

Saint Paul Promise

NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTS



FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



Dear families,

I am honored to partner with you in making our schools, neighborhood, and community great places for our children to grow. At SPPN, we are committed to families strengthening themselves through building community and

kinship networks.

Kinship networks are the people we turn to in different situations. They are our close ties: the people who support us and who we count on during times of celebration or hardship. When we don't have people around us, we often feel alone and isolated. This winter break, I'm committed to strengthening my kinship network. Here are some actions I plan to take, and I invite you to adopt as well:

- Identify my strengths and where I need support
- Seek guidance from the elders in my family or neighborhood
- Surround my child with caring adults, both family and friends

- Teach my child small ways to get and give support, such as asking for advice when he needs it
- Invite over or visit family and friends who I've lost contact with

In this issue, we spotlight SPPN partner the Cultural Wellness Center, which shares more about how developing kinship networks is a powerful way to improve lives. Read more on page 6.

I wish you all a great holiday season, a strong kinship network, and a happy new year!

All the best,

Muneer Karcher-Ramos
Director, Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood



IN THIS ISSUE:

- » Director's Letter 1
- » About SPPN..... 2
- » Results & Goals..... 2
- » Opportunities..... 3
- » Partner Spotlight..... 6

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Find us on Facebook and Twitter for more photos and opportunities!



Twitter: www.twitter.com/SPPN_News
Facebook: www.facebook.com/SaintPaulPromiseNeighborhood

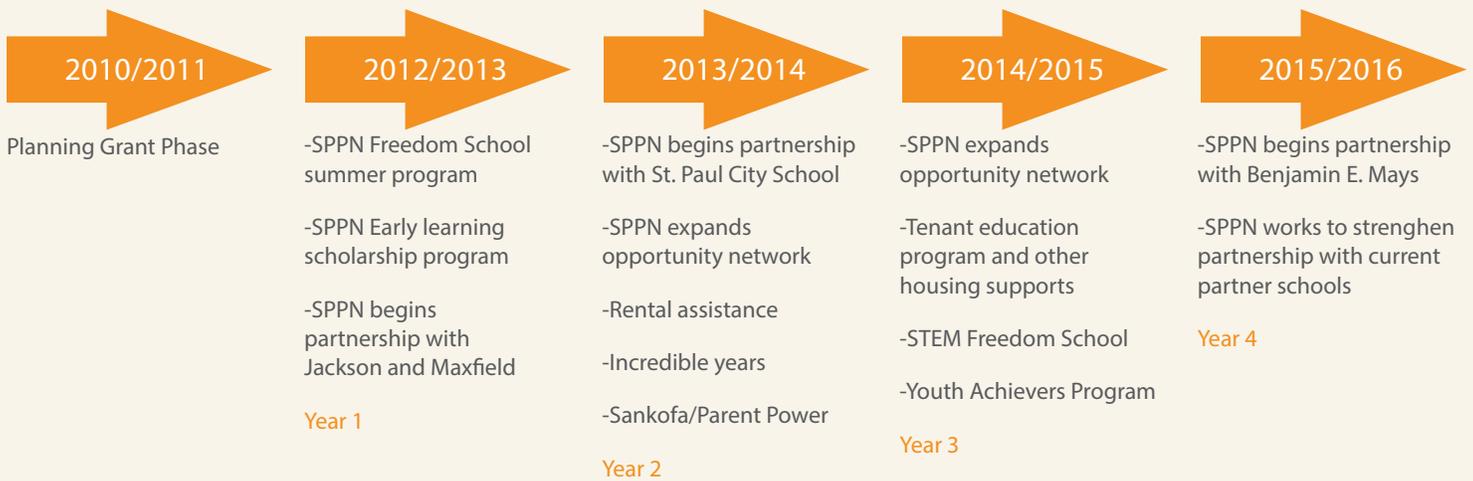
Visit www.SaintPaulPromiseNeighborhood.org to learn more about SPPN and to download a complete list of resources for children and families.

ABOUT THE SAINT PAUL PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD

The Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood (SPPN) uses education as a tool to end multi-generational poverty in the Frogtown and Summit-University neighborhoods. We ensure that every child has early pathways to college and career success. We partner with more than 80 organizations to provide family wraparounds that support the social and academic well being of children. Together with the SPPN and its partners, families are leading the charge to transform our school, neighborhood, and future.



