In 2008, the UWM College of Nursing spearheaded the establishment of the Westlawn Partnership for a Healthier Environment (WPHE). WPHE is a group of community stakeholders that has been meeting on a regular basis to identify and prioritize environmental health risks in the Westlawn community, and implement solutions to reduce those risks. WPHE was built on the long-standing trusted presence of the Silver Spring Community Nursing Center, which is located in the heart of Westlawn, and has provided health care services to community members for over 25 years. Located in northwest Milwaukee, Westlawn is a low-income predominantly African American community and home to Wisconsin’s largest publicly-subsidized housing development.

Today, WPHE consists of Westlawn residents and over 35 organizations, including not-for profit agencies, schools, elected officials, government agencies, private businesses, UWM faculty, staff, and students, and others. Since its inception, WPHE has received nearly $500,000 in extramural funding to support its activities.

Given the high rates of asthma in the community, four out of the top five environmental health concerns identified by WPHE were asthma triggers. WPHE has implemented Healthy Homes and Healthy Day Cares programs in Westlawn to improve indoor air quality, reduce asthma triggers, and provide health education about asthma. Over 10,000 people have been reached by WPHE asthma health promotion activities.

Examples of other accomplishments of WPHE include:

- construction of 14 asthma-friendly housing units in the newly-developed Westlawn Gardens
- installation of “no smoking” and “no idling” signs outside of Westlawn area schools and the Silver Spring Neighborhood Center (SSNC)
• installation of school and community gardens in Westlawn, and the provision of gardening and nutrition education
• implementation of a bicycling program to improve outdoor air quality, which includes free bicycle tune-ups and repairs, the SSNC Bike Club, Bike Camps for Kids, and most recently a funded research study to assess the impact of bicycling on physical fitness
• environmental health education for nursing students
• community health worker employment
• influencing local, state, and national policymakers on environmental health issues
• published scholarship about WPHE, with community members and UWM students involved as coauthors on most articles

Publications


