

ROOTS COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER
PROUDLY PRESENTS

WELL ROOTED



STORIES AND PERSPECTIVES
DETAILING THE JOYS, CHALLENGES,
AND CONSIDERATIONS WHEN HEALING
OUR COMMUNITY FROM WITHIN.

JUNE 30, 2021

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation
helps build and strengthen the community by
bringing together people and organizations who
want to strengthen the common good.

We commend Roots Community Health Center
for undertaking the mission to heal our
Bay Area community from within.



A MESSAGE FROM ROOTS' CEO AND CO-FOUNDER



Greetings,

Whether you have been a champion of Roots Community Health Center since our inception in 2008, or are a newer member of Roots' extended family, thank you for your interest in our work to uplift those impacted by systemic inequities and poverty.

These past 15 months – the COVID times – have been a time of extraordinary challenge, locally and globally. Too many of us have lost family, livelihoods and stability, and freedoms we once took for granted. I am incredibly proud of the Roots team for rallying together to protect one another and to meet the needs of our community with care and compassion. I am also humbled to be part of a network of powerful organizations, bright thinkers, and generous supporters who have come together to respond to emerging community needs.

It is no accident that when COVID hit and the world shut down, Roots doubled down. Roots stepped up, stayed open and served our community without missing a beat. Our mission required no less. Roots established the East Bay's first walk-up free COVID testing site. Overnight we converted our Clean360 social enterprise from a soap making factory into a major local producer of hand-sanitizer. We quickly began producing weekly online People's Health Briefings that distill in plain language our best knowledge about how to stay safe and keep others safe during a deadly and changing pandemic.

And Roots never looked back. While we designed and implemented whole new COVID-response services, we continued to operate, even expand, our other community-rooted programs. Those programs span primary care from infant to seniors; behavioral health care for anyone who needs it; job training and placement; nutrition support for

individuals and families in need of food; street outreach, physician care and social services connections for our unsheltered brothers and sisters (STOMP); navigation services for persons re-entering our community, Roots' Dream Youth Clinics . . . and more.

We believe that the roots of wellness are found in each of us; in our homes, schools, community centers and workplaces; in our front yards, backyards, streets and vacant lots. Roots cultivates these roots – through love, compassion, and our commitment to refashion and rebuild community in the pursuit of Whole Health.

A prerequisite of that pursuit is documenting where we are and where we are going. Roots documents. We document the well-being and needs of our members, beginning at birth. We document the resources of our neighborhoods, and we document the social determinants of health that impact the Roots community. And we document our methodologies, our innovation and our results.

Here we document some of the challenges we have faced and some of the work we have undertaken during a deadly pandemic that has upheaved so many, and which continues to morph weekly. Here are some of the stories, visuals, and photographs that I believe illustrate the passion, compassion and creativity with which Roots staff have pursued Roots' already difficult mission under historically difficult circumstances.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Noha Aboelata'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Noha Aboelata, MD, CEO



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She's Right.

the mask stays on, even when checking on mom.





I AM HERE TODAY TO TRY AND GET A HOUSING APPLICATION. EVERYONE HERE HAS BEEN VERY HELPFUL AND THEY DON'T MAKE ME WAIT LONG. I FIRST LEARNED ABOUT ROOTS THROUGH A FRIEND WHO TOLD ME TO GET HELP.



HEALTHCARE DOESN'T MATTER WHEN YOU'RE STARVING

BY FADY SHANOW

IN THE RELATIVELY AFFLUENT BAY AREA, MANY ASSUME THAT HEALTH STARTS AND ENDS AT THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE. TO THOSE FINDING THEMSELVES ON THE MARGINS, THIS IS NOT THE CASE.

The experience of homelessness or starvation is unfamiliar to many of us. We throw around these words in casual conversation, expressing small bouts of hunger or during moments where we were forced to couch surf with a friend for a few days, without understanding the true gravity of those circumstances. We forget that shelter and sustenance are basic needs to human survival; without them our mode of operating drastically shifts and our humanity suffers.

When crafting solutions to poor health outcomes, many think that increasing access to healthcare is the solution, failing to recognize that many of our poorest community members can access healthcare, they just don't. And I do not blame them. When you're deciding between a doctor's visit and the possibility of your next meal - you will choose the meal. For many mothers in difficult financial situations their health takes a backseat while juggling work and childcare. With finite resources, you calculate every investment, and health is often too expensive to maintain.

We forget that caring for your health requires time, commitment, and financial investment, even if the services and medication themselves are free. For a community member experiencing homelessness, poor health is a direct consequence of a lack of stable housing. When a patient is diagnosed with diabetes, it is easy to recommend a healthy diet, but it is difficult to provide them with the financial resources to secure that diet. Even if they were given this assistance, they would still be experiencing food apartheid - living in a community that has been starved of healthy foods and injected with processed junk.

