

3	Letter From the President Ivan J. Juzang	18	Allegheny County Health Department (2021) Mobilizing Faith-Based Communities to Address Health Disparities in Allegheny County
4	Louisiana Department of Health (2011 - 2021) Community Outreach and Professional Development to Address Health Disparities in Communities of Color	19	Philadelphia Department of Public Health (2020-2021) Conquering Seasonal Flu Shot Disparities in African American and Latino/a Communities
6	Louisiana Public Health Institute (2015 - 2021) Reducing Tobacco Use in African-American Communities in Louisiana	20	Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency - Philly 4 Life Campaign (2020-2022) Youth Violence Intervention
8	United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania (2021) Addressing COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy in Allegheny County's Communities of Color	22	Protective Factor Skills-Building Media and Materials (2021) Developed and Produced Materials
9	University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing (2021) A Web-Based Intervention Designed to Help Parents Talk to Their LGBTQ+ Youth About Sex	24	Amachi Pittsburgh (2021-2022) Amachi Pittsburgh Service Provider Engagement Campaign
10	Danya Institute (2021) Training for Behavioral Health Providers on How to Decrease Stigma and Increase Access in Communities Experiencing High Levels of Trauma and Other Health/Social Disparities	25	Montgomery County, Maryland's Collaborating Council (2021) Reducing the Denial of Opioid Overdose in Montgomery County
11	Drexel University College of Health and Nursing Professions (2020-2021) Producing Educational Videos for Conquering Cancer Together Initiative	26	The International Handbook of Black Community Mental Health (2020 - 2021) Moving Young Black Men Beyond Survival Mode
12	Thomas Jefferson University (2019-2022) Audience Research and Educational Materials for a Study Delivering Genetic Testing Information to African-American Men in Prostate-Issue Age Range	28	University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing (2021) Measuring the Effectiveness of Safe Sex Messages Targeting African-American Teens
14	The California Endowment/W. Haywood Burns Institute (2021-2022) Planning Process to Explore and Refine a Protective-Factors Delivery Tool for Justice-Involved BMOB	29	MEE Training Portal (2021) Trauma-Informed Wellness Communications Trainings Targeting Low-Income Communities of Color
16	Allegheny County Health Department - United Against COVID Campaign (2021-2022) Awareness and Education Campaign for COVID-19 Safety	30	Media Samples
		32	MEE Executive Officers and Board Members

Letter From the President

Ivan J. Juzang

MEE Productions Inc.

Though **MEE** has been deeply embedded in lifting up vulnerable and underserved populations, for many Americans, COVID-19 pulled back the covers on deep-seated health disparities that have imperiled communities of color for generations. The sad reality, though, is that in many arenas, little has changed. That lets us know that MEE's work and decades-long commitment is more important than ever.

The environmental realities of where people live, work and play, along with the social determinants of health (disparities), continue to affect a broad range of quality-of-life outcomes and risk. MEE first introduced its social-ecological model in our 1995 research report *In Search of Love*, focused on interpersonal violence among urban youth. Systemic racism is one of the key social determinants of health in that model. It impacts all of MEE's health-disparities work in low-income, underserved communities. Changing the racism that is deeply embedded in America's past and present is a complex and long-term process, yet a critically important goal for our society.

What I've been thinking about, in the wake of the racial unrest over the past two years, is what we can do in the meantime, starting right now? We cannot afford to lose or leave behind a generation of youth of color. What can and should the public health and mental health fields be doing immediately to improve life outcomes and save young Black and Brown lives in the here-and-now?

I believe that putting a protective-factor approach at the center of our work is the answer. This may seem like swimming against the tide, since funding for true prevention still continues to lag behind back-end, intervention focused or punitive strategies. Our *Moving Beyond Survival Mode* mental-wellness research in 2009 was the turning point for MEE, in terms of looking at everything through a protective-factor lens. What became clear was the connection between our day-to-day existence as people who are marginalized, discriminated against and consistently overlooked/underserved and how we cope with that sustained, chronic trauma.

A large step forward in continuing the work of revolutionary thinkers like Dr. Carl Bell and Dr. Joseph White will be MEE's launch in late 2022 of the Center for Protective Values. This virtual space will be a clearinghouse that gathers and disseminates the insights gained from collaborations with wise mentors (now ancestors) and

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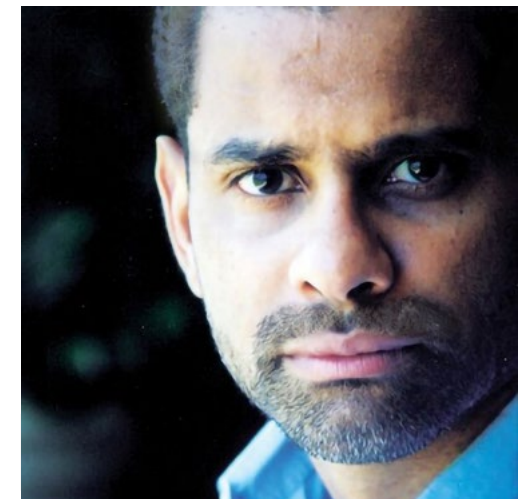
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on-the-ground work in the most underserved communities where “failure is built in.” That is the legacy we create for the next generation committed to “doing the work.”

MEE's business focus for 2022 prioritizes work that infuses protective-factors values and strategies. They include: designing and implementing projects focused on community violence, the impact of substance misuse, and achieving mental wellness in an insane world, as a way to start reducing health and social disparities; increasing access and traffic to the MEE Training Portal as a way to put skills in the hands of trusted community leaders; and continuing to explore international collaborations with like-minded partners in South Africa. That Black-majority nation, which inspired so many of us at the end of apartheid, has been limited in achieving its full potential due to the impact of some of the same issues MEE is addressing here in Black America – substance misuse, youth suicide and community violence.

The current economic conditions require deft management through times of uncertainty. We navigated pandemic-related financial setbacks and shifted the management structure to “right-size” to a lean-and-mean team. Staying nimble, MEE is still here, as strong as it has ever been. We are excited about the opportunities ahead.



Louisiana Department of Health (2011 - 2021)

Community Outreach and Professional Development to Address Health Disparities in Communities of Color

Location: Louisiana (Statewide)

After five years of implementing the SIDS Risk Reduction & Safe Sleep social marketing campaign for the Louisiana Department of Health - Bureau of Family Health (BFH), MEE continued working with BFH on a multi-year contract to effectively administer, manage and evaluate a statewide community outreach and professional development initiative to address health disparities through community outreach, building community linkages, and health education for low-income African-Americans of reproductive age.

The goal of the community outreach and professional development activities were to improve maternal and child health outcomes and reduce infant mortality, particularly among African-American residents in Louisiana, by increasing the amount of culturally-relevant health information available in underserved communities and by improving the effectiveness of BFH staff and partners in engaging members of the community and delivering that information.

Over the course of MEE's work with BFH, MEE:

- Conducted a series of professional development trainings on effective health communications for more than 200 service providers from BFH and its partnering organizations.
- Disseminated over 200,000 safe sleep materials to campaign partners across the state.
- Developed and produced digital media ads promoting safe sleep practices to parents.
- Conducted numerous community canvassing sessions targeting childcare providers and hair salons in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Shreveport, Lafayette, Alexandria and Monroe.
- Conducted a series of focus groups with African-American fathers to get a better understanding of how health agencies can engage African-American fathers to support the health and wellness of their families.
- Provided personalized technical assistance for three of BFH's programs (Breastfeeding, Home Visiting, and Developmental Screening) with a goal of helping each program develop messaging, materials and tactics that could enhance their ability to connect and resonate with African-American fathers.



Building a Credible and Lasting Relationship with African-American Men and Fathers

BFH Research Design/Agenda

- 8 Variables**
- Challenges of Being An African-American Man
- Attitudes Toward Being a Father
- Relationship with the Mother(s) of Their Children
- Relationships with Their Children
- Accessing Health Services



Media Channels/Outreach Activities to Reach Men & Fathers

- Twitter, Instagram & Facebook
- Barbershops/ Sporting Events
- YouTube Videos
- Churches/ Faith-Based
- Community Outreach
- Child Care Centers

Implications for BFH

- Prioritizing Community Outreach to African-American Men
- Culturally-Relevant Messaging (Oral-Based)
- Partnering with Men's/Father's Organizations
- Video Testimonials
- Parenting Classes/ Support Groups
- Cultural-Sensitivity Training: Interpersonal Communications



Trauma-Informed Adolescent Wellness Communications Targeting Low-Income Communities of Color

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www.mee productions.com

Louisiana Public Health Institute (2015 - 2021)

Reducing Tobacco Use in African-American Communities in Louisiana

Location: Louisiana (Statewide)

2021 saw the completion of MEE's work with LPHI to develop and implement an African-American Male Tobacco Cessation campaign in six markets across the state: Alexandria, Monroe, Opelousas, Shreveport, Baton Rouge and New Orleans. The first three years of the campaign were launched as pilots in Shreveport, Baton Rouge and New Orleans respectively, before rolling out in the six markets in 2018.

