

# HELPING HER LIVE:

*Gaining Control of Breast Cancer*

Community Forum Summary

October 2009



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*The Helping Her Live Program is directed by the Sinai Urban Health Institute (SUHI), a proud member of Sinai Health System and is generously funded by the Avon Foundation.*

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

The Helping Her Live (HHL) Program is an innovative breast health awareness and navigation program. Its goal is to bring education and community navigation to two communities in Chicago (North Lawndale and Humboldt Park) in an effort to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in breast cancer morbidity and mortality.

During the month of October, HHL spearheaded four exciting community forums in our target communities in honor of breast cancer awareness month and to promote HHL Program services. The forums created a community space for women, along with their families, friends and neighbors, to learn and ask questions about breast cancer and to sign up for breast health services. Women were invited from the North Lawndale, Humboldt Park, Austin, East and West Garfield Park communities on the Westside of Chicago. The forums were held at community venues and involved the support of local churches, businesses, and community organizations, without which none of the events could have been successful.

While the programs varied at each site, there were some common elements to each forum. A presentation of the dire situation of breast cancer mortality among women of color in Chicago was made at each forum, emphasizing the importance of early detection and routine screening. In addition, HHL Coordinators introduced the HHL program and gave women the opportunity to sign up for a mammogram or to host a breast health awareness workshop. An information

table, which included brochures and pamphlets on breast health services and community information, was set up; and gift bags and giveaways that included HHL program information, breast health information and Avon products were distributed to all participants.

The following summary highlights the planning, implementation and outcomes of each of the forums.

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## **NORTH LAWDALE FORUM: GREATER GALILEE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2009**

The first HHL forum event was a breakfast that was held at one of the largest churches in the North Lawndale community. HHL had made many presentations at this venue during the past year and had a good working relationship with the Health Ministry leader.

Local businesses were great supporters of the forum. Breakfast was catered by Edna's, a famous soul food restaurant with a rich history of providing 'good' food on the Westside of Chicago, and a local Starbucks donated coffee for the event. Giveaway items were purchased for the speakers of the program as well as raffle items for those who attended. These incentive items were donated or purchased items from a North Lawndale organization called Sweet Beginnings. Sweet Beginnings is a not-for-profit organization that creates jobs for North Lawndale residents (most of whom are returning from prison) through the

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production and manufacturing of honey and beauty items created with honey.

Several outreach activities were undertaken in order to reach out to the community and create excitement about the forum. These activities included mailed invitations to the local pastors of North Lawndale churches and mass e-mailings to local organizations. Additionally, intensive outreach efforts were made at existing community events in the weeks prior, including the Komen Breast Cancer Walk (9/26/09), the Historically Black Colleges/Universities Football Classic (9/26/09), and at local health fairs and events (e.g., 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Lawndale Christian Fitness Center 5K Walk/Run) etc.

HHL staff leafleted at the local Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) meetings, local businesses, and schools and set up tables within the Sinai Health System. Fliers were sent out to participants of the HHL Community Walk held in August 2009. Lastly, several social service agencies supported the event by organizing their clients and bringing them to the event.

HHL partnered with the Woman to Woman program (sponsored by the Komen for the Cure Foundation) at the Sinai Community Institute to place a half-page ad in the *North Lawndale Community News* (NLCN) for the two weeks leading up to the breakfast event. The Woman to Woman program also generously provided transportation to seniors and women from three different facilities: Senior Suites Senior Living Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) Apartments, Sankofa House Apartments (Grandparents Raising Grandchildren), and Deborah's Place (local women's shelter).

In addition to these efforts, word of mouth was very helpful to the attendance success. For example many of those who called in advance expressed that they were bringing other people. Individuals who received invitations by mail brought their friends and family. Others heard about the forum from the local church bulletin and/or were encouraged by their pastor to attend or volunteer at the forum. Lastly, the day before the event, HHL staff made a special effort to call all of those who pre-registered to remind them of the event.

The entire community galvanized to promote the community forum and to help women get to the event. They understood the importance of making sure that women came to learn about breast health and to help them obtain access to free and low-cost breast cancer screenings.