To effectively meet the needs of community members, we must adopt a "Whole Health" approach. This means developing integrated, multidisciplinary solutions to health. It means that dealing with a patient's hypertension means providing him with legal assistance, stable employment, food aid, and mental health counseling while prescribing him with medication. It means looking beyond symptom management and moving into addressing the root causes of illness.

At Roots Community Health Center, we adopt a 360° approach to healthcare. You'll find our patients may visit us with a desire to treat their asthma, yet leave with a job at our workforce enterprise. We understand that our intentional process of identifying and eliminating all barriers to good health saves lives. It forces our organization to invest in fields that are unfamiliar to most healthcare organizations (have you ever heard of a community health clinic owning a sign making shop?), yet the proof is in shifted health and life trajectories. If all healthcare practitioners broadened their perspectives on the true definition of good health - we would see more organizations experimenting with innovative solutions to complex problems.

So, if you saw our organization installing a ballot box outside our site last year and thought we should just focus on caring for our community - we are. If you saw us advocating to declare gun violence a public health crisis and thought that should be left to someone else - it shouldn't. We simply understand that to best heal our community from within, we must address the root causes of suffering, advocate for systems to change, and empower the communities we serve in new and evolving ways.



**“ I COME HERE
BECAUSE
ROOTS ALWAYS
PROVIDES ME
WITH GOOD
INFORMATION
ON HOW TO
GET BACK ON
MY FEET. ”**

**“ROOTS HAS PROVIDED
ME WITH FREE FOOD
THAT WE NEED AT
HOME.**

**I COME HERE
BECAUSE I AM CLOSE
BY IN THE
NEIGHBORHOOD.**

**THE FREE FRUITS AND
VEGETABLES REALLY
HELP WHEN WE WANT
TO COOK A HOT MEAL
WITH MY KIDS.**

”





**“ I LOVE ALL THE
VEGETABLES THAT
THEY HAVE HERE
AND I ENJOY ALL
KINDS OF FOOD
GIVEN HERE.**

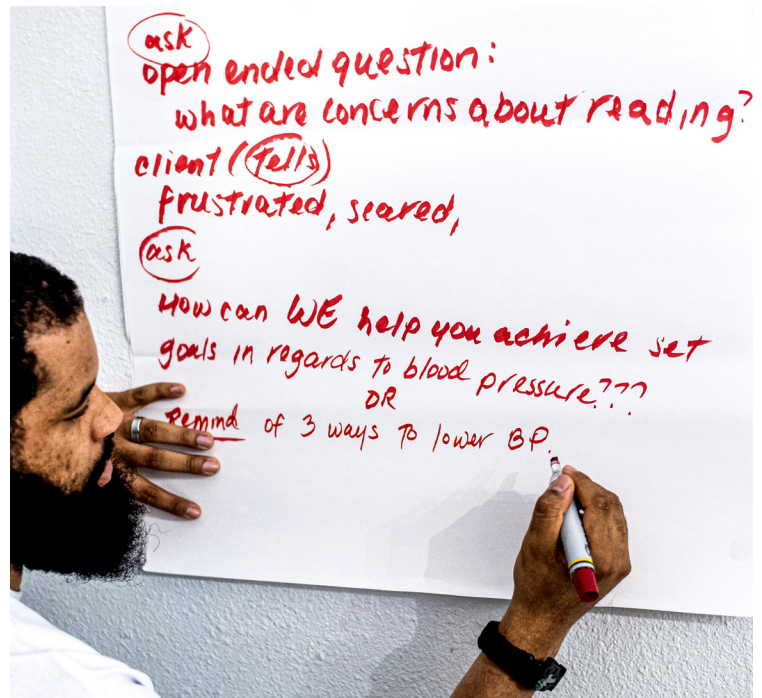
**ROOTS HAS BEEN
HERE TO SUPPORT
ME AND HELP GIVE
ME RESOURCES
FOR MY SON
GETTING OUT OF
PRISON. ”**



A CUT THAT HEALS

A CUT THAT HEALS BY MELVIN FAULK

Black men are disproportionately affected by hypertension and as a result suffer alarmingly high rates of both morbidity and mortality. In efforts to address this health disparity, the Cut Hypertension Program is a program that provides cardiovascular outreach and point of care within Black barbershops. Because the African American barbershop is a sacred space for Black men the community, where candid and vulnerable conversation often occurs, our program's founders believed injecting health into this equation would lead to better outcomes. As a result, he brought together a team of volunteers and health care professionals to help educate and treat men of color experiencing hypertension.



In addition to care, barbers train to become Certified Health Coaches. This allows them the opportunity to better serve the participants within the program, while also developing them as leaders and health ambassadors for their community.