The goal of the campaign was to reduce the rate of smoking among African-American males in Louisiana (ages 35 - 59) who were familiar with the hazards of smoking and wanted to quit, by letting them know that there is free support available that could help them be successful.

Using insights garnered through audience research, MEE's campaign promoted and raised awareness of the Louisiana Tobacco Quitline (1-800-QUIT-NOW) and the QuitWithUsLa.org website where users could receive Tobacco Cessation Trust services, such as: consultation with a tobacco cessation specialist; free self-help guides, tools and support materials; referrals to face-to-face programs in their areas; and materials for smokeless tobacco users. The campaign also delivered the message that these and other resources are user-friendly, culturally specific and can be trusted.

Over the course of seven years, MEE's campaign consisted of the following elements:

- Radio advertisements
- Interior bus advertisements
- Facebook, Google, and YouTube advertisements
- Billboards and bus shelters in targeted communities
- Dissemination of campaign materials through community canvassing targeting barbershops and other organizations serving African-American males

Adding to the campaign's success was MEE's engagement of three popular radio DJs in New Orleans (DJ Wild Wayne), Baton Rouge (DJ Big Ant) and Shreveport (Kool DJ SupaMike) to actively endorse the Quitline on-air and through their social media platforms. Two of the DJs who were tobacco users, Wild Wayne and Big

Ant, used the Quitline resources and shared their successful quit journeys with their audiences, further increasing the credibility of the Quitline and its ability to provide 24/7 quit support.

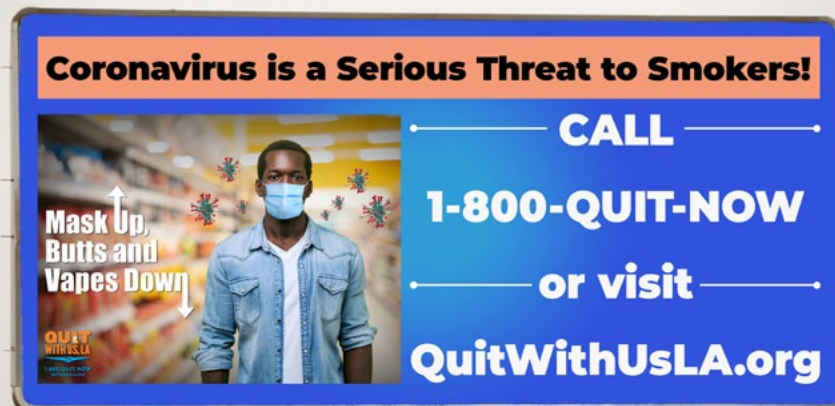
From the start of the statewide campaign in 2018, campaign evaluations showed an increase in awareness of the Quitline in the African-American community along with calls to the Quitline by African-American residents. MEE's campaign also generated increased likes on the Quitline Facebook page (from 7,608 to 12,145) and its Facebook advertising campaign generated 178,537 clicks (including 99,047 unique clicks) to the Quitline website.

2021 also brought the beginning of MEE's work with LPHI on an RWJF-funded initiative targeting ten small cities in Northern Louisiana, Project ASIRT (Addressing Systemic Inequities to Reduce Tobacco Use Among African-Americans in the South). MEE is providing community-engagement capacity training for grantee partners, developing outreach materials, placing ads on Facebook and developing and executing a DJ endorsement campaign with DJ Rob Lloyd of KVMX-FM in Monroe.

During the first three months, the Facebook campaign totaled 10,866 clicks to the Quitline website (including 7,080 unique clicks), reached 82,511 individuals and generated 1,062,229 impressions.



Outdoor Billboard



Outreach Materials



Radio Ads



United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania (2021)

Addressing COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy in Allegheny County's Communities of Color

Location: Pittsburgh, PA

MEE was hired by the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania to develop the concepts and scripts for public service announcements (PSAs) that addressed COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among people in low-income, Black and Brown communities in Southwestern Pennsylvania. The goal of the campaign was to help persuade members of those communities to get their questions answered and receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

Vaccination barriers uncovered during our United Against COVID campaign in Allegheny County, along with our 30-year track record of addressing health and social disparities in underserved communities across the country, enabled MEE to create a set of PSAs with messaging that resonated well among populations with significant mistrust of mainstream health institutions.

Created as a 60-second radio ad and a 15-second social media video, the PSAs scripts were designed to let the listener/viewer know that we understand and acknowledge their hesitancy. The PSAs informed them on how they could access information and resources that will help them feel empowered to make an informed (with facts vs. fiction) decision regarding the vaccine.

The PSAs, sponsored in part by the Pittsburgh Steelers, Pittsburgh Pirates, and Pittsburgh Penguins.



**United Way of
Southwestern Pennsylvania**



University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing (2021)

A Web-Based Intervention Designed to Help Parents Talk to Their LGBTQ+ Youth About Sex

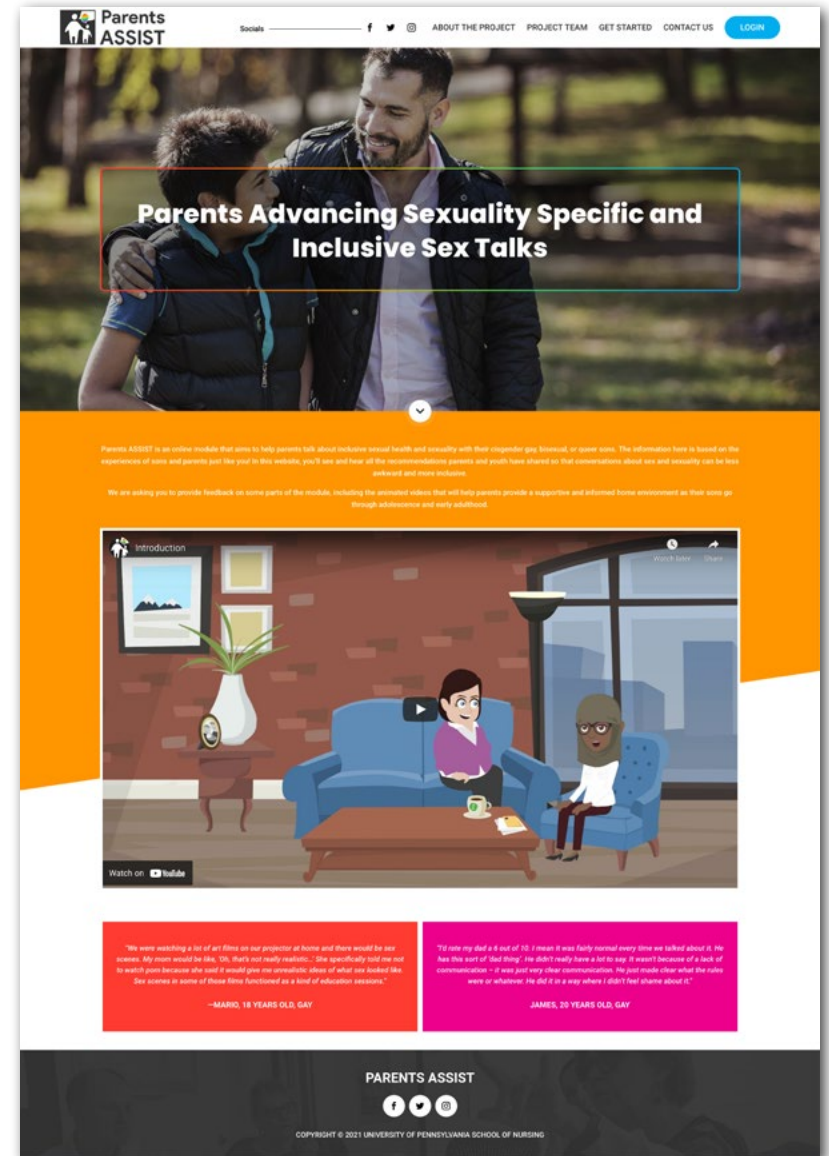
Location: Philadelphia, PA

MEE was hired by the School of Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania to develop an online learning portal that could be used during a pilot study to determine the acceptability and feasibility of Parents ASSIST. Parents ASSIST is a web-based, 6-module intervention that helps parents talk about sex and sexuality with their sons – especially if they’re gay, bisexual, or queer.