The program was shaped to include prayer provided by the Deacons of the host church and several testimonies given by survivors and HHL Clients. The agenda also included invited distinguished guests Illinois State Representative Arthur Turner and Assistant Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health Joseph Harrington, as opening speakers. Dr. Steven Whitman, SUHI Director, presented the epidemiological data describing the breast cancer situation, and Dr. Anngell Jones, general surgeon and a breast specialist of Mount Sinai Hospital moderated an informative presentation which included a question and answer period.

In addition, the North Lawndale event included a slideshow on famous African-American women and men who had either died from or survived breast cancer with background gospel music playing during the

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free breakfast. There was a special table for survivors in the room and a separate room where clients could talk privately with an HHL staff.

Because of the success of this year's program, we were invited back to Greater Galilee in October to participate in their Annual Health Fair, which resulted in (19) service requests (13 mammogram reminders and 6 mammogram appointments). We are proud to say that as a result of this forum, HHL has already been asked to plan and host the event again (October 2, 2010) at another large church in the community (United Baptist Church).

<b>BOX 1. Summary of North Lawndale Attendees</b>	
N = 155	
<b>Demographics</b>	
# Male	12
#Female	143
Age	22 – 82 years old (Avg. 52)
Female ≥40	105
Female <40	29
Among Females ≥ 40 Routine Mammogram ≤ 2 Years	74 (70%)
<b>Total # Service Requests (37)</b>	
Mammogram	22
Reminder	11
Workshop	4

*\*Note: Numbers may vary due to missing information*

### **EAST HUMBOLDT PARK FORUM: LA ESTANCIA WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2009**

The second HHL forum event was also a breakfast, held in East Humboldt Park (EHP) at La Estancia. La Estancia is a mixed development housing building that is located

on Paseo Boricua (Puerto Rican Passage) in the heart of Chicago's Puerto Rican community. This newly constructed development is a valuable resource to the community and includes public space which community based organizations can hold events to provide health messages to residents living in the East Humboldt Park community.

HHL staff partnered with a number of community based organization representatives, business owners and community volunteers to plan East Humboldt Park's forum and to ensure its success. These partnerships included notable community leaders, survivors and representatives from all walks of life (e.g., Puerto Rican Cultural Center, Centro Sin Fronteras and Vida Sida). Partners supported the event by supplying volunteers, providing raffle prize incentives, and promoting the event in the community through their networks.

Local businesses were great supporters of the event as well. For example, El Quijote Bookstore and the Puerto Rican Cultural Center served on the planning committee and donated several custom gifts sets that included authentic coffee from Puerto Rico for raffle prizes. Breakfast was catered by a neighborhood favorite, Nellie's Restaurant, a Latin American restaurant that specializes in providing delicious ethnic breakfast and brunch creations. One of the planning committee members also secured a donation of breakfast beverages from Goya Inc.

The planning committee and EHP HHL staff worked hard to recruit women, gather donations from local businesses, and contact local television stations in an effort to promote the forum. Several outreach

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activities were undertaken to ensure forum attendance. Promotional flyers were handed to staff at all the local schools in East Humboldt Park. Pastors of the larger local churches (e.g., Rebaño Compañerismo Cristiano Church) were contacted, made aware of the event, and asked that they announce the event on the two Sundays prior. HHL staff also canvassed at busy thoroughfares and stopped at large businesses, such as supermarkets, Walgreens, laundromats, and parks, inviting community residents to attend.

The program agenda included several client and survivor testimonies and narratives on the importance of breast cancer screening. Most notable of these remarks were those given by Emma Lozano, two time breast cancer survivor, community activist, and executive director of Centro Sin Fronteras; and Maddi Amill, who is a HHL Client. Both spoke passionately about their breast health experiences and the importance of programs like HHL for the community. The agenda also included opening remarks by Illinois State Representative Cynthia Soto. Dr. Steven Whitman, SUHI Director, presented the epidemiological data describing the breast cancer situation. A pastor of one of the largest churches in the area and HHL forum planning partner, Pastora Lynette Santiago of Rebaño Compañerismo Cristiano, also provided comments.

Along with these phenomenal speakers, a representative from a local public health clinic, West Town Neighborhood Center, spoke to the audience about the importance of early detection and getting annual breast cancer screenings. She encouraged women to take the time at the end of the program to

visit the mammogram sign-up tables before leaving the event.