While hypertension and cardiovascular care is still the primarily focus of the Cut Hypertension Program, we've expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide education and training in local barbershops on COVID-19 testing and vaccine. Currently, the Cut Hypertension Program has partnered with three Oakland Barbershops, Mr. Krispy's Barbershop, Cedric's Barbershop, and Benny Adem Grooming Parlour in efforts to help educate the public regarding COVID-19. These shops disseminate informational guides that provide instructions of where to access a local testing and vaccine site and hold group conversations pertaining the vaccine, all while providing a safe space for men of color to confide in one another during these challenging times.

The Cut Hypertension Program (CHP) is a program borne out of evidence that African American barbershops can be places of health prevention, community building, outreach, and treatment for African American men, a community affected by alarming health disparities in cardiovascular disease, cancer, HIV and mental illness. Dr. Kenji Taylor started CHP as a medical student at the University of Pennsylvania in 2010. Since 2010, it has expanded across the country from Atlanta to San Francisco, with the goal of disrupting alarming health trends in African American men.

A SNAPSHOT OF ROOTS' IMPACT IN 2020

15,930

CLINICAL VISITS

SUPPORTED AND NAVIGATED

987 RELEASED
PERSONS

IN SANTA RITA JAIL PARKING LOT

1,235
CLINICAL VISITS
REACHING

570

UNSHELTERED
INDIVIDUALS

6,188

food deliveries
to community members
in need.

5,091

NAVIGATION / COACHING VISITS

\$616,373

distributed to 261 clients
to prevent evictions and displacement.



THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN US, ABOUT USSM

Doctors, nurses and researchers talk about the COVID Vaccines

“This is a chance where we can level the playing field and make sure that we have equitable access to something that is really lifesaving.”

-Dr. Janice Blanchard

BLACK
COALITION
AGAINST COVID.ORG

WEO
COVIDSM

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN US, ABOUT US.SM

W. Kamau Bell talks with Black health care workers about the COVID vaccines



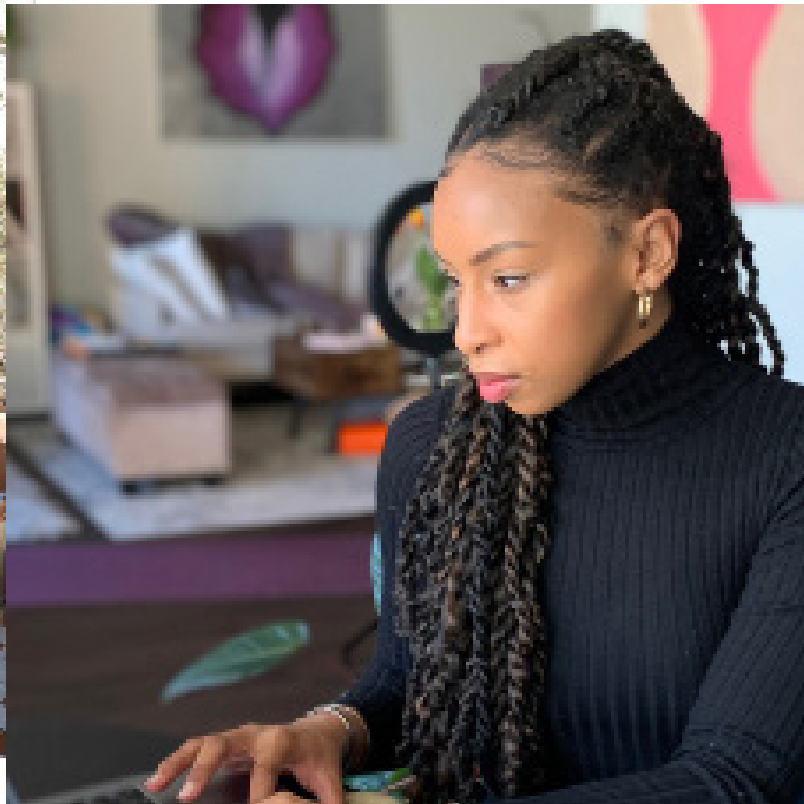
BLACK
COALITION
AGAINST COVID.ORG

WEO
COVIDSM



*Voices
& Faces*

**FROM THE
FRONTLINES
OF THE PANDEMIC**



During the COVID-19 Pandemic, working at Roots has completely changed. I have been working fully remote since March of 2020. As a workplace built on relationships and working together, this isolation really changed my experience at Roots. I found it more difficult at times to connect with the work and had fewer outlets to deal with the harder side of working in healthcare, but also found new ways to engage with projects and programs.

In 2020, I switched to a new position as Program Manager of Research, Evaluation, and Training. As a person passionate about advancing health equity and access for marginalized groups, this position gives me hope for the future and a renewed sense of fulfillment in my work. It gave me a change of pace and new opportunities for growth by managing our external partnerships, training programs, impact evaluation, and research engagement to benefit our client population. Overall, I'm really excited for the opportunity to learn and grow in this role, despite the challenges of doing so remotely

WORKING IN HEALTH CAN GET HEAVY, ESPECIALLY SEEING DEATH AND SUFFERING SO FREQUENTLY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

with less opportunity to engage with community members.

