

# The NKFM Establishes Health Resource Hub for Western Wayne County Latino Residents

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## 2022 DNPAO Success Story

National Kidney Foundation of Michigan



## Overview

The National Kidney Foundation of Michigan's (NKFM) Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) project aims to make healthy living easier for those living in Inkster, Wayne, and Westland, Michigan. With the support of community members and organizations, the Health and Well-Being Room at St. Mary Parish in Wayne was established in March 2022. The room is a direct response to the growing need for local vital health and wellness information and education for Hispanics and Latinos, as found in a 2021 community health needs assessment conducted by the NKFM.

## Public Health Challenge

Focused in Western Wayne County, the NKFM is working to improve health, prevent chronic disease, and reduce health disparities through culturally appropriate programming, particularly among the African American and Latinx populations. In an effort to support and connect with the Latino population, the NKFM collaborated with the Pastoral Minister and Hispanic Ministry at St. Mary Parish in Wayne, Michigan. St. Mary serves the largest Hispanic population concentration in Western Wayne County, and pre-COVID, served as a hub for community engagement. Each week, the parish sees 300 individuals of Hispanic descent or first generation immigrants at their Spanish language service. In addition, the Hispanic ministry often hosts Hispanic cultural events for parishioners and community members.

The NKFM conducted a community health needs assessment in 2021 among parishioners at St. Mary's. St. Mary's Pastoral Minister provided immense support in this effort, including sending the online assessment to parishioners, inviting the congregation to answer the survey, and mentioning it at the end of each mass. According to the needs assessment<sup>1</sup>, there is a need for local, reliable, and safe spaces for Spanish-speaking individuals to navigate health care resources, get assistance with immigration concerns, utilize interpretation/translation assistance, and have a space where they feel culturally appreciated. Many families have to travel to Detroit to access resources and services in Spanish<sup>1</sup>. This is often a challenge for those who do not have reliable transportation.

Community members also expressed a need for the following offered in Spanish<sup>1</sup>:

- Information and prevention programs for chronic diseases, specifically on diabetes, hypertension, and chronic kidney disease.
- Mental health resources

- Information and help applying for federal, state and local health and social services
- Nutrition education programs
- Connections and resources about medical providers in the area

Hispanic and Latinos in Western Wayne County do not have the visibility, and thus the appropriate number of culturally appropriate health and social services, that other communities in Wayne County, primarily in Southwest Detroit, do. As a result, Hispanic and Latinos living in Western Wayne County, including the cities of Wayne, Westland, and Inkster, are underserved and must travel to get the care they need.

## **Approach**

The NKFM built relationships with the St. Mary's staff and Hispanic congregation through a series of events including a flu clinic, a roundtable for the wellbeing of the Latino Community, and a Hispanic Heritage and Cultural Celebration with a cultural competency training. Please see the timeline at the end of this section for more information about these events.

Together, the NKFM and parish staff identified how the parish could support efforts in creating a sustainable healthy environment where residents of Western Wayne County can gather and receive information and resources on healthy living. The parish staff offered to transform an unused room into a space dedicated to health and well-being. NKFM worked with parish staff to outfit the room to address the needs that were identified during the needs assessment. The idea was that the room could be both a drop-in space for community members to access health information and resources as well as a meeting space for health programs, workshops, and meetings.

For approximately 6 months, NKFM staff worked with its partners to obtain resources needed to form the space and make it welcoming for community members. NKFM staff also worked with community partners to identify programs that are available in Spanish and could be presented in the health room when opened. With these items in place, NKFM and St. Mary staff schedule a grand opening of the Health and Well-Being room.

While housed within the church, the Health and Well-Being Room is available to the entire community. As a way to market the room's grand opening and to inform the city of Wayne on the efforts to increase awareness of the Hispanic community, the NKFM attended a city council meeting in March 2022. Staff presented the needs assessment results and the reason behind the Health and Well-Being

Room. At the end, staff invited the mayor, council members, and community members to attend the grand opening.

Sunday, March 20 was the grand opening of the Health and Well-Being Room. Approximately 50 people attended, including Wayne's mayor and council members and St. Mary's Pastoral Minister. Attendees were able to tour the space, take their blood pressure, grab a healthy snack, sign up for upcoming programs, and access health information.

## St. Mary & NKFM Community Events Timeline

### **Flu clinic with Alana's Foundation**

*November 2020*

Alana's Foundation is a Michigan-based organization providing influenza education and awareness with a focus on offering convenient and affordable flu vaccination options. A community vaccine trusted messenger and physician was present to provide up-to-date, culturally and linguistically appropriate information and resources on the influenza vaccine.

### **Roundtable for the Wellbeing of the Latino Community and community health needs assessment conducted**

*July 2021*

Hosted by the NKFM, Roundtable for the Wellbeing of the Latino Community was a series of events held at the church to promote education, networking, discussion, and planning with stakeholders and community leaders who were interested and invested in the wellbeing of the Latino community. They, too, served as an opportunity to discuss additional ways to combat health disparities.

### **Hispanic Heritage and Cultural Wellbeing Celebration and Cultural Competency Training**

*September 30, 2021*

The Hispanic Heritage and Cultural Wellbeing Celebration provided community members the opportunity to learn about Hispanic culture via a Hispanic Cultural Competency training (hosted in English and Spanish), taste the cultural cuisine, and celebrate with live entertainment and music. Seven community-based organizations attended and shared health and wellness resources with visitors. The event saw 50 attendees and 17 individuals attended the training.