The topics of the six learning modules include:

- Answering Questions
- Coming Out and What it All Means
- Myths & Facts: Why Parents Don’t Talk to Their Children
- Setting Rules and the Teenager’s Developing Brain
- You’re Normal, Kiddo!
- Details, Not Generalities

The MEE-developed site was used in a pilot study designed to get input from young gay, bisexual or queer adolescents and young adults on the effectiveness of the seven learning modules.



Danya Institute (2021)

Training for Behavioral Health Providers on How to Decrease Stigma and Increase Access in Communities Experiencing High Levels of Trauma and Other Health/Social Disparities

Location: Philadelphia, PA

MEE Productions was hired by the Danya Institute to extend its youth violence initiative in Philadelphia to include a focus on engaging behavioral health providers nationally in supporting young people in dealing with ongoing stress and trauma in a culturally relevant and community-friendly manner. Danya, which receives funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is a Mental Health Technology Transfer Center that designs and provides technical assistance-trainings for behavioral health providers and other SAMHSA-funded organizations.

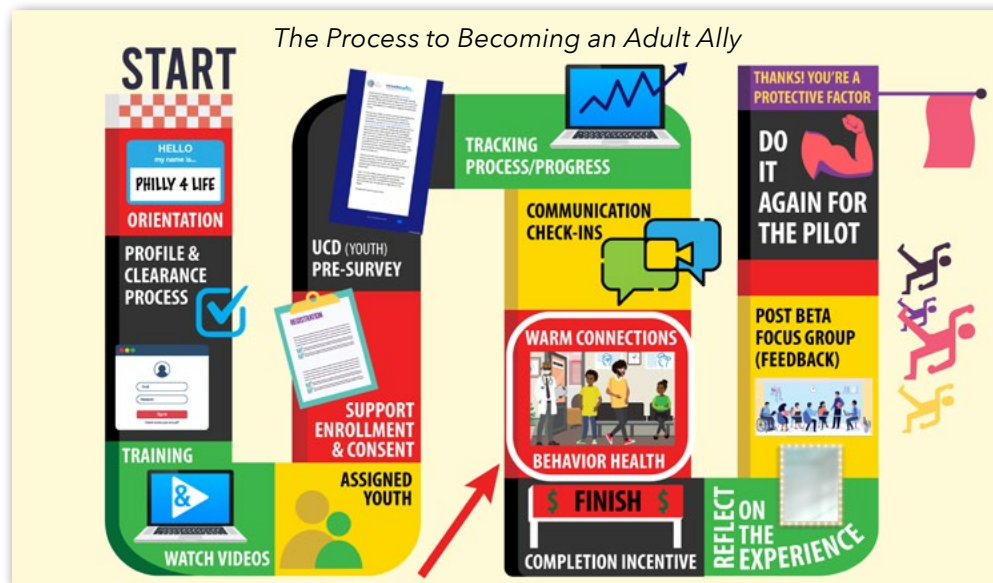
This project dovetails with MEE's public health approach to reducing youth violence, decreasing stigma, and increasing access to violence-intervention services. The Philly 4 Life project (see full description on page 20), which was funded by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, is the latest extension of MEE's decades of work in this arena. Many of the design elements of this project were consistent with MEE's previous development and implementation of The Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia, Operation Peace in Philadelphia and other campaigns built on a community-at-the-center approach.

MEE was tasked with gathering information that could inform the content for a digital toolkit and training series that would build or improve the capacity of behavioral health providers to engage the community, provide a welcoming experience to youth, and frame mental wellness in a way that reduces stigma and overcomes mistrust and resistance. Providers would be supported in meeting young people (and their families) "where they are," beginning to establish trusted relationships and explaining the benefits of their programs and services for creating mental wellness.

MEE held a series of planning calls and meetings with local partners such as the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS), representatives from the public-school system and The Consortium, a community-based behavioral health provider. Along with members of the project's Community Advisory Board, this team focused on supporting the logistics of linkages to community-vetted and trusted supports for youth, using the matched Adult Allies to raise awareness of this community resource by taking their youth onsite for a "warm connection." MEE also created a video presentation

about each step in the process, so that Adult Allies would know what to expect and could guide youth toward a positive experience.

Lessons learned in this project include the need for overcoming resistance to change, even among those in the therapeutic community. With suspicion and mistrust on both sides, MEE learned that building "supply-side" readiness will be important, well prior to launching an effective, youth-friendly outreach campaign that could trigger additional demand for services. Findings like these may be incorporated into a customized training package for Danya Institute and SAMHSA. In the meantime, MEE also shared videos of thought leaders Dr. Joseph White and Dr. Carl Bell offering insights to behavioral health providers working in marginalized communities, via Danya's YouTube channel.



Drexel University College of Health and Nursing Professions (2020-2021)

Producing Educational Videos for Conquering Cancer Together Initiative

Location: Philadelphia, PA

In June 2020, MEE reconnected with one of its longtime collaborators in academic research, Dr. Loretta Jemmott, for a video-production project to support community-education activities. Dr. Jemmott, who had moved from the University of Pennsylvania to helm a community-based health initiative for Drexel University's College of Nursing and Health Professions, contacted MEE to develop a series of educational videos designed to close disparities in cancer outcomes among African Americans in West Philadelphia.

The project built on MEE's previous work related to cancer-outcomes disparities negatively impacting African-American communities. This included long-term tobacco-use prevention projects with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health and tobacco-cessation/Quitline promotion campaign for the Louisiana Public Health Institute. MEE also was able to bring learnings from its peer-education project on prostate cancer among African-American males, which was executed in partnership with researchers at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia.

The Conquering Cancer Together initiative was focused on 11 West Philadelphia neighborhoods designated as Promise Zones. These communities are predominantly African American, with low- to middle income. While Drexel's team had developed some print materials to be used for community outreach, short videos would help researchers deliver important cancer education and prevention information to residents in a manner that aligns with their oral communications culture.

The CCT Team provided MEE with background information on five cancers that disproportionately impact Black people, along with branding requirements and a summary of findings from previously executed listening sessions in the community. Based on this information, MEE convened the project team for a Point B outcomes development session to uncover and prioritized specific endgames for the project and its target audience. After getting additional feedback using an online survey of key stakeholders and project partners, MEE developed a final Point B document that guided the development of the video treatment (including the call-to-action), scripts, and storyboards for five educational videos. Preliminary on-site production, in the form of recorded interviews with Dr. Jemmott and her outreach team, took place in early 2021, resulting in first drafts of several of the videos.

Pre-production planning for the remaining videos extended through late 2021. Interviews with medical/scientific professionals will be completed in December 2021, with post-production activities to extend into the first quarter of 2022. The final videos will be in formats that can be streamed online or embedded in social media posts for various platforms.



Thomas Jefferson University (2019-2022)

Audience Research and Educational Materials for a Study Delivering Genetic Testing Information to African-American Men in Prostate-Issue Age Range
Location: Philadelphia, PA

MEE Productions was hired by oncologists and researchers at Thomas Jefferson University to conduct formative audience research and develop educational materials for a study on effective and culturally-specific ways to deliver genetic testing information to African-American men as they navigate choices related to prostate health. This work is important because African-American males have the world's highest incidence of prostate cancer, and are more than twice as likely to die from prostate cancer than men from other races/ethnicities. At the same time, Black people have been traditionally underrepresented in genetic testing, just as they are in clinical trial participation. Genetic testing can reveal genetic mutations linked to prostate cancer and serve as an early warning signal of the need for active monitoring, further testing, lifestyle changes and sharing the information with other family members who may share the same genes.

African-American males (ages 40-80) who received healthcare services at a selected West Philadelphia provider clinic were the project's primary target audience for this study. In 2019, MEE's project team renewed its Human Subjects Research certification and initiated the audience research design (a series of focus groups) for the project, including the moderator's guide and a brief pen-and-paper survey to be completed by participants. MEE's team supported recruitment for the focus groups, sharing the information with members of its Community Network, and co-facilitated the focus groups. We collaborated with the TJU team in the data-analysis process.