At the end of the event, women signed up for mammogram exams at either West Town clinic or one of two clinics that were located in EHP. Those that went to the West Town clinic were given same day services on October 20-22, 2009. HHL worked closely with West Town to provide such care to 60 women who received free pap smears and/or mammograms (if age eligible) all on the same day.

In addition to these services, women were given an opportunity to participate in a HHL breast health workshop in the reception area while they waited for their services. Coverage of the event was printed in *La Voz* newspaper (Vol. 6, No. 7) during the week of October 19th. The HHL program staff is eager to plan another successful forum in October of 2010.

<b>BOX 2. Summary of East Humboldt Park Attendees N = 125</b>	
<b>Demographics</b>	
# Male	18
#Female	107
Age	15 – 86 years old (Avg. 60)
Female ≥40	49
Female <40	52
Among Females ≥ 40 Routine Mammogram ≤ 2 Years	40 (82%)
<b>Total # Service Requests (129)</b>	
Mammogram	76
Reminder	3
Workshop	50

*\*Note: Numbers may vary due to missing information*

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## **WEST HUMBOLDT PARK FORUMS: THE PINK CELEBRATION DINNER AUSTIN TOWN HALL WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2009**

West Humboldt Park (WHP) was unique in that it held two separate forums on different dates with different partner agencies. The first program was coordinated in conjunction with the Westside Health Authority's (WHA) Austin Breast Cancer (ABC) program. The ABC program is another AVON funded project offering similar navigation services to women living on the Westside of Chicago. HHL partnered with ABC to host the Pink Celebration because of their long standing presence in the community. The planning committee for this event included WHP HHL staff and two members of the WHA ABC staff. Advertisements and announcements for The Pink Celebration were placed in several community papers such as the *Austin Weekly*, the *Austin Voice*, and the West Humboldt Park Development Council Newsletter as well as the listserv for the Chicago Foundation for Women.

The Pink Celebration was held at the Austin Town Hall Park Community Room. It was held in the evening to offer a time when working women would be able to attend. Program speakers for the celebration included Alma Smith, a breast cancer survivor, and Celevia Taylor, HHL Health Educator, who shared inspiring words about her own personal experience with navigating the health care system to resolve abnormal mammography findings.

Other speakers included the director of the WHA Health Promotions Programs (Cody McSellars-McCray), who also presented on

the ABC program services. Dr. Steven Whitman, SUHI Director, presented the epidemiological data describing the breast cancer situation and Dr. Anngell Jones, a general surgeon and breast specialist at Mount Sinai Hospital gave a breast health presentation and answered questions from the attendees. The program was taped by the local Chicago Community Access Network Television (CAN TV).

As in all the forums to this point, HHL staff provided program attendees with the opportunity to sign up for primary care appointments to get their mammogram referrals onsite. In an effort to encourage women to attend, childcare was also provided for the event. The Jamaican Grill, a local favorite restaurant in the area, catered the dinner for the event.

## **PINK LADIES LUNCHEON LAFOLLETTE PARK OCTOBER 24, 2009**

The second program of the WHP forums was co-sponsored with another community partner, the West Humboldt Park Development Council (WHPDC). WHPDC has been a supporter of the HHL Program from the start of the program and this relationship has been very fruitful in reaching women in the community.

For this event WHP HHL staff expanded the program from the previous event to include transportation, entertainment and other medical resources. In addition, a continental breakfast and lunch were provided for this event.

To promote the forum, invitation letters and program fliers were mailed out to over 300 homes and businesses in the WHP

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community. Fliers were also distributed at a number of community meetings and presentations. In addition, WHP HHL staff canvassed and distributed flyers at a number of senior venues and businesses prior to the event. An ad in the *Austin Weekly* came out several days before the event.

Transportation was arranged to pick up women from another HHL community partner, the Sanctuary Place, a residential facility that provides transitional housing for homeless women and children. Many of these women signed up to volunteer for the event. Transportation was also provided to women from senior facilities who wished to attend.