WHERE WE'VE COME FROM



OUR RESULTS & GOALS

SPPN is committed to addressing tough issues facing our community, including multi-generational poverty, the education opportunity gap, and other factors that influence a child's academic outcomes. Together with families, SPPN and its partners are focused on achieving:

Education Results

Result 1: Children enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school
Goal: Improve readiness for kindergarten

Result 2: Students are proficient in core academic subjects
Goal: Improve grade 3 reading scores

Result 3: Students attend stable schools
Goal: Improve school attendance and reduce mobility rates
Goal: Improve school attendance for highly mobile families

Result 4: Families and community members support learning in SPPN Partner Schools
Goal: Increase parent engagement in the child's educational process

Family & Community Results

Result 5: Families live in stable communities
Goal: Increase housing stability

Result 6: Children are healthy
Goal: Increase healthy eating and access to healthy food

Result 7: Parents and SPPN Partners have the power to influence public decisions that impact their lives
Goal: Increase engagement of parents in public decision-making processes
Goal: Increase engagement of SPPN partners in public decision-making processes

We partner with more than 80 organizations to create an effective continuum of academic and family wraparound supports. Our 10 anchor partners are: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, City of St. Paul, Cultural Wellness Center, Hmong American Partnership, St. Paul City School, St. Paul College, St. Paul Public Schools, Network for the Development of Children of African Descent, Ramsey County, and the YWCA of St. Paul.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

The Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood rallies its program partners to improve the availability and accessibility of academic and family wraparounds. Here are some winter opportunities children and families might be interested in participating:



ComMUSICation

ComMUSICation is an exciting chorus, or group singing class, for boys and girls. Students are trained in singing, reading music, rehearsal procedures, and our unique ComMUSICation traditions. We partner with local organizations and perform throughout the Twin Cities! Since ComMUSICation is an official partner of the Boys & Girls Club, students can also receive Club benefits including homework help, snack, and dinner.

ComMUSICation Choir

When: Activities occur Monday - Friday. Monday is optional (can go to Mt. Airy Boys & Girls' Club for homework help), Tuesday-Thursday is choral core, and Friday is piano lessons. Homework help is 3-4:00 p.m, snack is 4-4:30, rehearsal is 4:30-5:40 p.m.

Where: Saint Paul City School (643 Virginia Street)

To register or get more information, contact: Sara Zanussi at director@cmcmn.org or (651) 253-0481.

Crescendo

When: Monday -Thursday Little maestros (2nd grade) is 4-4:30 p.m., and Crescendo (3-6th grade) is 4:30-5:15 p.m.

Where: Mt. Airy Boys & Girls Club Performing Arts Room at 690 Jackson St., Saint Paul, MN 55130.

To register or get more information, contact: Michelle Bendett at cresc@cmcmn.org or (407) 883-1917.

Sankofa Reading Program

The Sankofa Reading Program is an after-school tutoring program by the Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD). The program helps students build reading confidence and cultural identity to support academic performance. We teach students to master reading skills and strategies that can be applied to any text, any time, for any purpose over a lifetime. Children pre-K through 3rd grade who qualify for free or reduced lunch are eligible for free enrollment in the program.

Where: 655 North Fairview Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55112 To get more information, contact: Ndugi Njoroge, Program Coordinator at (651) 209-3355.



Coaching Services

Model Cities provides coaching services to children ages 8-12 living in SPPN who are at risk of academic failure due to poor school attendance and chronic absenteeism. The coaching services provide support and link families to cultural-specific community-based services and activities that help them prevent crisis and learn how to successfully navigate challenging life situations that impact their children's ability to learn. Children show improvement in their school attendance and improve academic success.

Where: 839 University Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104

To register or get more information, contact: Kizzy L. Downie, Director of Community Services at (651) 632-8350 or kdownie@modelcities.org.

Youth Achievers Program (YAP)

This YWCA Saint Paul program serves low-income youth of color from the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood, among others. YAP work with youth with risk factors, low self-worth, anger management issues, poor performance in school, and lack of support that makes it difficult for them to succeed in school, home and community. Youth (ages 8-10) benefit from an activities-driven approach that provides opportunities for growth, learning and fun. YAP equips youth with skills for life by building their self-esteem, supporting academic motivation and success, and promoting positive life choices.

When: Programming is provided daily until 6 p.m., 3 days/week.

Where: 375 Selby Ave., St. Paul, MN.

To get more information about YAP or the enrollment process, call (651) 222-3741 or email youth@ywcaofstpaul.org.

Vision in Living Life

Vision in Living Life is a youth leadership program that helps young people develop confidence, leadership skills, and the socialization they need to succeed. Youth participate in activities and educational opportunities that support their passage to adulthood.

When: A 6-week session starts February 6, 2016

Where: Aurora Saint Anthony NDC, 774 University Ave, St. Paul, MN 55104

To register or get more information, contact: Damone J. Presley, Program Director at (651) 503-8724 or (651) 288-9323.

Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation (ASANDC)

ASANDC strengthens and promotes economic stability and prosperity through personal literacy and community opportunities for housing and wealth creation. The program supports the educational success and stability for families, strengthening communities through culturally sensitive and transformative approaches to build equity, assets, and capacity. Residents in Ward 1 (Aurora/St. Anthony, Frogtown and Summit University neighborhoods) are welcomed to participate.