In 2020, MEE converted the project's research findings into informative and persuasive text, writing, designing and laying out a curriculum booklet that was used by male peer educators from the community that MEE also assisted in training. In addition, MEE created recruitment flyers and social media posts to attract study participants during a rolling enrollment period.

In 2022, once data-gathering and analysis is complete, MEE will join the researchers in publishing the study findings in a peer-reviewed journal. We will also create user-friendly newsletter to share the research findings and information about genetic testing for prostate cancer with members of the community.



Men's Health Session!

Learn How Your Family Health History Can Impact You!

1 in 7 African-American men will have prostate cancer in his lifetime. Your health and your family history can greatly impact your chances of getting prostate cancer. Learn the risk factors for prostate cancer, what you should know about your family history, genetic testing, and what you can do to live your healthiest life possible.

If You:

- Are an African-American male between the ages of 39 and 69
- Live in the Philadelphia area
- Would like to learn more about genetic testing and ways to improve your health

...Then Come to a Men's Health Session!

More Than Words Ministries will sponsor sessions on
Thursday, January 6, 2022
 at **Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church**
 2800 W. Cheltenham Avenue
FREE Parking available on-site.

For more information or to register for a session, call 267-667-7332
You will be PAID for two hours of your time!

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The Co-Investigator for this study, which is funded by a U.S. Department of Defense grant (PC 180624), is Amy Leader, PhD, (215) 955-7739

Genetic Testing and Prostate Cancer

YOUR HEALTH • YOUR LEGACY • YOUR LIFE



Funding for this study is provided by the National Cancer Institute. Veda Gin, MD is the Principal Investigator and the Co-Principal Investigator.

2

Why Genetic Testing Matters in Prostate Health

WELCOME!

Many African-American men in Philadelphia aren't aware that they are more at risk for prostate cancer than men from other racial/ethnic groups. About 1 out of every 5 Black men in America will be diagnosed with prostate cancer at some point in their lives, compared to 1 in 7 for all men.

We don't know all of what causes prostate cancer or why Black men are more likely to get prostate cancer. But we want you to have the information you need to understand your own prostate cancer risk and what you can do about it. This allows you to make informed choices.

One reason that men may develop prostate cancer is because of genetic mutations passed down through their family. We're going to give you some information about the prostate, genetics and family health history—and about how all of these things are connected. Then you'll be prepared to take control of your prostate health going forward.

Testing Related to Prostate Cancer

There are several types of tests for prostate health.

- **Screening tests**, such as the PSA (prostate-specific antigen) blood test or a digital rectal exam, help to see if there is suspicion for prostate cancer being present, but do not diagnose prostate cancer. These tests, usually done by your primary care doctor or a urologist, are used mainly to screen for prostate cancer in men who don't have any symptoms.
- **Diagnostic tests**, such as prostate biopsies, take a piece of your actual prostate tissue to see if there are prostate cancer cells present. This minor invasive procedure is the only way to diagnose prostate cancer.
- **Genetic tests** look at your genes, focusing on ones known to be associated with prostate cancer. It allows doctors to evaluate your DNA for changes that may have been inherited and could be harmful. (More details on p. 14)



10

Is a Prostate Screening Test Right for Me?

If you're over 45, talk to your doctor about your risk of prostate cancer, even if he or she hasn't brought it up—even if you don't have any symptoms of prostate problems. If you have a father, brother or son who has/had prostate cancer, you should begin screening at age 40.



Not all doctors agree that all men should be screened for prostate cancer. Consider what your doctor says and talk to other important people in your life who you trust, then decide if screening is the right decision for you.

11

The California Endowment/W. Haywood Burns Institute (2021-2022)

Planning Process to Explore and Refine a Protective-Factors Delivery Tool for Justice-Involved BMOC

Location: California (Statewide)

This project, executed in conjunction with the esteemed W. Haywood Burns Institute, was a continuation of MEE's longtime work with The California Endowment on interventions targeting boys and men of color (BMOC) and using protective-factor approaches to improve life, health and social outcomes for marginalized and underserved populations. It expanded on MEE's 2016 Heard, Not Judged audience research and report, by examining how to apply its findings to justice-involved youth BMOC in California, as the system transforms to community, rather than carceral settings.

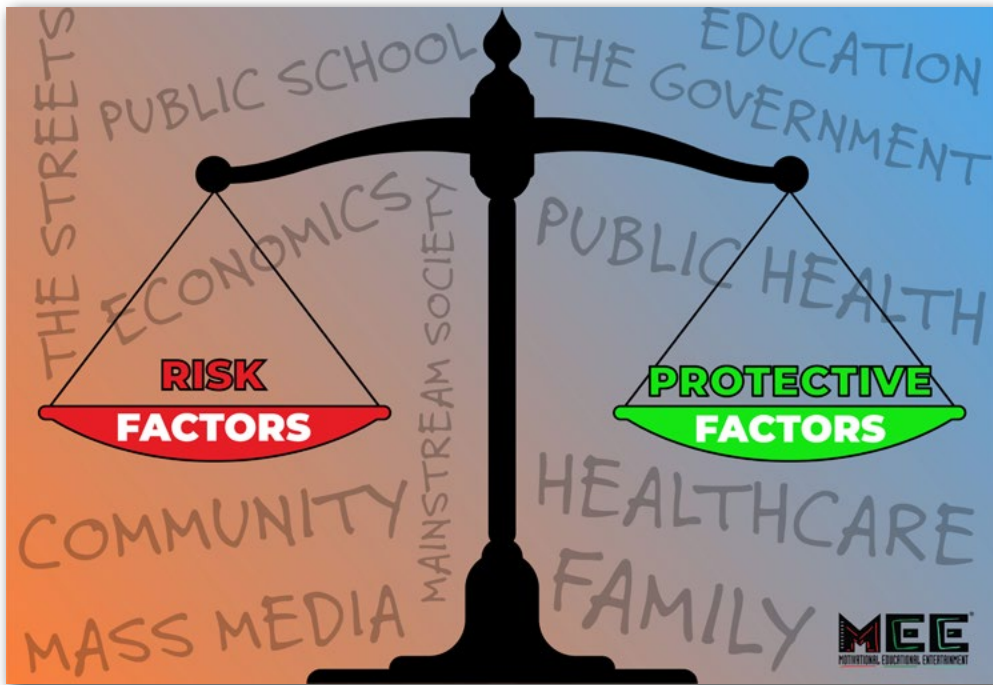
James Bell, Founding President of the Institute, represented incarcerated youth for more than 20 years, and has used his insights to become an outspoken international voice for the radical transformation of the juvenile justice system, given the disproportionate (and negative/punitive) impact on boys and men of color. MEE also partnered with Darryl Cobbin of Brand Positioning Doctors (BPD), an industry-leading expert in branding and marketing.

Over what was scheduled to be a nine-month planning process that started in November 2019, MEE wanted to be able to answer the question about whether or not the prototype of a digital mental-wellness tool we piloted within a youth suicide-prevention campaign in Ohio and a violence-prevention initiative in Philadelphia could be a good fit with the juvenile justice reforms on the horizon in California. Our work in the planning grant was designed to determine whether it meets provider needs at the systems and policy level (including whether it could work to get young men's lives back on track). We also sought to determine whether this tool is appealing, engaging and persuasive while it delivers protective factors and social skills to boys and men of color.

In individual expert interviews conducted by MEE in Fall 2020, we explored both where the system is now (Point A) and where it can/should be (Point B), from both the insider's and outsider's perspective. Carl Bell acted as the lead point person between MEE and the juvenile-justice community. He helped us pull together the questions for the key-informant interviews (research design) and then helped us identify the right people to invite to participate, within broad categories of relevant experiences or insights. Each of the participants was a thought leader in the fields of juvenile justice, adolescent development, youth violence, etc.

MEE summarized and analyzed the interviews and shared the findings and key themes with the team and The California Endowment. Finally, MEE worked with Bell to convene several colleagues for a 2-day symposium in May 2021 to review what we learned and explore potential real-world applications. Discussions included in-depth exploration of key findings such as: youth in marginalized communities need mental-wellness skills in order to cope with the daunting social determinants of health that threaten their well-being; a branded tool that reflects and appeals to youth culture provides a way to attract BMOC to services that can improve life outcomes in real time (24-7 access), rather than providers having to "chase them down" to offer needed support; and addressing both intervention and prevention at the same time in a community allows for the potential to disrupt the pipeline and divert youth away from punitive juvenile justice systems. We analyzed comments from symposium participants and produced a comprehensive final project report on the planning process to The California Endowment in October 2021. MEE and BPD are also creating a presentation deck to share our findings, recommendations and future steps with potential funders in the private sector.





