

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
THIRD WARD INITIATIVE

January 30, 2020 Update

THIRD WARD INITIATIVE (TWI) PRIMARY LEADERS

Education: **Robert McPherson**, Dean, College of Education
Health: **David Buck**, Associate Dean for Community Health, College of Medicine
Economic Empowerment: **Paul Pavlou**, Dean, Bauer College of Business
Art & Culture: **Andrew Davis**, Dean, Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts

EDUCATION

1. Project Love at Blackshear Elementary School

Each student at Blackshear Elementary was given one or more gifts at a festive event on December 2, 2019. Members of the UH community helped with the wrapping and distribution of the donated gifts. There were members of the Board of Visitors as well as representatives from the College of Medicine.

2. Luncheon Fundraiser to Support COE is being Planned

Dr. Michelle Verma, Chair of the Task Force on Third Ward Schools is planning a luncheon fundraiser to obtain funds that could serve as College of Education matching funds as COE applies for grants that will help fund tutors and mentors that have been so impactful in the targeted schools. The tentative date for the luncheon is March 31st.

HEALTH

1. HEB Opens New Store on North MacGregor at Highway 288 on December 18, 2019



With great fanfare the ribbon was cut on this 90,000 square foot new full service grocery store that Third Ward residents hope will address the food dessert problem in greater Third Ward. Days prior to the opening HEB representatives reached out to Dr. Lee to learn of community concerns. He quickly invited four key community leaders to participate in the dialogue. Issues raised were the lack of bus access to the store by



Northern Third Ward residents who lack automobiles, potential employment opportunities for residents, and HEB's capacity to contribute to sponsor community projects. Partly as a result of this meeting HEB presented \$5000 checks at the opening to Deloyd Parker of SHAPE Community Center and Helen Stagg of Changes Happens!

2. NSI and METRO Working on Improving Access to New Store

NSI informed METRO representatives who attended the opening that access to the store from Northern Third Ward was difficult if not impossible. METRO responded and brought its route planners to UH to meet with Dr. Lee and several Third Ward leaders to discuss the problem and possible solutions. Despite constraints METRO expressed a strong desire to develop a solution. Another meeting will be held later this spring at which time strategy for publicizing the solutions will be addressed.

3. UH Efforts to Address Food Equity in Third Ward

- UH Community Garden – The UH Community Garden is still going strong as it works to address the food dessert issue by donating all of its produce directly to local food pantries and organizations that serve low income families such as Manna House in Third Ward. Volunteers from UH donate their labor under the direction of the UH Office of Sustainability that manages the project.
- Master Growers Club Expands to Blackshear – This after-school program began in the East End but has expanded this fall to Blackshear Elementary school in Third Ward. It is offered by the College of Education's BOUNCE program under the direction of Professor Norma Olvera. During two lessons a week 4th and 5th graders learn how to grow and cultivate their own food.

4. College of Medicine (UH COM) Recruitment Committee

At the request of Dr. Kathryn Horn of the UH COM, Dr. Lee identified community members from the East End and Third Ward who would be worthy candidates for positions on the UH COM recruitment committee tasked with selecting the initial class of medical students. From the list two were selected to join the committee.

5. College of Optometry



Lucy Kehinde, OD, PhD, the only African-America faculty member in the College of Optometry received a grant to develop a workshop/lecture series, designed to teach faculty and students from UH Health Profession programs principles of community engagement and enhance their cultural competency. The partnership is with Houston Independent School District's Hartsfield Elementary, in the Greater Third Ward. As part of this effort Dr. Kehinde has asked Dr. Lee to make orientation presentations to optometry students on February 5th and February 12th.

6. Health Conference: 2020 HEALTH: A Call to Action Conference – Scheduled for January 30th and 31st, this conference is sponsored by The HEALTH Research Institute, Directed by Dr. Ezemenari Obasi and Dr. Lorraine Reitzel. Attendees will include health professionals, scientists, community leaders, and policy makers. They will discuss issues relevant to health work in Third Ward and similar areas such as:

- Best practices for preventing and treating chronic diseases in diverse community
- Building sustainable partnerships and resources aimed at achieving health equity
- Fostering intellectual incubators that generate novel solutions to current health challenges

Thematic areas of health equity focus on prevention, detection, treatment and survivorship of cancer, diabetes, mental health, obesity and substance abuse.