To open the program, Psalmist, Alonzo Berry, from Revival Fellowship Church of God in Christ, sang an inspirational hymn for the participants. Flora Roby, a recent breast cancer survivor, gave a wonderful testimony of her survival. The WHP HHL staff presented findings from the HHL community survey, described the HHL program, and shared breast health awareness facts with the audience. To reinforce HHL key breast health messages, HHL staff placed breast cancer awareness facts in the center pieces on each table as a continual reminder of the importance of early detection.

During the program, attendees had an opportunity to sign up for primary care appointments to get their mammogram referrals onsite, just as with the other forums. For this event, HHL contracted with Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, a renowned dance company throughout the Chicagoland area, to perform an inspirational piece for the luncheon portion of the program. Two massage therapists also provided ten minute massages to some of the attendees.

Numerous gift prizes were raffled at the event including four large gift baskets containing AVON products (which had been donated), as well as four tickets to an upcoming Deeply Rooted performance. Smaller Avon gift bags were given to all the volunteers for the event. The entertainment and additional services helped women feel appreciated. It was a small gesture that went a long way in celebrating women's livelihoods and survivorship in the community.

#### BOX 3. Combined Summary of West Humboldt Park Attendees

N = 127

Demographics	
# Male	9
#Female	118
Age	26-104 years old (Avg. 52)
Female ≥40	84
Female <40	15
Among Females ≥ 40 Routine Mammogram ≤ 2 Years	57 (68%)
Total # Service Requests (66)	
Mammogram	18
Reminder	15
Workshop	33

*\*Note: Numbers may vary due to missing information*

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#### **SUMMARY:**

All of the forums were tremendously successful in galvanizing the communities that HHL serves. In preparing for the forums, community partners, businesses and local organizations were involved and demonstrated their support in raising awareness about breast health for women in the community.

The forums were overflowing with people and beautifully decorated in appreciation of the women. Women from the community were given a space to participate, ask questions and speak about their concerns. Most meaningful was the celebration of survivors. For many of them, it was the first time that they were given a forum to speak about their battles and to share their testimonies of survivorship. This is particularly significant because such breast health forums, to our knowledge, have never before been held in these communities, for these women. The testimony period at most of the forums was so powerful that the program went slightly over the scheduled times as we could not find a comfortable moment to end the survivor's speeches. In fact, in many instances, several survivors who were not scheduled requested to speak so they could share their experiences and tell their stories.

The forums had a profound impact on the community. The events reached close to 500 women in our two target communities and signed up over 100 women for breast cancer screening, particularly those with no insurance and potentially no access to it. The women were engaged and we have received a number of anecdotal stories and feedback

from women who felt that it was the best forum that they had ever attended.

HHL messages have started to transcend to others in the community who may not have attended. For instance, one enthusiastic participant changed her personal voicemail to a message encouraging women to get their yearly mammogram and to call the HHL program if they needed help.

These forums were successful in that the women left understanding the importance of getting their screening and knowing who to call to help them get screening. Most importantly, men and women who attended the forums are now spreading the HHL message by mobilizing community residents and encouraging women to get screened routinely.

Since the forum, HHL staff has worked tirelessly to ensure that all women who have requested a mammogram have gotten their mammograms and to schedule breast health workshops for women who requested them. We are very proud of the collective efforts that were made to make these events a success and look forward to continuing to partner with the community to have equally successful events next year.

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A proud member of Sinai Health System

## Community Forum Summary Demographics

N = 407

DEMOGRAPHICS	
# Male	39
# Female	368
Combined Age	15 – 104 years old (Avg. 54)
Female ≥40	238
Female <40	96
Among Females ≥ 40 Routine Mammogram ≤ 2 Years	171 (72%)
TOTAL # SERVICE REQUESTS (232)	
Mammogram	116
Reminder	29
Workshop	87

**\*Note:** Numbers may vary due to missing information



For more information about the **HELPING HER LIVE BREAST CANCER PROGRAM**  
Contact us at 1-877-HER-LIF2 (1-877-437-5432)

Sinai Urban Health Institute  
California at 15<sup>th</sup> Street • K-436 • Chicago, IL 60608  
[suhi@sinai.org](mailto:suhi@sinai.org) • [www.HelpingHerLive.org](http://www.HelpingHerLive.org)

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