Using a Branded, Community-Centered Digital Tool to Engage & Support Justice-Involved BMOC

Results from a Planning Grant Process Funded by
The California Endowment

Submitted By



Allegheny County Health Department - United Against COVID Campaign (2021-2022)

Awareness and Education Campaign for COVID-19 Safety

Location: Allegheny County, PA

In March 2021, MEE was contracted by the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) to develop and launch a campaign designed to provide trusted, accurate COVID-19 information to minority, ethnic and marginalized communities across the County. The goal, as the resulting United Against COVID campaign's slogan reflects, is to "spread truth, not COVID."

Recognizing that there is significant mistrust and misinformation, first about mainstream institutions, like the healthcare system, then more specifically about the COVID-19 virus and the need for testing and other mitigation measures like mask-wearing and social distancing, and then even more deeply, about the COVID vaccines, the campaign focused on providing authentic and credible messages from trusted, community-identified leaders, including the actively involved members of the campaign's six-member Community Advisory Board (CAB), who all had grassroots credibility. With the foundation of a community-at-the-center approach, MEE continually provided the most up-to-date scientific COVID-19 safety and vaccination information possible (including the emergence and impact of the Delta and Omicron variants).

MEE worked closely with the CAB to develop the campaign, whose call-to-action is "Be Mindful, Be Vigilant, Beat COVID." Using both digital technology and "human-ology," the campaign engaged the community with culturally-specific and persuasive awareness and education messaging. MEE targeted marginalized sub-populations in Allegheny County, including those who are African-American/Black, Latinx, Refugees/Immigrants, Non-Native English Speakers and LGBTQ+. We put in place a process to build and nurture long-term connections with community-trusted partners, both individuals (faith leaders and other community-identified leaders) and organizations (nonprofits and other organizations that work with specific sub-populations, small businesses, health coalitions, FQHCs, etc.).

The beginning phases of the campaign development and roll-out focused on building and testing the infrastructure of the digital elements, the campaign landing page and the digital training portal including the Community Engagement Toolkit. Starting in May 2021, MEE focused on creating the structures and support for recruiting and training community leaders - the campaign's "human-ology" elements. Those trainings, included a site-specific training for residents

of a local public housing development, accelerated in July and August, with multiple sessions to accommodate the various schedules and needs of our trainees. Together, leveraging their training, those community-identified leaders built bridges, disseminated information and sparked dialogue that could help overcome the deep-seated barrier of community mistrust.

In August 2021, in addition to continuing the Digital Community Engagement Toolkit Trainings, MEE planned and executed a number of in-person campaign events in low-income communities to address vaccine hesitancy and misinformation. A no-cost extension through September allowed MEE to extend the campaign work, earning additional time to create community dialogue via executing community events and conducting radio interviews and other public affairs programming.

In late October, MEE was awarded a contract to execute a maintenance phase, as the County seeks a CBO partner to take over day-to-day campaign operations in the spring of 2022. During this phase, MEE will maintain the campaign's digital and social media presence, with messages about the vaccine booster shots, avoiding a surge caused by holiday travel and gatherings, and the continued need for masking and social distancing. MEE created a comprehensive Assets Transfer Plan to guide the closeout and transition process for the campaign.

In the first eight months of the campaign:

- MEE conducted a series of professional development trainings for more than 100 service providers from ACHD and its partnering organizations.
- The landing page generated 3,500 views and 2,125 unique users.
- Social media efforts resulted in 658,635 impressions, 70,819 video views and 6,727 link clicks.

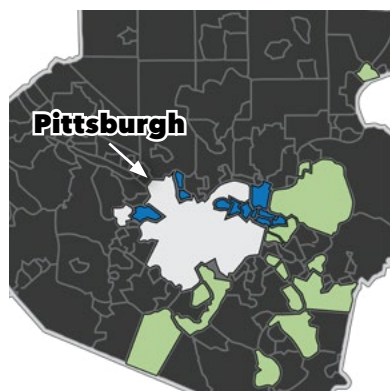




United Against COVID

SPREADING **TRUTH** NOT COVID

Targeted Communities

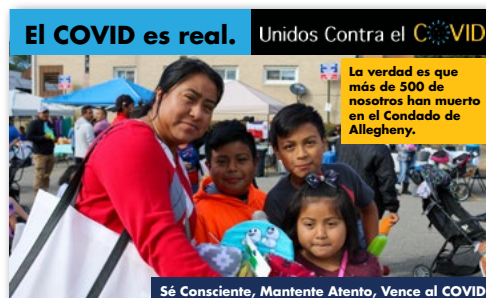


YouTube Channel

Multi-Language Flyer

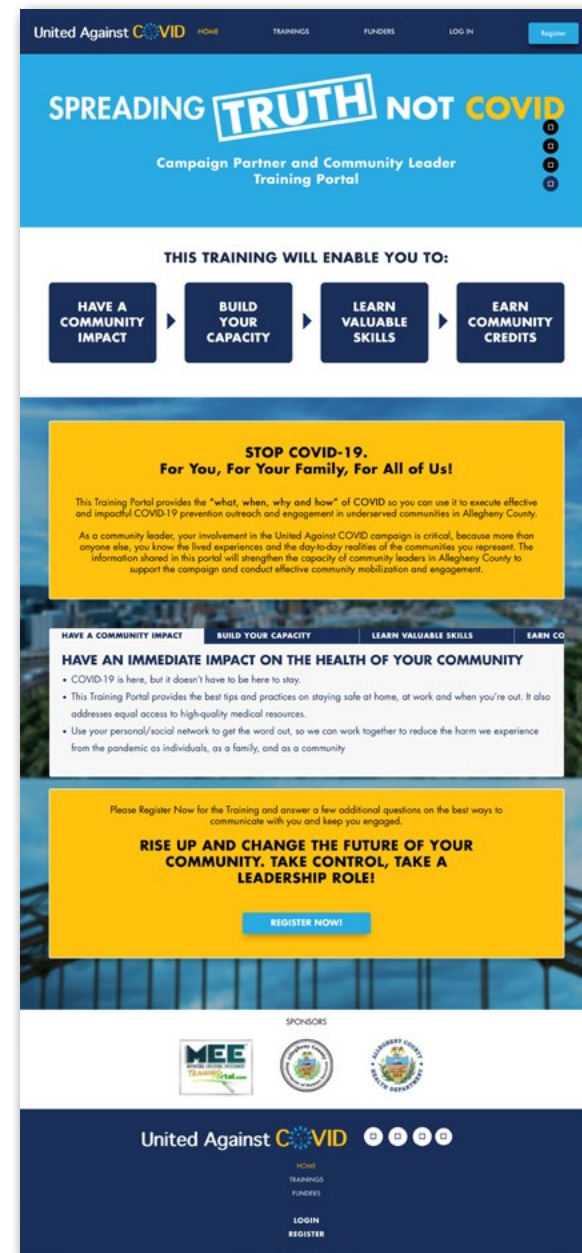


LatinX Social Media



Landing Page Design

Website Design



Allegheny County Health Department (2021)

Mobilizing Faith-Based Communities to Address Health Disparities in Allegheny County

Location: Allegheny County, PA

MEE Productions was hired by the Allegheny Health Department (ACHD) in 2021 to assist the department in addressing seasonal flu in low-income African American Communities. Funded by a grant from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's REACH Initiative, the ACHD asked for MEE's support in finding new and innovative ways to engage hard to reach communities around the seasonal flu.

MEE provided the ACHD's campaign with community engagement services for mobilization of faith-based institutions to address chronic diseases and other health disparities, including the seasonal flu in Allegheny County. MEE has shown that partnering with faith-based communities can counter the lack of trust African Americans have in health systems and mainstream institutions. MEE designed and disseminated flyers, social media posts, and a recruitment/invitation email to engage local church groups, health ministries, spiritual leaders, faith-based institutions, and religious educators. MEE also conducted online listening sessions featuring faith-based leaders. The sessions were co-moderated by Ivan Juzang, president of MEE Productions, and Rev. Dr. John Welch, the project consultant.