The pandemic itself has been really hard for me, as both of my parents work frontline healthcare jobs and my grandparents who live with them are consistently at risk.

I worry about them daily, as I do for our community members, but am grateful to work in public health and have the opportunity to directly address the many social and systemic determinants of health.

Self-care has been imperative for me. During the pandemic, I've turned to wellness practices to keep afloat. Working in health can get heavy, especially seeing death and suffering so frequently throughout the world due to COVID. Last year, in search of a healthy outlet, I completed a 200hr yoga instructor training so that I could deepen my own yoga practice and share the practice with others. I'm an advocate for integrating mental, physical, and spiritual health, so this practice has integrated into my work in

public health perfectly. I also find the outdoors and creativity helpful, so I commit myself to finding sunshine daily.



FUNDER
PROVIDER
ADVOCATE

BUILDING HEALTH EQUITY TOGETHER

We believe that everyone in our community should have the opportunity to be healthy. A person's income, race, immigration status, language, age, gender, or zip code should never act as a barrier to health.



Improving Health Through Food



Making Chronic Diseases More Preventable & Manageable



Prioritizing Health In Housing

Thank you, Roots Community Health Center, for being a partner in building health equity!

I've spent a greater portion of my life helping other people who look like me. COVID has compounded those impoverished and those who are in need. Me personally as a Black man living in North America, I go out of my way to help my people. Then COVID arrives...and I see COVID has compounded - doubled, tripled, quadrupled, the effects of poverty. There was already a lot of systemic nonsense going on, but now you can see it even more.

I'm still learning how to shed the struggle and sorrow that I ingest every day...and I'm very deliberate about that because I need to survive this thing. I need not take my trauma from the streets of me helping other human beings, home to my family. I sit there and make sure I have left whatever trauma I've picked up during the way in my

I'M STILL LEARNING HOW TO SHED THE STRUGGLE AND SORROW I INGEST EVERY DAY...

driveway. I leave it on my driveway, and pick it up the next morning...because when I wake up the next morning and leave my house, enter my car, and drive to work... there are our people under the freeway who require our assistance. There are men and women there shut out of the workforce who need our assistance to be able to feed themselves and take care of themselves. I believe in help-fare, not welfare. We should all lend a hand to our brothers and sisters, to take the help we're giving them and parlay it into a way of life.



ROOTS' COVID-19 IMPACT IN NUMBERS

38,000+

COVID-19 TESTS ADMINISTERED



BEGINNING IN EARLY
2021, ROOTS BEGAN
THE PROCESS OF
ADMINISTERING THE
VACCINE:
FIRST TO OUR
EMPLOYEES, THEN
TO THE COMMUNITY.

15,000+

COVID-19 VACCINES ADMINISTERED



Some of my greatest joys during this pandemic has been working on our programs. One is PEI (Prenatal Equity Initiative): we work with women before they are pregnant and in between pregnancies to build their health and wellness. We also created a program and named it WOW, Women of Wellness, to provide education, motivation, and support for Black women to achieve optimal health. Finally, we are also focused on Food is Medicine, another beautiful program where we emphasize the importance of proper nutrition in the prevention and combatting of illnesses.

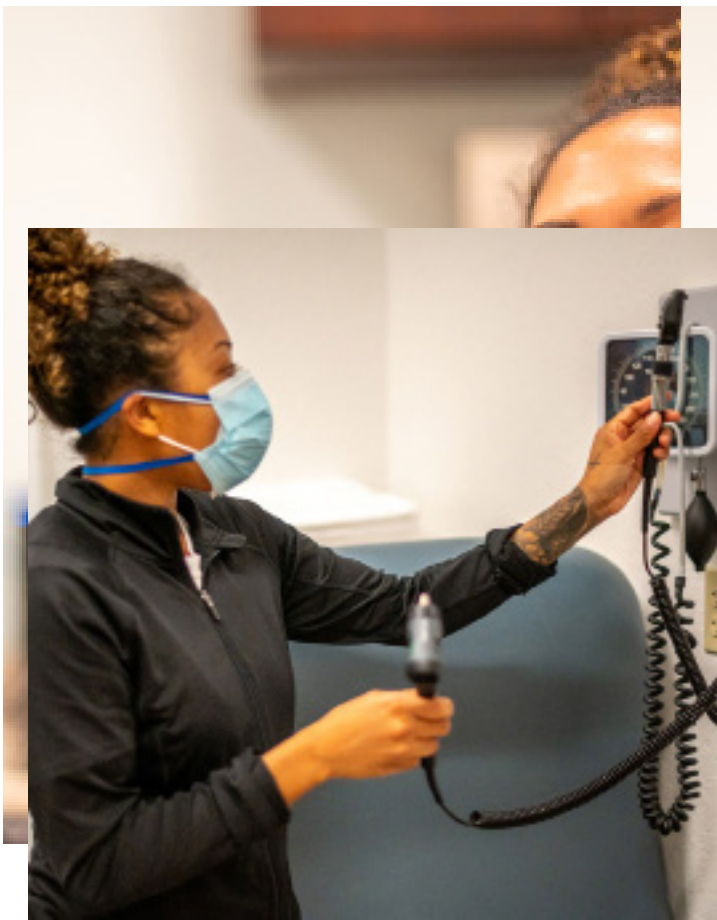
I got the vaccine because I was thinking of my husband and the people I come in contact with. I didn't want to put my loved ones at risk. There's so much misinformation going around with all of the things seen on social media and some of those stories of how the vaccine affected people. What helped me overcome those fears was doing my own research, through reputable sources.