## **Results**

The Health and Well-Being Room at St. Mary Parish is a direct response for the increased need for information and educational materials on health and wellness. The room holds information from community organizations in English and Spanish about chronic disease prevention, nutrition education, food pantries, mental health care providers, community health centers, free or low cost patient services, and local hospitals. There is a breastfeeding friendly space for lactating mothers with resources and information on breastfeeding. Information on AmaMantando, a breastfeeding support group for Latina women, established by the NKFM, is available for current and future breastfeeding mothers.

Referral and resource navigation is another crucial tool that is available to community members, including a self-guided tool to help individuals apply for federal, state, and local benefits. This tool, FINDING YOUR WAY: A Roadmap To Social Systems And Resources In Wayne County, was developed by the NKFM and is available in English and Spanish. FINDING YOUR WAY has helped community members find mental health resources offered in Spanish, free or low-cost urgent dental care, and mothers in search of formula at the height of the formula shortage. Copies of FINDING YOUR WAY are available in the health room for community members to use.

Recently, Gleaners Community Food Bank hosted a 6-week Cooking Matters class. Gleaners is the first community organization to host a Spanish speaking nutrition class at St. Mary's. Cooking Matters teaches participants how to shop for and cook healthy, easy, and affordable meals that fit their lifestyle. The class was filled immediately with interested community members, and there is a waitlist for future classes. The NKFM, St. Mary's, and Gleaners are working closely to schedule future classes that address barriers individuals faced in not being able to sign up for the first class, including offering parent/child classes, offering classes at flexible days and times, and providing reliable transportation to and from St. Mary's.

The establishment of the Health and Well-Being room was designed with sustainability at the forefront. The transformed space serves as a supportive health environment, addressing the physical and social surroundings that are affecting Western Wayne County residents. Providing services, especially those offered in Spanish, help Hispanic and Latino individuals feel welcomed and acknowledged in their community. Yanira Duque, leader of St. Mary's Hispanic Ministry, describes her feelings this way: "I am of service, of help, of commitment, and I really like being able to express the culture and that we get to know each other. It is not about the differences, it is about the similarities. We are people who also contribute to society." The Western Wayne County Latino population is a strong community. It is through the NKFM and St. Mary's commitment to them, their health, and their culture, that residents feel heard and understood.

The Health and Wellness Room is open Monday – Friday from 9am to 4pm and 8:30am to 3:30pm on Sundays. An NKFM staff member is onsite every Tuesday from 9am to 2pm.

### **Sustaining Success**

The Health and Well-Being room and its resources will remain available for parishioners and community members after funding ends, which will be supported by St. Mary's staff. The NKFM is drafting additional sustainability plans for the room, which includes recruiting volunteers to assist St. Mary's. The volunteers'

roles would include replenishing materials and connecting community organizations to the space to offer materials, resources, and services. The NKFM will continue to work with their project manager at the CDC, program evaluators, St. Mary's, and the community to make healthy choices readily available and easily accessible.

The health resources available in the Health and Well-Being Room have been augmented by additional changes throughout the parish community to respond to the needs of the Hispanic congregation. St. Mary's Pastoral Minister has since shown an increased interest and commitment in providing culturally appropriate approaches within the Hispanic Community. Recently, he attended an 8-week Spanish Language Immersion in Mexico to learn and speak the language.

NKFM has also collaborated with the parish's business manager and health ministry to provide parishioners with consistent health education messaging. From January 2022 – January 2023, NKFM will create and distribute newsletters for the church's weekly bulletin. The single sheet, written in English and Spanish, is added to the bulletin once a month. It will share information on health-based topics, including National Kidney Month, Women's Health Month, and National Minority Health Month. The newsletter also shares events and programs happening in the community as they relate to health and wellness. Quarterly advertisements are also added to the bulletin to market the REACH project and help decrease the burden of chronic disease among the Latnix population.

## **Contact**

The Health and Wellness Room is located at 34530 W Michigan Ave, Wayne, MI 48184. For more information, please Contact Marolyne Valenzuela at [mvalenzuela@nkfm.org](mailto:mvalenzuela@nkfm.org).

To learn more about the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan's REACH project, visit [reachhealthmi.org](http://reachhealthmi.org) or visit us on Facebook @[REACHHealthMI](https://www.facebook.com/REACHHealthMI).

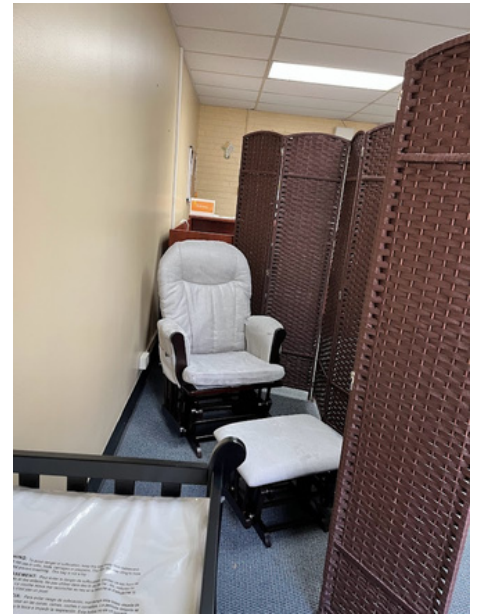
## **Quote**

*"Since St. Mary's has opened the doors to the Hispanic community, we have noticed a shift in the community. Many Hispanic and Latino families are now members of the congregation. Bringing resources and services to the Hispanic community not only allows them to practice their religion and express themselves in their own language, but also creates a safe space where they feel included within their community."* – Yanira Duque, Hispanic Minister at St. Mary Parish

## Health and Well-Being Room BEFORE



## Health and Well-Being Room AFTER



## References

1. National Kidney Foundation of Michigan. (2021). Community Health Needs Assessment.