The ACHD learned that faith-based leaders have the ability to initiate exchange and dialogue with communities around health disparities, chronic diseases, and disparities around seasonal flu. The ACHD also learned that it must make a serious and sustained effort to engage communities with high levels of distrust of mainstream institutions, including the health department. But to engage their audiences and constituencies, faith-based communities will need tools, support, training, resources, technical assistance, and ongoing engagement from the health department. MEE recommended that the ACHD build flu outreach partnerships with Allegheny County's faith-based leaders who can effectively engage communities that have been historically mistreated by health systems and institutions. MEE also recommended that the ACHD create a comprehensive flu-prevention campaign targeting African Americans, by way of digital outreach (high-tech) and on-the-ground, community-based encounters (high-touch).

MEE compiled and analyzed data from its surveys, listening sessions, and participant profile information to create the "Framework for a Community Engagement Plan" for ACHD's REACH Initiative and the upcoming 2021/2022 flu season.



Engaging the Faith Community in Flu Prevention Efforts in Allegheny County

Data-Gathering and Insights from
Faith-Based Leaders in African-American
Communities Targeted by the REACH Initiative

How Faith Leaders Can Make a Difference

Get What YOUR Community Needs to Fight the Flu

- Give the County direct input and feedback about how it should go about engaging and building ongoing relationships with the faith community
- Make sure underserved communities are included and represented in County flu outreach and education efforts
- Identify organizations and grassroots leaders affiliated with the faith community who can be active partners in sharing flu-safety messages
- Receive flu-prevention print and promotional materials from ACHD that you can display or disseminate as flu season approaches
- Become eligible to receive a flu education digital toolkit, and get free training and technical support on engaging and protecting the hardest-to-reach communities

Philadelphia Department of Public Health (2020-2021)

Conquering Seasonal Flu Shot Disparities in African American and Latino/a Communities

Location: Philadelphia County, PA

In 2020-2021, MEE collaborated with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) on a project aimed at overcoming seasonal flu shot disparities in African American and Latino communities in Philadelphia. MEE was hired by the PDPH to design and execute the media placement strategies for the department's existing campaign, "Should've Got My Flu Shot," funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

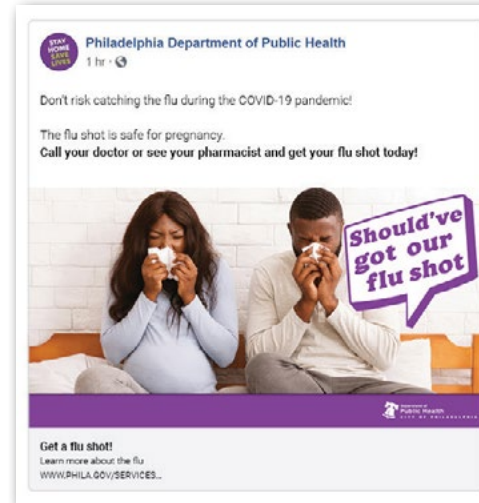
The campaign targeted African American, Latinx, and other marginalized communities with high disparities in flu vaccination. It also targeted populations at increased risk of complications including pregnant women, adults over sixty-five, parents of children younger than two, and people with weakened immune systems. The media campaign ran during Fall 2020 and early Winter 2021 to educate and inform Philadelphians about the Flu vaccine and encouraged them to get the vaccine, even as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to unfold. MEE placed broadcast and digital advertising using audio and print media created by PDPH.

The placed media mix included radio advertising, outdoor/transit advertising, music streaming on Pandora, and digital/social media advertising on Facebook/Instagram. Social media advertising on Facebook/Instagram included ads in English, Spanish and French. The media placement provided great city-wide coverage and high visibility in the campaign's primary geographic areas, especially in North Philadelphia, Northeast Philadelphia, Kensington, West Philadelphia and South Philadelphia.

Unlike MEE's normal process of full campaign development and implementation, MEE provided only media placement for this campaign (no creative/message development), leveraging its extensive relationships with media outlets throughout Philadelphia.



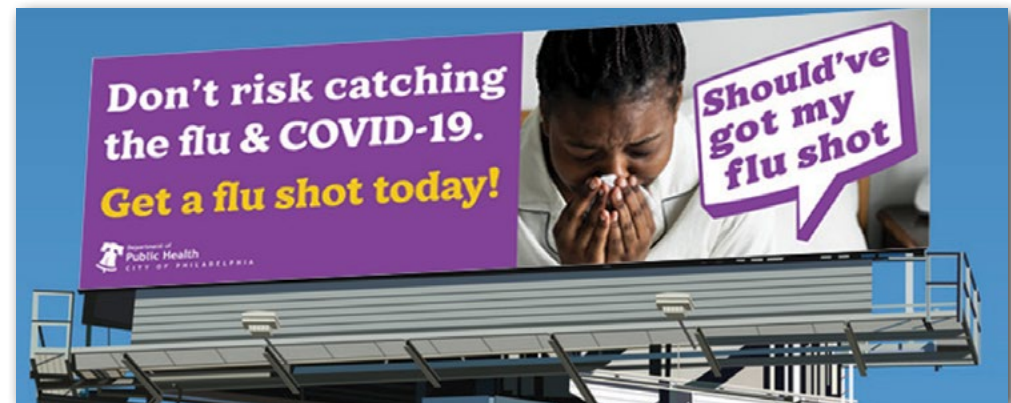
Social Media Post



LatinX Bus Shelter



Outdoor Billboard



Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency - Philly 4 Life Campaign (2020-2022)

Youth Violence Intervention

Location: Philadelphia, PA

In July 2020, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) awarded MEE a two-year Community Violence Prevention and Reduction Grant to implement an innovative youth violence intervention in Philadelphia targeting at-risk youth ages 14 to 19. For the last 15 years, MEE has been developing and honing a unique behavioral/mental health intervention approach, resulting in what's being piloted as "Philly 4 Life" (P4L). P4L evolved from MEE's extensive public health experience with marginalized and traumatized communities, as manifested by negative coping behaviors such as youth violence, substance misuse and suicide. After a year of design, planning and engaging with the community, MEE will launch a full citywide pilot of "Philly 4 Life" in the first quarter of 2022.

Philly 4 Life is a strengths-based violence-prevention campaign that embraces the resilience of youth and provides them with protective-factor skills that allow them to focus on living and thriving, rather than merely surviving community violence. In the P4L pilot, paid (but positive) staff working at institutional or nonprofit service providers will serve as Adult Allies (a key protective factor) for hundreds of participating youth that they are already engaging with on a daily basis as part of their work. Then, through a digital platform and interpersonal dialogue (between youth and their Adult Allies), MEE plans to give young people the skills and confidence they need in order to practice self-care and cope differently with violence and the other challenges they will face daily. The trauma-informed lessons, delivered/conveyed through a digital ecosystem of culturally-relevant materials, a mobile-friendly website, YouTube videos and social media platforms, instruct youth about:

1. How to take care of oneself in a moment of trauma or crisis;
2. Daily self-care practices that support ongoing mental wellness; and
3. Long-term thriving self-care practices (including linkages to care) in spite of their stressful environments.

With P4L, prevention and intervention happen in concert, an innovative advancement in how services to at-risk youth are traditionally provided (either-or approaches). In addition, it brings youth to community-based service providers instead of them having to "chase youth down" and persuade them in order to provide the services that can improve their life outcomes. As part of MEE's pre-

intervention training, provider staff will learn how Philly 4 Life helps them act as a protective factor for youth in their care. These Adult Allies will also play a critical role in onboarding youth into P4L and supporting the completion of its lessons and activities.

Because it uses a hybrid approach (online for scale/offline for impact), Philly 4 Life has the potential to deliver life skills to young people who are at different ages and stages in their adolescent development. Whether they are adjudicated youth who have been assigned to a program or those who don't yet "have paper on them" but are at high-risk due to social determinants of health, Philly 4 Life can reach and positively impact a range of young people who live in communities of concentrated poverty. Youth from these communities face many of the same challenges: they have experienced violent trauma (causing harm or being harmed) or bullying or fighting at school; they are at risk of dropping out of school; have been diagnosed with a mental illness (i.e., anxiety, paranoia, depression) or are misusing substances as a way to cope; or they are unemployed or underemployed, experiencing unstable housing or in foster care. In this project, MEE also seeks to reach young people who are referred from "violence-interrupter" interventions or police-run diversion programs, enrolled in alternative schools for youth with behavioral or substance-misuse challenges, or who are in GED or Job Corps programs.

