



Washington, DC

▲ Community Example from Chapter 1 of "Lessons for Leaders:"
Lessons in Community Capacity Building

Community Background

When Washington, DC, became a *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* (HKHC) grantee, the partnership knew it had to work together. Wards 7 and 8 had rates of childhood overweight and obesity among the highest in the nation. The equally high rates of poverty, crime and illegal drug use degraded the condition of neighborhoods and deterred residents' use of the parks and other green space. Additionally, residents had few healthy food options.

Led by the Summit Health Institute for Research and Education, Inc. (SHIRE), the partnership aimed to change some of those statistics. SHIRE, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of health and wellness for all people, works to eradicate health disparities and aid vulnerable populations. Therefore, the organization's mission and core values compelled it to share resources with its partners and advocates.

Community Action

As Executive Director of SHIRE, Ruth Perot made sure to include organizations and agencies well matched to the work. She collaborated with partners to identify specific roles they would play and developed contracts to ensure appropriate resources for their work. D.C. Hunger Solutions, for example, took the lead in pushing for federal funding for after-school meals. As a result, DC Public Schools have since been serving after-school meals to more than 9,200 children weekly.

In another example, with a contract through HKHC, Groundwork Anacostia River DC (Groundwork) advocated with SHIRE for policies to improve DC parks. With Groundwork's leadership, the Department of Parks and Recreation allocated funding for a Division of Small Parks and Policy to support a Park Rangers pilot program, a hopeful precursor to a parks ambassador program, employing neighborhood residents to supervise, maintain and promote the use of parks.

In addition to funding their partners, SHIRE also provided opportunities for learning and leadership. The partnership sent various partners to HKHC grantee meetings designed for professional development and networking. In some years, partners presented their experiences as workshop speakers. SHIRE also hosted site visits from funders and legislators, helping local leaders and partners to build these important relationships.

Furthermore, SHIRE organized a local conference on building community engagement in underserved neighborhoods. It was an interactive forum where residents of the community, including Ward 7 and 8, served as presenters and expert panelists. SHIRE provided scholarships to Ward 7 and Ward 8 residents to enable their attendance. The conference provided an excellent opportunity for learning about obesity-related issues as well as leadership development. HKHC partners played an active role in sharing information about the policy issues they addressed.