



## COMMUNITY GRANT OUTCOME REPORT

# Developing a Men's Wellness Network to Reduce Health Disparities

African American men in Milwaukee's Lindsay Heights neighborhood benefit from a place to make social connections and to negotiate life stressors.

► **Description:** The **Developing a Men's Wellness Network to Improve Community Health Outcomes** team addressed a significant need to improve the health of African American men by engaging them in the leadership of physical, social and health promotion activities in Milwaukee's Lindsay Heights neighborhood.

► **Relevance:** African American men in Milwaukee suffer high disparities in health, including the highest mortality rates in the country, yet they are underrepresented in health research and health promotion programs.

► **Partnerships:** Walnut Way, Inc. and its partners at the Center for Urban Population Health, UW-Milwaukee Zilber School of Public Health and the YMCA Northside launched the Lindsay Heights Men's Wellness Council in 2011. The council was designed as a venue for African American men to explore the meaning of health, critical determinants of health and areas of action in their community.



Members of a men's wellness group in Milwaukee participated in a panel discussion at the community premiere of their documentary film, *No Longer An Island*.

► **Results:** For 18 months, a small group of African American men met monthly to discuss issues of health and wellness. Though the project initially focused on physical activity in men, council members quickly discovered that a more holistic approach was needed to focus on emotional, mental and financial well-being. Discussions brought to light the tremendous isolation and pressure African American fathers and men experience, leading to their self-definition as "an island of one." Members found that the council meetings provided the critical space needed to make social connections, negotiate life stressors and learn from experiences of other men. Based on these findings, key recommendations and an action plan were submitted to the Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families, which led to implementation funding.

The council's efforts resulted in a documentary film, *No Longer An Island*. The film was intended to inform local and national audiences interested in developing health promotion programs tailored to African American men. The project team has presented its findings at several conferences and plans to submit the film to the American Public Health Association film festival and develop a journal manuscript for submission in 2012.

### DEVELOPING A MEN'S WELLNESS NETWORK TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY HEALTH OUTCOMES

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**Award:** \$50,000 over one year and seven months