Where: 774 University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104

To get more information, contact: Nieta Presley, Director at (651) 222-0399.

Tenant and Landlord Education Training

The Community Stabilization Project provides affordable housing advocacy, training, and organizing services. People will gain knowledge of tenant/landlord rights and responsibilities that will lead to behavior change, new skills, and stable housing so their children can have better school attendance and academic outcomes.

Where: 501 N. Dale St. Suite 203, St. Paul, MN 55104

To get more information, contact: Carolyn Brown, Co-Director at (651) 225-8778.

Community Education Youth Enrichment - Saint Paul Public Schools

The Community Education Youth Enrichment programs are offered after school at the Rondo Education Center during the school year. All K-8th grade students are welcome to register and attend programs. Program offerings change seasonally and include: world languages, performing and studio arts, culture, science and technology, as well as fitness and safety classes. Program cost varies by class, but some scholarships are available for students who qualify for free/reduced lunch.

When: Monday-Friday afternoons

Where: 560 Concordia Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55103

To register: Visit us online at <http://commed.spps.org>, call 651-487-7383, or in person at Rondo Education Center, Community Education Office, Red Door Entrance.

Homework Center - Rondo Library

Homework centers are comfortable spaces at the library where students of all ages can drop in and work on their homework independently or with the help of volunteer tutors. The Rondo Library Homework Center is open to children and youth grades 1-12 and is free of charge.

When: Monday-Thursday 4-7 p.m. and Sundays 1-4 p.m.

No registration required - just stop by!

Where: 461 N Dale St., St. Paul MN

For more information, contact: Eric Whalen by phone at 651-266-7400 or via email at Eric.Whalen@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Visit us online at: <http://www.sppl.org/services/homework-help/homework-centers>



AMPLIFY YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Now that we are halfway through the year, it's a great time to check in with your child/ren and their teachers to see how they are doing and how they can do better. SPPN navigators are also here to ensure your child gets access to the right opportunities at the right time. As you may know, the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood focuses on providing both academic and family support opportunities. All children and their families at SPPN partner schools, whether they live in the neighborhood or not, have access to:

- Family centers: The Center for Culture, Families and Learning at each school provides a space for children, families, and community members to interact and be celebrated. This space is intended to affirm culture and community. (Note: All family centers are being re-named "The Center for Culture, Families and Learning." Not all schools will have a center this school year, but our goal is to create one at each partner school
- Navigators: Navigators at each SPPN partner school support children and families. They promote school involvement, develop kinship networks, increase student engagement, improve communication between parents and educators, and connect children and families to a network of opportunities
- After-school and summer academic opportunities: SPPN partners with other organizations to provide culturally-based academic programs. These high-quality after-school and summer programs ensure that children are meeting reading goals, and are on track to succeed.
- Family support opportunities: Family wraparound opportunities include parent trainings, early childhood education scholarships, and housing supports such as tenant training, housing search, and more. These opportunities promote family stability to ensure that children and their parents can focus on academic success. Come to the Center for Culture, Families and Learning to learn more.



Visit, call, or email the family center at your child's school for more information:

Center for Culture, Families and Learning at Benjamin E. Mays
Jolene Mason, School Partnership Coordinator
560 Concordia Avenue, Room 2246, St. Paul, MN 55103
(651) 325-2435
jolene.mason@wilder.org

Center for Culture, Families and Learning at Maxfield
Sister Ankhet Hesi-Ra, Administrative Director and Education Systems Navigator
380 Victoria St N., St Paul, MN 55104
(651) 744-2870
ankhet1@gmail.com

Center for Culture, Families and Learning at Jackson
Bao Lee, Family Navigator
437 Edmund Ave., Room 1109, St Paul, MN 55103
(651) 744-6518
baol@hmong.org

Office at St. Paul City School
260 Edmund Ave. St. Paul, MN 55103
(651) 225-9177
<http://stpaulcityschool.org/spcs/>





Partner Spotlight: The Cultural Wellness Center - Ensuring People Can See, Build, and Own Their Success

“Inside of every human being, there is a spark. We ignite that spark” is the enduring motto of the Twin Cities-based Cultural Wellness Center (CWC). For CWC, this idea is more than a catchphrase: building personal and community capacity is the cornerstone of CWC’s work.

“Everything we do is to direct people within themselves, family, and kinship. To us, culture is a knowledge that gives you strength to cope, capacity to understand and explain your situation, and power to determine your direction,” says Elder Atum Azzahir, Founder and Executive Director of the Cultural Wellness Center.

