You support services that keep Rogers Park safe, community survey says

This past year, HACC conducted a community needs survey to inform program planning, support work with grants and reports, and advise future community needs assessments. Read more inside!

Community members said that the following would keep the neighborhood safe— and HACC services touch on all of these needs!

1. Increase living-wage jobs
2. Employment opportunities for youth
3. Increase access to health care and mental health care
4. Increase affordable housing options
5. Expand gang-prevention programs

Donate today! howardarea.org/donate

December 1st was World AIDS Day!

HACC’s services put people on the path to preventing infection and living safely after being diagnosed.

Who is most impacted?

Anyone is vulnerable to contracting HIV/AIDS, but in Chicago Black and Latino/a communities have the highest rates of infection.


The majority of people of color in Chicago live in marginalized neighborhoods, which can mean: subpar resources for sexual education, and lack of access to disease-preventing contraception, regular STD testing and doctor’s appointments, safe housing, and domestic violence aid.

Stigma kills.

The stigma attached to HIV/AIDS creates a multitude of obstacles to receiving treatment and healthcare. HACC tackles stigma through intensive prevention outreach to vulnerable populations and free to low-cost dental care for individuals with HIV/AIDS. Most dentists do not treat HIV/AIDS patients. HACC is one of five clinics on Chicago’s north side that serves this population.

I am like a tree planted by the rivers of water that
Because when someone is tired they
can rest under me
And I always be there for anybody
And my leaf never withers, it is always green.

- Rita
HACC Adult Education student

Published in the 2017 Howard Line, a Howard Area Community Center student publication.
I found a home for my children and work after my addiction

“Nobody would believe this story.”

When she went to stay with her daughter last year, she was served an ultimatum. “If you don’t get sober,” her daughter said. “I found a home for my children and work after my addiction. Not that my life would be turned around in 7 months! Nobody would believe this story.” Tammie said.

With HACC’s aid, Tammie was able to move into an Evanston apartment with her three children and rebuild their relationship. Once she had stable housing, she was able to focus on pursuing her career goal—becoming a bus driver for the CTA. She worked extra hours to earn certifications and a Commercial Drivers License while at her CTA internship.

This December, Tammie interviewed for a full-time position as a bus operator with the CTA. She worked extra hours to earn certifications and a Commercial Drivers License while at her CTA internship.

“Their [other students] had parents who had jobs lined up for them by graduation. For us, the low-income, we had to build our resumes, and work, and make the connections, and get hired...You can get into college, but staying in college is a whole different game,” she said.

Unfortunately, most Scholars still have to work part or full-time to support themselves and their families. In response, the HACC Youth Center provides emotional support, tutoring, and workshops on budgeting, time management and applying for Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Ayesha said when she attended Grinnell as a Scholar, she needed all of the support that she could get. It felt hard to fit in surrounded by wealthy and/or white students who might not understand her struggles. In a 2017 article in The Atlantic, a report stated that 95 percent of colleges are unaffordable for middle class and low-income students (who are typically students of color, like a majority of the Scholars).

Ayesha is also enthusiastic about guiding the Scholars and seeing them accomplish their dreams through the Promise Scholarship. “It’s humanizing. They’re not a number, they are actual students who struggle,” she said.

Safa is extremely motivated. She graduates in 2019 and is looking forward to a stable and exciting career in computer science. “I love it, it’s really fun, I just love how technology continues to grow and I’d like to be a part of that,” she said.

You can get into college, but staying in college is a different game

Promise Scholarship helps HACC’s low-income and immigrant youth with higher ed

The Promise Scholarship, funded by and in partnership with the incredible Caerus Foundation, provides financial support for higher education for low-income youth in HACC programs. The scholarship essentially covers tuition –$40,000 for a four-year college and $20,000 for a two-year college.

But in addition to the funding, Promise Scholars have the crucial support of a HACC mentor to support them. And that’s Ayesha Mirzakhail, Ayesha, HACC’s Scholarship Manager and Job Developer, manages 16 active Scholars. “I asked Scholars ‘Are you getting support?’ and they said not from family because they don’t understand the process. So we serve as mentors,” said Ayesha. A former Promise Scholar herself, she graduated from Grinnell in 2013.

Like Ayesha, whose family is from Afghanistan, about half of the Scholars are from immigrant households. Many are the first in their family to attend college, like Safa, 21, a current Scholar in her junior year at Truman College in Chicago. She comes from a Pakistani immigrant family.

“My parents struggled so much to pay rent and pay bills, so there is no way they could have paid for my college. So this money and financial aid is the only way that I can go to school and focus on my grades and not working and freaking out about loans,” Safa said. She also said this helps her maintain her mental health and balance her life.

Congratulations Tammie!