

- **HELP THEM CONNECT TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES.** If someone opens up to you about a mental health challenge, you can support them by connecting them to mental health resources.

Help them find their local community mental health center in Kansas City. You can also encourage them to reach out to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (call or text 988) or the Veterans Crisis Line (call 1-800-273-8255, then press 1).



Randy Callstrom, CEO
Wyandot Behavioral
Health Network



Tom Petrizzo, CEO
Tri-County Mental
Health Services Inc.



PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS (PCP) PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN MANAGING CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Men of color can benefit from having a Primary Care Physician.

Studies have shown that men of color face higher rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease compared to their white counterparts. They often experience disparities in healthcare access, outcomes and have shorter life expectancies. By having a primary care physician, BIPOC men (black, Indigenous (Native American), and people of color) can benefit from regular checkups, preventive screenings, and early interventions. These proactive measures can help detect potential health issues at an early stage when they are more manageable, leading to improved overall health and a higher quality of life.

Primary care physicians (PCPs) play a vital role in managing chronic conditions. Through ongoing monitoring, medication management, and lifestyle counseling, PCPs can help BIPOC men better control their chronic conditions. PCPs can facilitate referrals to specialists when necessary,

ensuring that men of color receive appropriate and timely care for their specific health needs.

Another important aspect of having a PCP is the establishment of trust and cultural sensitivity. BIPOC men often face historical and systemic barriers when seeking healthcare, such as racism, discrimination and mistrust. Having a primary care physician who is culturally competent and sensitive to their unique experiences can help build trust and create a safe space for open and honest dialogue about their health.

Lastly, primary care physicians are essential in promoting preventive health measures. Vaccinations, cancer screenings, and sexual health services are all crucial components of maintaining optimal health. By staying up-to-date with these preventive measures they can reduce the risk of certain diseases and improve long-term health outcomes.

Trust in one's primary care provider leads to an improved quality of life.

SOURCE: Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center, www.SamRodgers.org



TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR HEALTH BEFORE IT CONTROLS YOU

- Percent of men aged 18 and over in fair or poor health: 13.2% (2021)
- Percent of men aged 20 and over with obesity: 40.5% (2015-2018)
- Percent of men aged 18 and over who currently smoke cigarettes: 13.1% (2021)
- Percent of men aged 18 and over who had five or more drinks in 1 day at least once in the past year: 30.9%

Source: Center for Disease Control (CDC)

IT IS TIME FOR MEDICAID RENEWALS!

The guidelines to qualify for Missouri Medicaid have expanded to serve more families. Please contact our Health Insurance Services team for assistance. We can help you with the application process.

**DON'T WAIT. GIVE US A CALL
AT 816-889-4787**



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call 816-474-4920
www.SamRodgers.org



**SAMUEL U. RODGERS
HEALTH CENTER**



Giving Back

Wherever there is a need, there's a way.

By Jeanene Dunn, OHM Staff

Anton Washington
Founder, Creative Innovative



Supportive work programs can help put houseless persons on the path to stability.

In response to multiple resident complaints and concerns about trash and dumping in houseless camps, Kansas City, Mo. officials (including City Council members) met to discuss solutions.

They landed on an idea for a pilot program to employ houseless persons to pick up and collect trash. The KC Litter Abatement Program, also known as Clean Up KC, was created with funding from the city's Public Works Department.

Crews started work last summer.

Two nonprofit agencies, Creative Innovative and Hope Faith Ministries, recruit screen and hire workers for the program. "They are responsible for staffing the work crews," says Robert Woods, Jr., Neighborhood Cleanup Assistance Program Liaison and Community Engagement Manager. "Our other teams use blue trash bags. The KC Litter Abatement teams use purple bags."

Anton Washington, the founder of Creative Innovative, and Doug Langner, the executive

director of Hope Faith Ministries both have years of experience working with houseless persons.

Washington's first work crew started in late August. Hope Faith Ministries first crew started in September. Both agencies have new work crews that started last month.

Langner was familiar with programs that employed houseless persons. "I had seen this done in other cities," he says. "I was excited that Kansas City is doing this type of supportive employment."

How the program works.

Both agencies start a new work crew every 3 months. When the contracted time ends, workers can:

- apply to remain with the city as temp workers through another agency,

Doug Langner
Executive Director
Hope Faith Ministries



- apply for a permanent job with the city,
- apply for work with another employer

"Our agencies have people who are ready to take the next step out of houselessness and are happy to have this opportunity."