7. **Safety**—The Department of Justice and the Houston Police Department are piloting a program entitled “Strengthening Police and Community Partners.” The kick-off meeting was Saturday, October 19th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with about 40 stakeholders and law enforcement representatives in attendance. Several UH students and Dr. Lee participated in the discussions. The next meeting will be in February at which time action plans will be developed.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

1. **SURE Spring Entrepreneur Academy Begins on February 8th**

From the 508 applicants who showed up to be interviewed on application day 140 individuals were accepted into the spring semester academy. Thirty-one from this group either live in Third Ward or are Third Ward affiliated.

C. **BOV Economic Development Task Force**

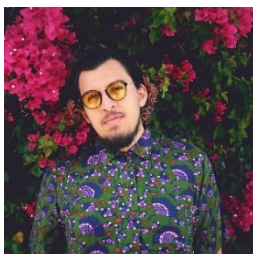


Mr. Aylwin Lewis, former Chairman, Chief Executive Officer and President, Potbelly Corporation, Kmart and Sears is now the Chair of the Third Ward Economic Empowerment Task Force. After meeting with people in and outside the University he has developed three focus items for the Task Force to discuss at a meeting scheduled for March.

- a. Webpage Optimization –With collaborating UH internal programs develop a workshop for Third Ward entrepreneurs on how to improve the effectiveness of their business websites. Potential partners: the Valenti School of Communication and the College of Technology.
- b. Food and Service Industry – Since many local entrepreneurs are in the food or service industry, develop a workshop outlining best practices in labor, fundraising and how to increase effectiveness. Potential partners: Hilton College of Hotel & Restaurant Management, and BOV members with food industry businesses.
- c. Financial Literacy Working with all ages (elementary, high school and adults) to share how to think about budget development and how to read a financial document. Such training would create a foundation for the future. These are details often absent from traditional school systems. Potential partners: BAUER College and the UH Alumni Association.

ART & CULTURE

1. **Spring KGM/ PRH Fellow Announced-** The Center for Art & Social Engagement at the University of Houston’s Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts and Project Row Houses are have announce the artists participating in the 2020 KGMCA-PRH Fellowship: Texas-based **José Eduardo Sánchez** and Maryland-based **Nicoletta Darita de la Brown**. Their introductory presentations were January 29th.



Texas-based José Eduardo Sánchez is a queer, immigrant cultural organizer, language worker, and popular educator. His artistic vision challenges neoliberal individualization and the white spatial imaginary by conjuring the self-determination, resilience, and solidarity of marginalized peoples. José Eduardo has a B.S. in political science and is a former Greensboro Justice Fund Fellow at the Highlander Center (2012) and Mickey Leland Fellow at the U.S. House of Representatives (2010). His artistic practice is informed by more than ten years of struggle as part of the transnational labor and immigrant justice movements, as

well as his roots in Central Mexico and his experience as an immigrant in the U.S. José Eduardo lives in Houston's North Side and currently organizes in the community with La Unidad11 Houston, and other groups.



Nicoletta de la Brown is a Maryland-based performance artist, interdisciplinary fabricator, filmmaker, mother of four, and self-love champion. Nicoletta is a Black Latinx and proud first-generation Panamanian born in the United States. She is a chamána (shaman) and comes from a long line of healers. Nicoletta is also an adjunct faculty at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) and the Maryland Citizens for the Arts (MCA) Artist Navigator. As the Founder of Vida Mágica Love, a creative platform dedicated to healing-centered services, she produces audience participatory engagements through interactive workshops, immersive activations, and multi-sensory experiences. Through interactive workshops and salon-style gatherings, de la Brown will examine how modern society asks women, and people of color, to hold space to care for others and questions, “When do we care for ourselves?”

2. **New Undergraduate Fellows**-This spring there will be four undergraduate fellows who will be mentored by Professor Rick Lowe and Sixto Wagan as they work to develop and complete Third Ward Cultural Loop projects researched and developed by Professor Lowe's Community Engaged Art Class. The generous support from the Office of the Provost CITE (Cougar Initiative to Engage) has made this possible.

THIRD WARD COMMUNITY PARTNER & LEADER APPRECIATION NIGHT

1. **Third Ward Initiative Community Partner and Leader Appreciation Night**



On Wednesday, December 11, 2019 NSI hosted a group of Community Partners, leaders, and neighborhood stakeholders who work closely with UH's Third Ward Initiative at the UH vs. UT Arlington Men's Basketball game. Among those in attendance were Helen Stagg of Change Happens. Principal Travis Johnson from Hartsfield Elementary, and Rev. Ed Jones, Pastor of the historic Trinity United Methodist Church. Other guests included leaders of area neighborhood civic clubs.

Elwyn Lee
Vice President for Neighborhood & Strategic Initiatives