

Healthier Glades

Impact Report

Cultivating Change During a Time of
Transition and Crisis

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November 2019-November 2020

Overview

This report will reflect how Healthier Glades cultivated change during a time of leadership transition and addressing community needs during a nationwide health crisis. This report will reflect the growth and impact of Healthier Glades from November 2019-October 2020.

Leadership Change:

In November 2019, Antoinita (Annie) Ifill transitioned from being a member of the Healthier Glades Steering Committee to Project Director. Kudos to the past Project Director, Inger Harvey for putting in place the infrastructure needed so that the work of Healthier Glades continued with minimal to no hiccups. At the time of the transition, Healthier Glades was in the process of selecting the mini grant awardees and supporting them in implementing their projects. Also there was a change in leadership on the steering committee with one of the co-chairs stepping down due to taking on additional ministerial duties. Healthier Glades selected Rev. Lionel Camel to fulfill those duties in November 2019 until it was time to keep or select new co-chairs. Rev. Willie Lawrence successfully served his term as co-chair during the first 2 years of the Healthier Glades initiative. Currently, we elected 2 new co-chairs to continue to support Healthier Glades in improving health outcomes through behavioral health.

Mini Grants:

Healthier Glades successfully completed the first year of implementing the Mini Grant initiative in the Glades community. Because of the health pandemic, Healthier Glades supported our mini grantees by giving them the flexibility to adjust the original intent of the grant so that they can implement their project. For many of our grantees, they had to adjust their project from being in-person to either virtual or hybrid. The mini grants allowed Healthier Glades to use this platform as a way to empower residents to utilize resources (like mini grants) to make a community impact. We were able to see a lot of creativity come from our mini grant awardees to implement their projects. Here are some pictures from some of our mini grant awardees:



Delivery of the hygiene kits with
One Love, One Community



Woosa Caregivers Retreat
virtual event flyer

Coalition of Men Literacy Event



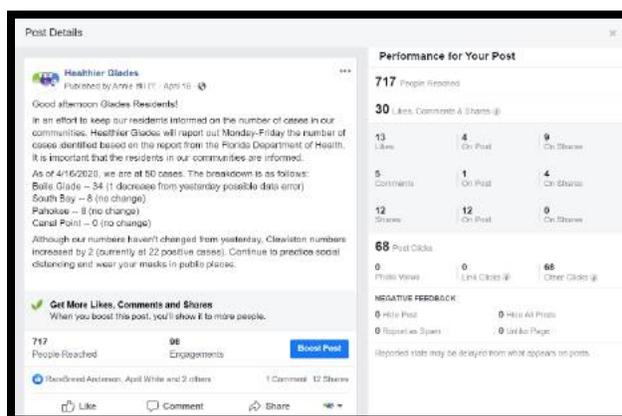
Future Global Leaders Club Protect Pahokee Project



COVID-19 Pandemic and Community Response:

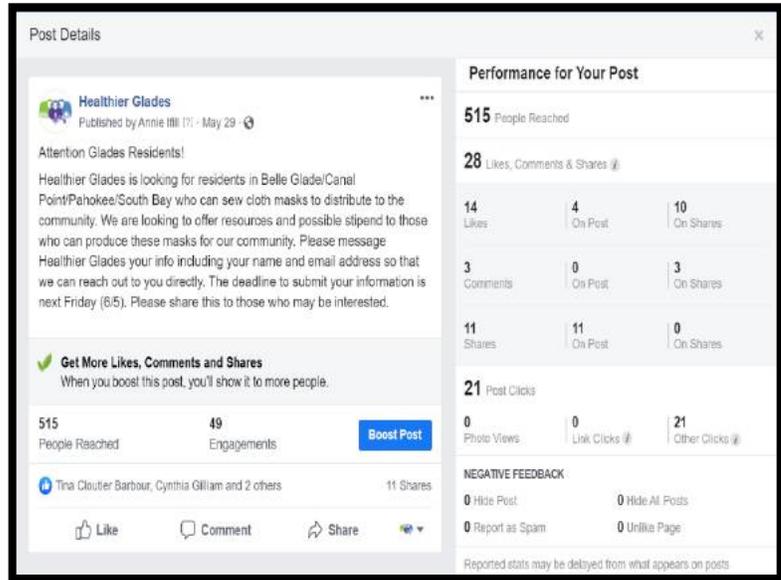
In March/April 2020, our community went into lockdown during the time that our mini grant awardees were implementing their projects. Many of our recipients had to switch from completing their events from in-person to virtual. This was not an easy task for many of them.

After being the Project Director for 4 months, the pandemic affected our ability to engage and recruit residents to this work. Social media became a lifeline for Healthier Glades to address the impact that COVID was having in our communities. In March/April 2020, many residents were continuing to live their lives business as usual as though the pandemic wasn't going to hit our communities. Although they began offering testing sites throughout the county, the Glades area didn't have a testing location until 6 weeks after the community was placed in lockdown. When the county was sharing the number of positive cases, it wasn't connecting to the Glades residents. During the pandemic, Healthier Glades initiated an awareness campaign to inform the community both the number of cases and resources to keep residents and the communities safe.