Clients stay connected to needed social services.

Social services one or both agencies provide include:

- Healthcare access
- Pre-employment orientation
- Career track counseling
- Mental health care access
- Access to work clothing (including shoes) and personal care items (Hope Faith Ministries)
- Help securing needed legal documents (ID, Social Security cards, birth certificates)
- Shower facilities (Hope Faith Ministries)
- An in-house salon (Hope Faith Ministries)
- Access to case workers
- Housing assistance

Stable job first, housing, next.

Washington and Langner are passionate about helping to get their clients into housing. No one should have to live on the streets," Washington says. "I was houseless for two years and I never felt safe the whole time."

Langner stresses the need to get people into transitional or permanent housing as soon as possible. "We don't want anyone to become used to living on the streets," he says. "But Anton and I know that it's harder to get into housing without a job."

Washington says working for the same employer for six months can help establish job stability. Jobs paying a living wage can help them move forward. "They can show a landlord or property owner that they have the income to be able to pay the rent."



Robert Woods Jr., MS
City of Kansas City, Missouri
Public Works Department
NCAP and Community
Engagement Manager

"We don't want them to become used to houselessness," Langner says. "The longer a person experiences houselessness, the longer it can take for them to adjust to being housed. It's like having to learn how to live in and maintain a home or apartment again."

Rising rents and fees continue to be a challenge

Even with job stability, move in and rent costs are way up. Doug Langner says the city needs more income-based housing. "The demand exceeds the supply of this type of housing," he says. "And property managers and owners have

increased move in costs, including application fees. I am happy to report that some of our clients have gotten jobs that pay enough to afford the costs."

Both agencies can offer help with deposits and application fees, if their clients qualify. "We want them to get in their place and thrive," says Washington. "We have case managers who follow up with our clients to make sure they have what they need."

To learn more visit:
Hope Faith Ministries
www.hopefaith.org

Creative Innovative
www.creativeinnovative.org

Chef Joe Walker's Love for Cooking Extends Beyond Work

For him, he's just doing what he loves.

By Jeanene Dunn, OHM Staff

Joe Walker has been cooking professionally for more than 40 years. It's not just a job to him, it's his passion. He also sees it as being in service to others.

Chef Joe Walker's kitchen duties don't end when he leaves work. He's also the head chef at the home he shares with Kim, his wife of 28 years.



He admits to cooking 95% of the time at home. And it's because he loves to cook and takes delight in preparing various meals. Walker is the first to admit that his wife

can throw down in the kitchen. He just happens to have a passion for what he does.

Walker was a quick study in Mom's kitchen

Walker's kitchen training started at home. "I just started hanging out in the kitchen with Mom when she was cooking," he explains. "I would ask questions, and pretty soon, she had me helping prepare the food. I caught on quickly and she put me to work."

His mother, Luella Walker, helped feed her community, too. "There was a lot of need in our neighborhood on the east side of Kansas City," Walker recalls. "When we could help others and share what we had, we did. If I wasn't in the kitchen or on the grill, I was fixing plates and serving guests."

Walker discovered his natural talent for cooking

"My first job was working at McDonald's," Walker says. "The company runs a solid operation and strives for perfection." He learned four key things from the experience: consistency, production, efficiency, and his natural talent for cooking.

After Walker moved on from fast food, he wanted to be a chef. After a lot of hard work, more learning and persistence, he got the job he wanted. He has been in the industry for more than 40 years. Walker has served in executive chef and management roles at many area hotels, casinos and restaurants.

He now manages food service operations at Kansas City, Kansas School District headquarters. Walker has been with the district for 11 years.

"I'm my happiest when I can satisfy the palates of my family, friends and others in the community," says Walker.



MEN

Your Health Matters

Screenings you need based on
your age and health status:

Heart Disease
High Blood Pressure
Cholesterol
Prostate
Colon
Diabetes
Mental Health
Vaccinations

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WHAT'S NEXT?



AUGUST 2023 Children's Health Edition

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), ADHD, anxiety problems, behavior problems, and depression are the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders in children. Children aged 5 to 19 years from low-income families are twice as likely (25%) to have cavities compared with children from higher-income households (11%).

The early and formative years of a child's life are important to ensure they are healthy, emotionally stable and prepared for a successful future. Children of every racial and socio-economic status must have their physical, nutritional, mental health, social health and educational needs met. We provide insights and resources to help families ensure their children have a healthy start from birth through young adulthood and beyond.

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