As this pandemic as progressed, I've been trying to find myself, finding solace in church and prayer. Going through all of the emotions of this past year, all of the anxiety - I had to really pray.

My husband and I found a new church home and that helped. It was important for me to manage these feelings because I wanted to be an example and voice for my community. I wanted them to be a source of positivity and hope for them; helping them understand ways to overcome their fears.

I WANTED TO BE A SOURCE OF POSITIVITY AND HOPE FOR THEM; HELPING THEM UNDERSTAND WAYS TO OVERCOME THEIR FEARS.





I'm a humanitarian at heart. Servant-leadership is one of the greatest things I hold close to me. I've been working at non-profits for a long time. Mostly direct care. My last experience was in mental health. Right now what I really love doing is connecting our people to what they need.

A lot of patients have chronic conditions, some of them are homeless, some of them just don't have access to basic needs. That could be food, natural supports, or even access to communication - like having a cell-phone. The population I worked with before were those at risk youth. Youth in the foster system. But I also worked with families who were victims of domestic violence.

The commonalities of the families I worked with then and the families I work with now is that they still don't have their basic needs met. They don't have access to the resources; whether that's healthcare, financial resources, access to housing resources.

Some of the youth I worked with on the streets years ago are now adults experiencing homelessness who I treat:

their conditions haven't improved.

This system has countless disparities but we're here to provide that empowerment and support for them to have those basic needs and basic access that everyone deserves.

SOME OF THE YOUTH I WORKED WITH ON THE STREETS YEARS AGO ARE NOW THE ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS WHO I TREAT.





Healthcare is a human right.

We support **Roots Community Health Center**
in its **commitment** to make that right a reality.

**WORKING
PARTNERSHIPS
USA**



COVID hit me right away, and in a very definitive way. I moved back here from Chico, CA to be near my grandmother. I thought that was really important. I had a dream, and I really missed my grandmother and it made me want to come back here and be with her. .

Within three weeks of my return to the bay, my grandmother had a massive stroke and she was incapable of caring for herself. Had I not come to her house when I did... she probably would not have lived. And then, she went from there straight into rehab, and from there we went straight into a pandemic. So, for me, the consequences of a pandemic, and how it was affecting people's lives, and what might happen to someone was immediately apparent to me.

Because of the risk, I haven't seen my grandmother in

I HAVEN'T SEEN MY GRANDMOTHER IN A YEAR, DESPITE MOVING OUT HERE TO BE CLOSE TO HER.

a year, despite moving out here to be close to her. Talking to her over Facetime and Google Duo - all the technology she was adamantly against - is now the only way we can contact each other and be with each other.

Because of all of this, these are quiet times for me. These experiences, and the hope to connect in-person with my grandmother keep me focused on my job and our organization's goals of conquering this disease.







As a Health Navigator at Roots, I work with patients directly. I work with some of the most vulnerable people in the midst of this pandemic. A lot of our clients are high risk - many having chronic illnesses. Essentially, my job is to help make sure they are staying on top of their needs, navigating their healthcare, and finding ways to connect them to resources.

THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHERE OR HOW THEY COULD RECIEVE HELP, ESPECIALLY DURING THIS PANDEMIC.

I'm a person who works for the people. One of my core values is having compassion for others. My job here at Roots and our mission statement centers on impacting the lives of others. This navigator position gives us an opportunity to help others in a real way.

I see this impact daily. We have many new patients who enter our care hopeless and defeated by the system.

They didn't know where or how they could receive help, especially during this pandemic. After serving them, I often hear them say, 'thank you so much I don't know what I would do without you.'

These moments have disproven a major misconception when it comes to our community members and their health. Many believe they simply don't care about their health... but that's not it. They just experience very real and difficult barriers that prevent them from accessing healthcare.





Protect the TOWN

Roots Community Health Center

**9925 International Blvd
Oakland, CA 94603**

1:00PM - 4:30PM

FRIDAY JULY

30

Warriors player on-site
Signed basketball giveaway
Home game ticket giveaway
Warriors masks



COVID itself is quite scary. Going to work, I am immensely worried whether I'll bring it home to my family. It makes you fearful... living through this and thinking through it has been mentally and emotionally consuming.