At the end of the pilot phase, MEE will comprehensively review and analyze all collected data and implementation processes, readying for the next stage of bringing this innovative approach to scale nationally.



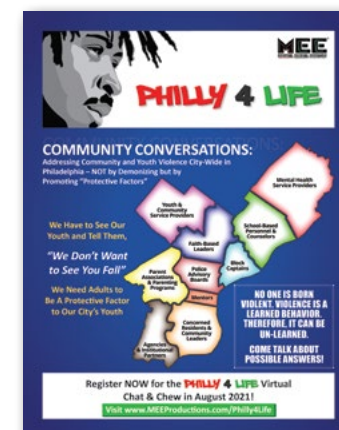

Enrollment Website

Adult Ally BETA Panel from Campaign Website

Adult Ally Orientation Video



Chat & Chew Flyer



Protective Factor Skills-Building Media and Materials (2021)

Developed and Produced Materials

Location: Multiple

MEE's new evidence-based tools deliver the mental-wellness content and life skills (lessons) youth need to positively cope with chronic stress and ongoing violence to which they are exposed.

Are you in need of mental wellness tools and programming that are:

- Culturally competent for inner-city youth from communities facing the highest disparities
- Innovative in how they combine digital technology with human-ology?
- Developed with meaningful input by the youth audiences for whom it is designed
- Evidence-based in its approach to impacting youth outcomes?

What to Do in a Crisis Postcard

Young people will learn how to keep a crisis from becoming a catastrophe.

**Materials Designed for Youth
Service Providers and Violence
Prevention Programs Whose
Staff Work Directly With Youth**

Wellness Postcard

Young people will learn daily practices that will build their peace of mind and increase physical and emotional wellness.

What's Your Plan? Postcard

Young people will learn how create plans (and a Plan B) for a future that maximizes their successes and reflects their passions and skills.

Navigating the System Postcard

Young people will learn the skills necessary to access and navigate the resources they need to be safe and succeed.

Amachi Pittsburgh (2021-2022)

Amachi Pittsburgh Service Provider Engagement Campaign

Location: Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, PA

Amachi Pittsburgh hired MEE Productions in 2020 to use its multi-step, “by-and-for” campaign-development process to create the components for an engagement, education, and training campaign for Amachi Pittsburgh. The campaign’s goal is to recruit and train educators, pediatricians, and other primary healthcare service providers to act as protective factors for young people who have experienced stress, trauma, and stigma because of their parents’ incarceration. Amachi, a national program founded by former Philadelphia Mayor Wilson Goode, provides mentoring and services to children whose parents are incarcerated, and it currently operates over 200 mentoring programs in 48 states.

Pittsburgh educators and primary healthcare providers, who are a critically important safety net for the children they serve, will be urged to “step up” to meet the unique needs and challenges of affected children and youth who have incarcerated parents. The campaign seeks to train providers how to be mindful, present, empathetic, and non-judgmental when interacting with these youth. Instead of viewing young people, whose parents are incarcerated, through a prism of negative stereotypes or misconceptions, educators and healthcare professionals must see these young people through a positive light and encourage them to succeed regardless of the challenges they may face.

MEE businesses engaged in the project included:

- Audience research
- Campaign development (message/media development)
- Video production/graphic design/significant social media posts/videos

In 2021, MEE completed its proprietary Point B (desired outcome) process and outlined a culturally specific Communications Plan that reaches pediatricians and local educators at the touchpoints through which they engage with youth. MEE will develop video-training modules for providers, educators, and pediatricians.



The modules will cover key topics, such as:

- Overview and Understanding Youth of Incarcerated Parents
- Effective Provider-Youth Communications
- How Providers Can Be a “Protective Factor” and Build Resilience in Youth of Incarcerated Parents

The Amachi Pittsburgh campaign to engage service providers fell under MEE Productions’ new direction of focusing on protective factors instead of risk factors. Focusing on protective factors can provide young people with the skills they need to overcome the challenges they face. MEE’s tested and honed models and methodology that undergird its behavioral health interventions will be brought to bear in developing a campaign for Amachi Pittsburgh.



Montgomery County, Maryland's Collaborating Council (2021)

Reducing the Denial of Opioid Overdose in Montgomery County

Location: Montgomery County, MD

MEE Productions was hired by the Montgomery County (MD) Collaborating Council (part of the Health Department) in 2021 to develop messaging and educational materials to help publicize the opioid crisis in Montgomery County, one of Maryland's most affluent counties. The materials, which targeted Montgomery County's adult residents with middle-to-high socioeconomic status, also targeted the County's mainstream civic, social, and business organizations.

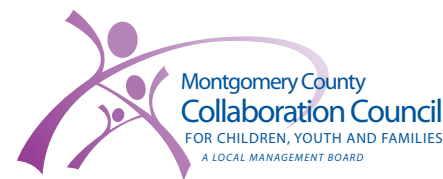
To create these campaign resources, MEE first completed its proprietary Point B (desired outcome) process with Collaborating Council leadership and partners. The results of this exercise indicated that Montgomery County residents needed to become more aware of the magnitude of opioid overdoses and overdose deaths in the County and to learn where they could access available treatment and prevention resources and programs via the County's Department of Health and Human Services. Messaging themes uncovered in the Point B discussions to reduce the denial among many of its residents included:

- It's Happening Right Here!! We are experiencing overdoses and deaths much more than we think.
- We have a problem that's being overlooked here in Montgomery County, and we've got to come out of denial and take control before it gets worse.
- The opioid epidemic is not just heroin abuse; it's also misuse of prescription pills for injury and pain.

The campaign's slogan was "Understand the Facts - Know the Risks - Protect Your Family." MEE created a one-page resource flyer that Collaborating Council partners and treatment providers can print and distribute at health fairs and community events; and a print-ready, digital infographic (for in-person or virtual presentations).

Differentiating this campaign from MEE's usual work in underserved and marginalized communities, MEE's messages were framed to reach a population from a higher socioeconomic status. The resource materials helped Montgomery County residents from middle-to-high- socioeconomic status realize that the opioid crisis, which is often framed by the media as a low-income, inner-city, people-of-color issue, is actually happening in their families, neighborhoods and

communities. The materials dealt with the reality that the opioid epidemic, which was initially started by over-prescription of prescription pills primarily to wealthy white people, is taking place in suburban and rural communities throughout the country.



The International Handbook of Black Community Mental Health (2020 - 2021)

Moving Young Black Men Beyond Survival Mode

Location: International

In his decades of work as a pioneering thought leader in Black psychology, Dr. Joseph White consistently talked about the many challenges young Black men face in our society. "If you grow up in certain neighborhoods, the question is not whether you're going to feel stress, it's how are you going to handle it"

Dr. Joseph L. White, PhD - 1932 - 2017



MEE President Ivan J. Juzang was invited to be one of the contributing authors to *The International Handbook of Black Community Mental Health*, sharing his insights gained in more than 30 years of developing behavioral- and population-health interventions in some of America's hardest-hit communities. The Handbook brings together the work of researchers and practitioners from the UK, Europe and US to explore the personal, lived experiences of people of color in the mental health system. Crucially, contributors go on to not only outline and make policy recommendations but have also developed practical exercises/activities and new technologies that can help to address the problems of both Black mental health professionals and service users.

Juzang was invited to join the book's esteemed group of researchers and practitioners by one of his most esteemed mentors, the late Dr. Joseph White. Now, he humbly considers his writings as a way to carry on the legacy of deep thought by Dr. White and others in support of Black resilience and thriving. While knowing that major systems reform is called for, he also believes that the day-to-day challenges young Black men face require urgent action, using a strength-based, proactive approach.

Juzang's chapter illuminates how systemic racism, poverty and other social determinants of health (disparities) create a unique brand of urban trauma that "builds in failure" for low-income Black males as they experience the nightmare called the American Dream. Determined to act rather than merely re-act, Mr. Juzang focuses "upstream" in his work, building unique primary prevention strategies and protective-factor infusion techniques.