CWC is based on a three-part model: community systems navigators, community care giving system, and cultural knowledge production. The Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood partners with CWC to support children and families through an education navigation system housed in the Center for Culture, Families and Learning at each SPPN Partner School (where space is available). Navigators engage parents and strengthen parents’ capacity to be partners in their child’s education. They also support the health, housing, and community kinship needs of families.

One of these navigators teaches the Rites of Passage group where children get to explore and learn more about their culture. Students refer to the teacher as ‘Brother Freddy,’ using titles that are family- and community-developed. Through this group, young people are empowered to identify problems and solution within themselves.

Recently, a third-grader named Junior* was removed from his class, and Freddy went to visit him and asked the young man

what happened. Junior wasn’t sure why he was removed from the classroom. They later discovered that the teacher was out for the day and left a note for the substitute warning him/her about Junior. The substitute decided to remove Junior out of the class as a preventative measure. While what happened to Junior was unfair, it made him realize that he had a reputation for misbehaving. Freddy is working with Junior to change his behavior to reflect a reputation he can be proud of, and he’s making great strides.

Support Families through the Navigation System

Even though the navigation system focuses on building people in ways that can’t be quantified, it seeks to deliver outcomes-based results by reducing suspensions, increasing attendance, boosting classroom participation, and increasing parent engagement. Consider this:

- 494 parents are engaged in the kinship network, parent empowerment, and other classes
- 50 families who were previously homeless or highly mobile were housed, and the children in these families reduced chronic absenteeism from 49% at baseline to 5%
- 12,000+ engagement efforts were made by navigators to engage parents in the education of their children

Navigators have also connected children with academic opportunities that have resulted in noteworthy gains in reading assessments.

“Numbers are important – but we’re not just trying to get test scores up – we’re trying to engage children in learning. We are working to find culturally specific ways to eliminate the education opportunity gap,” Elder Atum said.

Addressing Root Causes of Issues

One of the first things navigators do when they meet with an individual or family is to develop their kinship network.

“Whether we look at the education opportunity gap, mental health issues, or domestic violence, we can see that individualism, lack of culture, and lack of community are a few of the things that make people sick and expose them to unsafe conditions. If you’re isolated, you’re vulnerable to abuse,” Elder Atum said.

Often navigators will go out and do a home visit and find the shades drawn and hear that the person hasn’t left the house in months. For those who are feeling “stuck,” loneliness becomes a temporary escape, but it can make situations worse.

CWC considers isolation a prelude to crisis, particularly with young families. When young women who are expecting are referred to CWC, the organization focuses on developing their kinship network so they don’t experience fear and isolation. An in-house doula will accompany the expecting mother to prenatal appointments, labor and delivery, and provide lactation consulting.

CWC stays connected to that new mother for up to two years. Often, issues like post-partum depression materialize later, so it becomes important to commit to the health of baby and mother by looking beyond the delivery phase and ensuring that new mothers have a network they can count on.

Education navigators follow the same approach: developing a family’s kinship network and connecting with them beyond the academic year.



Inspiring People to Lead the Way for Themselves and Others

With community navigation staff, CWC focuses on hiring staff that have experienced similar hardships as individuals in the Promise Neighborhood and know how to lead the way out of crisis.

“These individuals grew up in the St. Paul area, they know what it’s like to be in the trenches, and they are now working in the Promise Neighborhood,” Elder Atum said.

But the end goal isn’t simply housing stability or academic success, it’s about building community.

“Our current intern is a member of our housing program and is a parent at an SPPN partner school. One of the ways we engage people is supporting them in becoming navigators themselves,” she added. “They are our future circle keepers, community leaders, and support systems for others.”

The CWC and SPPN navigation system is focused on creating long-lasting, human-to-human connections to personal/family support.

“We’re not case managers. We want to be a part of the family, community, and the kinship network team,” Elder Atum said.

*Not the student’s real name





SPPN Connects is a newsletter for children and families at:

Benjamin E. Mays Elementary School
Jackson Elementary School
Maxfield Elementary School
Saint Paul City School

Acknowledgements:

SPPN Partnership Council: Andriana Abariotes, Atum Azzahir, Toni Carter, Nancy Dana, Rassoul Dastmozd, Jane Eastwood, Gevonee Ford, Frank Forsberg, Sharon Freeman, Kristine Martin, Kirk Morris, Ann Mulholland, Ryan O'Connor, John Senar, Nancy Stachel, Danielle Taylor, Dai Thao, Bao Vang, Yeu Vang, Paul Williams, and Donna Zimmerman

Staff: Muneer Karcher-Ramos, Kye Allums, Maureen Brazil-Sawyer, Chong Lee, Jolene Mason, MK Nguyen, Ebony Young

The Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood: Changing the Odds with Families



Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood
C/O Amherst H. Wilder Foundation
451 Lexington Parkway North
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
www.saintpaulpromiseneighborhood.org
Tel: (651) 280-2076