BUT.. on the positive side, I feel immensely empowered by being able to help the folks that are most in need. I've been a part of the solution, providing COVID education to our youth, screening them for the illness, and supporting them through their concerns during this time. I don't feel helpless.

To help deal with some of those worries I described, I've invested in a whole lot of Netflix. I started watching *Girlfriends* for the first time, and it's given me the space to laugh, breathe, and unwind. At

**I FEEL IMMENSELY
EMPOWERED BY
BEING ABLE TO
HELP THE FOLKS
THAT ARE IN THE
MOST NEED.**

the start of the pandemic, I began a 60 day yoga practice with my family to help center me. Finding the time to disconnect, unwind, and practice mindfulness has been essential to maintaining a positive outlook despite the circumstances.





Santa Clara Family Health Plan™

Medi-Cal | Cal MediConnect



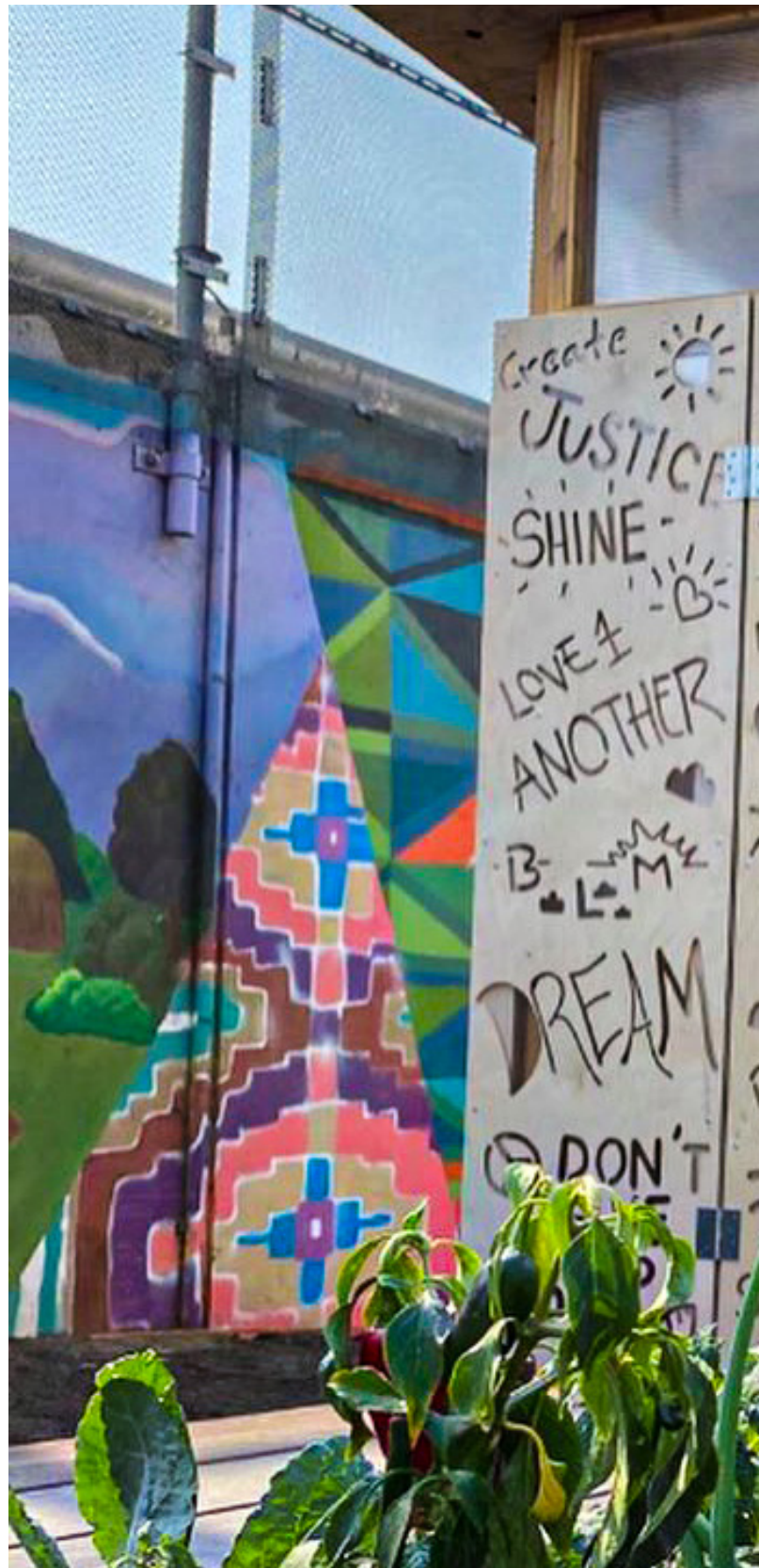
**We are proud to support
Roots Community Health
Center and its work to
advance health equity in
our communities.**