Our first post on the number of cases was shared on 4/16/20 in which we were reporting out daily. From that point, residents began following and sharing our posts to their friends and family members. During the course of posting the number of positive cases, our community became one of the hotspots in the county. Residents shared their appreciation to Healthier Glades sharing this with the community. At one point, residents dying from the virus made it feel more real.

Another issue that we discovered was many of our residents didn't have masks to protect themselves. Healthier Glades then put out an all call to any resident with sewing skills to help us prepare masks to distribute to residents. A former resident of the Glades, Celia Elrod, answered the call and pulled together a group of ladies to make masks for the Glades residents. We were able to distribute 1000+ adult and children's masks from June-September 2020. Once more residents began wearing masks, the infection rates began to decrease.



The local hospital (Lakeside Medical Center) began offering testing to the Glades community but later discovered that residents (who didn't have cars) had difficulty going there to get tested. A group of local residents/community leaders came up with the idea of testing residents at the food distribution events. Once they finally began testing in the Glades, residents became fearful of getting the test with rumors swirling in the community about "how uncomfortable it was to take the test". Healthier Glades saw this as a learning opportunity and the Project Director along with Florida Community Health Center modeled to residents how the test is taken (see picture). Residents responded positively to the post and more people began getting tested at the food distribution events.

Resident Engagement:

As we entered into year 3 of the initiative, Healthier Glades made some gains in marketing the initiative through the mini grants to engage residents to the work. Because of the pandemic resident engagement became challenging because of social distancing. Healthier Glades began to partner with local residents and community groups on creating ways to engage residents not only in the Healthier Glades work but other engagement activities in the community. Here are some examples of resident engagement work.



Glades Community Updates -- During the pandemic, Healthier Glades and BRIDGES (Belle Glade and Pahokee) established weekly virtual updates that were shared on the Healthier Glades Facebook page with community partners that shared resources to residents in the Glades community. During this community update we had 369 residents to view this update.

Muckteenth Celebration -- After the death of George Floyd a group of local residents representing Belle Glade/Pahokee/South Bay came together to create a virtual Juneteenth event (affectionately called "Muckteenth") to educate residents on the significance of this celebration and to begin an annual tradition in the glades of celebrating Juneteenth. In planning for the event, members of the committee discovered that a local resident wrote his dissertation on a local activist group that was formed in the Glades from 1969-1971.



The link to the dissertation is

<https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6893&context=etd>. The virtual event took place on June 19, 2020. The response to the event was huge and became a springboard for the group to begin planning for next year. The "Muckteenth" Event can be seen here on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/smessam15/videos/10100944715496206/>.

Hispanic Heritage month and the forming of the Hispanic Behavioral Health Workgroup – Since the start of Healthier Glades, the Steering committee always addressed concerns about not having a diverse representation of residents in the community. After the success of the Muckteenth event, Healthier Glades reached out to local residents to inquire how the Hispanic community plan to celebrate Hispanic Heritage month during the pandemic. During the initial conversation, it was discovered that most of the events were planned at the local schools. Because of COVID, the schools were not able to host these events (especially in the Pahokee community that actively participate in these activities). Prior to this group forming, there were initial talks about planning a Cinco De Mayo event but had to be postponed because of the pandemic.

The group brainstormed and came up with the idea of recognizing local businesses and interview them to share their story of how they came to make their home in the Glades and showcase their business. Little did we know how much attention the interviews would get. The interview that we posted received close to 10K views. As a result, the group became a vehicle for Healthier Glades to connect and engage with the Hispanic population in the Glades. One of the videos that was showcased on our Healthier Glades page received over 6000+ views and is prompting this group to prepare a community presentation introducing the Hispanic community to Healthier Glades.



Key Learning:

As Healthier Glades reflect on the growth and change that has occurred during this time, here are some key learning points for the initiative:

- The resiliency of our residents and community leaders to respond to a crisis (ex. COVID response)
- The leadership of our Steering committee to continue to keep the initiative moving despite the challenges with the pandemic and leadership change.
- Residents are hungry for positive stories of the community and the increase of residents following our Healthier Glades page shows the resident interest.
- Healthier Glades was able to reach out to the Hispanic community and through social media engaging them to learn more about Healthier Glades. Plans are underway to do the same kind of engagement with the Haitian community.
- The positive response by residents to follow our Healthier Glades page to get information about the number of positive COVID cases and community resources. We are currently moving in the direction of being a trusted voice in the community.
- Healthier Glades made an editorial post about the sign at 20 mile bend that was in desperate need of repair. After making the post, residents began sharing the same concerns and started asking questions. On October 7, 2020, the new sign was presented to the community. Although residents had questions about the wording of the sign, for the most part, the residents was pleased that action was taken to change the sign.