In his chapter in this timely handbook, he explains how an abundance of protective factors in a young man's life can "inoculate" him against the stressors and trauma he will inevitably face, while arming him with the coping skills needed to thrive, even in the face of repeated exposure to extreme poverty, systematic racism, violence in the home or community, poor public education and housing conditions and other adverse childhood experiences. Juzang argues that a strength-based approach is "required" to support young Black men in their growth and personal development (knowing the challenges they are going to have to face)

Within urban America festers its own unique brand of trauma. Juzang argues that, while the social determinants of health seem to have set young Black men up for failure, a protective-factors approach is one of the most cost-effective ways to counter the risk factors (and health disparities) that put them in survival mode. He also explores why and how some young Black men are not only surviving but are actually thriving in these hostile environments. These "thrivers" are living in the same neighborhoods and exposed to the same social determinants as their peers, but are making different choices, ones that lead to much healthier mental health outcomes. What can we learn from these differences?

If these young Black men are thriving without formal interventions, Juzang wondered, how much better could things be if we developed, implemented and evaluated a protective-factors population health intervention for BMOC? Even nearly two decades ago, former Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher recognized protective factors as a way to cope with stress and trauma, in a groundbreaking 2001 CDC Youth Violence Report. However, the funding, policy emphasis or the will has been missing to effectively implement such an approach at scale in low-income urban communities - and then measure its impact.

Even beyond preventing mental illness and helping individuals heal and recover faster when trauma does occur, a protective-factors intervention can provide numerous positive gains, addressing a myriad of health disparities in the Black community. In addition, it can infuse skills directly into young Black men by providing capacity-building to the organizations rooted in their communities that they trust - like mentoring programs, faith-based institutions and trauma-informed community-based service providers.

Juzang argues that it's time to focus on real solutions to the mental health challenges America has helped to create among our young Black men. His chapter makes the case that protective-factor interventions should be studied and evaluated. It also raises the bioethical question—why potential “population health” interventions that can provide better outcomes in a cost-effective, culturally-relevant way are not being funded by CDC and NIH. Conducting large-scale protective-factors interventions will provide the research and evidence base necessary to scale up “what works” in order to help low-income youth of color survive and thrive.



[Click Image Above to Purchase
The International Handbook of Black Community Mental Health](#)

University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing (2021)

Measuring the Effectiveness of Safe Sex Messages Targeting African-American Teens

Location: Philadelphia, PA

In 2021, MEE built on a previous 2006-2008 academic partnership with researchers from the University of Pennsylvania and others to expand upon Project iMPPACS, an award-winning, media-delivered sexual health campaign targeting low-income African American teens in four mid-sized cities. Principal Investigator Steven Meanley from University of Pennsylvania's School of Nursing engaged MEE to build upon prior implementation successes of iMPPACS by adapting and implementing an updated digital (social media) version targeting African-American teens (15 to 19 years) in Philadelphia.

Recent surveillance ranked Philadelphia as having the third-highest sexually transmitted infections rate among urban areas in the United States. Given the strong association between adolescent STI diagnoses and subsequent HIV infection, African-American teens remain a local high-priority group for Ending the HIV Epidemic initiatives that are culturally-responsive to minimizing HIV risk factors and long-term HIV vulnerability. And, of course, disparities in HIV/STI infections are more pronounced among those living in low-income neighborhoods.

The original National Institutes of Mental Health-supported sexual health campaign resulted in several awards for the media MEE developed. iMPPACS exhibited large, sustained effects on condom use and sexual health empowerment indicators (e.g., self-efficacy to reject condom-less sex) among intervention-exposed participants. These positive findings were largely attributed to the intervention's prioritized attention to culturally-sensitive media delivery and campaign messaging (e.g., offering counter-narratives that empowered against negative beliefs about condoms).

Nevertheless, the evaluation team observed that higher levels of HIV-related stigma (i.e., toward persons living with HIV) attenuated the impact of media exposure on HIV testing and knowledge accuracy. In fact, preliminary findings from recent Dr. Steven Meanley research indicated that such stigma remains high in Philadelphia young adult African Americans.

For the new project, MEE is working alongside an interdisciplinary, multisectoral partnership that includes the lead researchers at UPenn's School of Nursing; iMPPACS co-developer, Dr. Dan Romer (UPenn's Annenberg School of Communications); and HIV/implementation science experts from the Penn

Mental Health and AIDS Research Center, the AIDS Activities Coordinating Office (AACO) at the Philadelphia Department of Public Health; and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). Together, the team is preparing iMPPACS messaging for implementation, this time using social-media platforms commonly frequented by the target population in Philadelphia. In Year 1, MEE is updating a subset of existing ads and creating four to five new ads to address HIV stigma, introduce PrEP and promote sex-positive condom use. Year 1 also includes updating the project branding, audience testing the messaging content and developing final scripts/storyboards of the ads based on the feedback.

In Year 2, (2022-2023) MEE will produce the ads and create a three-month social-media placement schedule targeting low-income Black teens (15 to 19 years old) in Philadelphia. A preliminary evaluation will be conducted on the effectiveness of the social media messaging.



MEE Training Portal (2021)

Trauma-Informed Wellness Communications Trainings Targeting Low-Income Communities of Color

Location: Nationwide

This past year it became increasingly apparent that more and more community-based organizations and governmental agencies needed technical assistance and/or training on the most effective and culturally-relevant ways to reach and influence communities that are often overlooked, underserved and marginalized on a variety of public health topics.

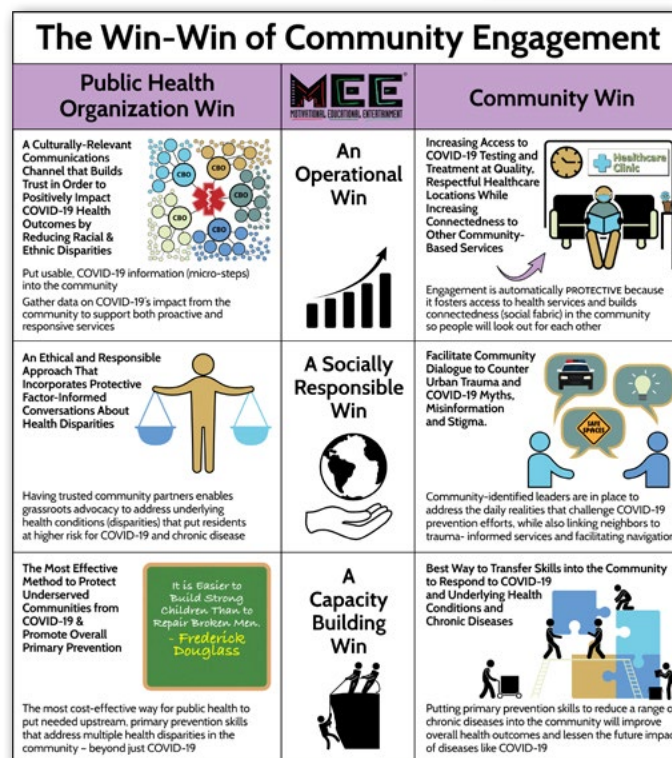
MEE's Community Engagement Trainings provide participants with a deeper understanding of the importance of community mobilization and how community engagement strategies create wins for both the community and their organizations. That "win-win" is what leads to stronger, more vibrant and resilient communities.

To help facilitate the delivery of MEE's trainings (both in-person and virtual), we developed the MEE Training Portal. The Training Portal allows MEE to guide participants through the training process and enables MEE to provide attendees with a myriad of resources they can use in their work moving forward.

In 2021, MEE provided technical assistance and training for the following organizations and conferences:

- Allegheny County Health Department
- Delaware Prevention Leaders Training Series
- Louisiana Department of Health
- Louisiana Public Health Institute
- Louisiana SPX Rx Prevention Leaders Training Series
- Pennsylvania Prevention Conference
- Prevention Technology Transfer Center
- Road Trip Nation
- Society for Prevention Research
- Virginia Department of Behavioral Health

MEETrainingPortal.com



Media Samples

Louisiana Public Health Institute (See Page 4)

Reducing Tobacco Use in African-American Communities in Louisiana

Allegheny County Health Department (See Page 17)

Awareness and Education Campaign for COVID-19 Safety

[Click Image Above to View the Videos](#)

[Click Image Above to View the Ads](#)

[Click Image Above to View the Videos](#)

[Click Image Above to View the Toolkit](#)

[Click Image Above to View the Toolkit Components](#)

...Media Samples *(Continued)*

Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (See Page 20)

Philly 4 Life - Youth Violence Intervention

[Click Image\(s\) Above to Watch the Video](#)

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In 2022  Launches

VENTURE OFF THE GRID

Trips to the Eastern Cape of South Africa