

Empowering Our Community with Good Health: The Mustard Seed Story

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Gloria was worried about her blood pressure but with no insurance she didn't know where to turn. Her neighbor said, "Go to Mustard Seed Community Health" just 3 blocks from her apartment. Dr. Mulberry listened to her and explained the benefits of nutrition and physical activity so now Gloria's blood pressure is manageable.

The vision of quality health care grew like a tiny mustard seed from a volunteer clinic into a community health center in the Cottage Grove neighborhood in southeast Greensboro. At Mustard Seed, people find respect and compassion in their struggles with chronic illness, poverty,

~~Community Engagement and Learning Exchange. Despite the challenge of changing diet and physical activity, 81% of hypertension patients and 67% of diabetic patients are managing their diseases with Mustard Seed support. BCBSNC Foundation chose Mustard Seed's partnership with Cottage Grove Neighborhood Association, New Hope Community Development Group, and Greensboro Housing Coalition for one of three Community-Centered Health grants in the state to develop models for clinical-community collaboration for "upstream" health: changing the environment that makes people sick, transforming health from excellent medical treatment for serious illness to promoting wellness. **Mustard Seed's impact extends far beyond the clinic walls.**~~

As a **medical home** for vulnerable patients—many of whom have limited English proficiency and are without insurance—Mustard Seed Community Health serves as their provider of primary and preventive care and their advocate to connect with dental and medical specialties and non-medical services that enhance wellness. The team coordinates comprehensive patient-centered services for management of chronic illnesses and preventive health.

The **Health Outreach Team** links Cottage Grove neighborhood residents, interns in social work, nursing, and public health with Mustard Seed's

clinical services. Community Health Workers from the neighborhood build trust to open the doors for interns to learn cultural sensitivity and neighbors to try new ways to wellness.

Collaborative Cottage Grove partnerships build the capacity of neighborhood residents to promote a **healthy environment**: access to nutritious food, safe places to walk and play, housing repairs, preparation for employment and entrepreneurship.

This Collaboration in Cottage Grove, in turn, is **transformational**, serving as the health impact community “laboratory” with the city-wide

InvestHealth initiative to align housing rehabilitation with health for system changes: hospital data-sharing for mapping and measuring impact, investment in purchase and rehabilitation of severely substandard housing, workforce development to do remediation of asthma triggers. InvestHealth, in turn, links with **Housing Our Community** to incorporate health impact into the ambitious plan for expanding opportunities for safe affordable housing. The **community engagement** in Cottage Grove gets national attention as a model for transforming health through shared leadership with community residents’ voices essential for achieving health outcomes.

Mustard Seed Community Health is the answer to Cottage Grove residents’ number one priority: medical care in the neighborhood. Because patients without insurance pay a sliding scale fee, patient receipts provide less than 10% of the cost of medical care. As a nonprofit organization, Mustard Seed relies on donations and grants to cover the rest of those expenses—which are much less than the financial and social costs of calling 911 with a stroke or diabetic coma or other medical crisis that could be prevented by quality primary care.

Keeping people well, with fresh food, with safe places to walk and play and live, with community empowerment: that is the health care we can all support.