ROSES IN THE CONCRETE: THE GARDEN OF DREAMS

BY AISHA MAYS, MD

The Dream Youth Clinics of Roots Community Health Center are the youth-led, youth-engaged adolescent clinics located within the Dreamcatcher and Covenant House Youth Shelters in Oakland. Dream opened in 2017 and serves the most vulnerable youth of the Bay Area, including youth affected by homelessness, the juvenile justice system, the foster care system, and youth affected by sex trafficking. Dream provides adolescent medical and behavioral health care, health navigation, and youth support groups for young people ages 13-24 years old, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. Dream is a youth-empowered space, where young people are involved in the design of all of the clinic programming. At Dream, we believe that #healthiseverything so we infuse art, music, and all forms of creative expression into our clinic space and programs.

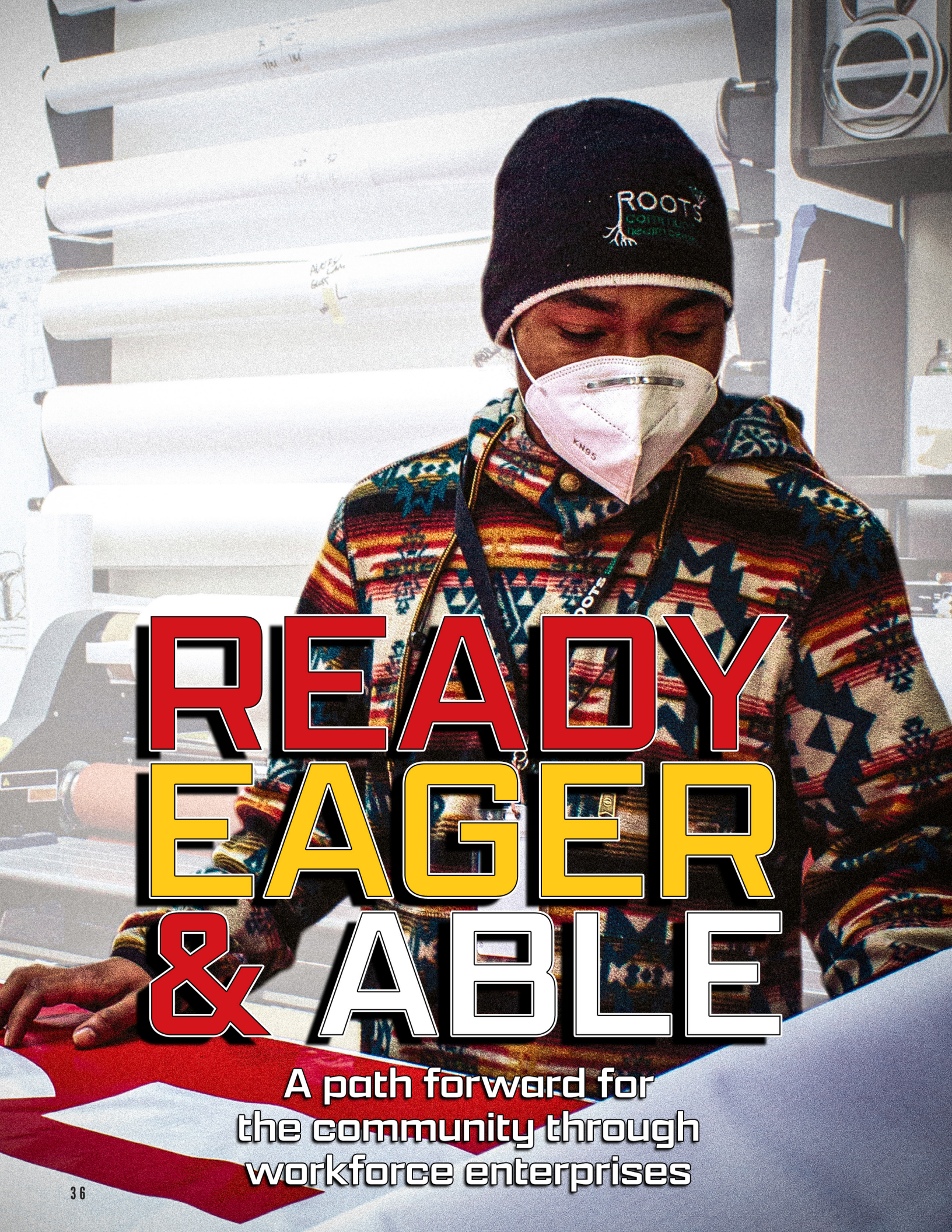
During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dream created its third youth-led space -- The Garden of Dreams. The Garden of Dreams is a youth-envisioned and youth-created community garden and outdoor clinic that we erected in the abandoned lot next door to one of our clinic sites. In the Garden of Dreams, our youth grow over 20 varieties of fruit and vegetables, learn about urban gardening and nutrition, harvest and cook the garden vegetables in the shelter through monthly cooking workshops, and build community with each other safely outdoors. The Garden of Dreams is a healing outdoor youth space -- a visible anchor of stability-- where young people can connect with Dream Clinic staff beyond the four walls of the traditional clinic setting.











READY EAGER & ABLE

A path forward for
the community through
workforce enterprises

PERSPECTIVE FROM AN EMANCIPATOR ALUM

BY BARRON BRADLEY

In 2014, I began work at Roots Community Health Center. At the time no other employer would hire me nor give me an opportunity to prove myself; I had been written off and rejected from work. When Roots extended me this opportunity, I was eager to learn, grow, and build a better future for myself. I first started in Roots' Soap Factory - Clean360 - with the title of "Emancipator". It was not only having secure employment that felt great. It felt amazing that I was producing quality products that positively impacted our community.

Eight years later, I've grown older, learned a whole lot, yet am still an official employee serving and helping my community to the best of my abilities. Despite beginning at the bottom, I've been able to rise up the ranks at Roots, and now sit as the Operation Manager for the organization.

In this role, I get the unique privilege of supporting and teaching the Emancipators, who I once was. It has been an absolute pleasure to be able to show and lead the young generation of our very own community in the exact way my elders at Roots did for me. This program provides opportunity with dignity, giving individuals a chance to earn their keep without begging or resorting to crime.

I am immensely thankful to Roots for their Workforce Development Program which indeed helped me and many others get back on our feet. I am eager to continue to guide our Emancipators towards stable, secure, and impactful work.



THIS PROGRAM PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY WITH DIGNITY, GIVING INDIVIDUALS A CHANCE TO EARN THEIR KEEP WITHOUT BEGGING OR RESORTING TO CRIME.

LUXURIOUS HANDMADE BATH & BODY PRODUCTS.



CLEAN360.ORG





THEY'VE TAUGHT ME THAT PART OF BEING A MAN IS MANAGING THE FEAR AND NOT LETTING YOU ACT IN A WAY THAT WILL RUIN YOUR LIFE AND THE LIFE OF OTHERS.

COVID really struck a nerve for me and held me down. With me just getting out of prison in late October of 2019, its really held me to a standard where I refuse to take the actions that would put me back in prison. The worries of COVID, and the slowness that came with it has forced me to get my life together, in an honest and positive route to get my life on track. It pushed me to be patient and see what's going on. With just being patient and honest with myself, and knowledge of organizations out there trying to help...

I found Roots and everything changed. Ever since then, Roots has kept me on a positive road and kept my anxiety down.

This disease has personally affected my family. My auntie had caught COVID, and fought the disease for two good, strong months. Just recently, we found out she passed. When we got that news... it was easy to lose all this progress and return to my old life. But like I said before, finding Roots and seeing men in this organization, speak their grief, carry their community's burdens, and create space to accept these sorrows helped keep me straight. They've taught me that part of being a man is managing the fear and not letting you act in a way that will ruin your life and the life of others.

ROOTS' TRAINING AND BUSINESS IMPACT

OUR TWO ENTERPRISES PROFITED AND REINVESTED

\$360,000

SINCE JANUARY 2019.

36

TRAINED AND GRADUATED
WORKFORCE APPRENTICES
THROUGH OUR PROGRAM IN 2020

TRAINING + EMPLOYING

54

HEALTH
NAVIGATORS

FROM OUR COMMUNITY,
WHO EACH SUPPORT
~40 CLIENTS



Empowering young health professionals

~75

health professionals
trained annually

Medical Assistants, Phlebotomists, RNs, Behavioral Providers,
Nurse Practitioners, Medical Students, Residents, and Fellows

Examples of our young health professionals



Yasmine Griffiths, Program Manager
Transitioning to Howard Medical School



Fady Shanow, Communications Coordinator
Current MPH Student at Boston University



Sarah Griffiths, Program Coordinator
Aspiring Physician



Melvin Faulks, Program Coordinator
Aspiring Physician


YOUR WORDS OUR SIGNS.

Hamilton Broadway
SIGNS




HAMILTONBROADWAYSIGNS.COM

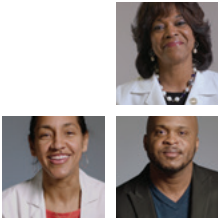
Got Questions About the COVID-19 vaccine?



Do I have to pay to get vaccinated?



How did we get a COVID vaccine so fast?



Why do we need a COVID vaccine?

Doctors, nurses and researchers provide facts and dispel misinformation in this new video series.



THE CONVERSATIONSM BetweenUsAboutUs.org

 WATCH NOW!



 SCAN ME