



University of Pittsburgh

“Welcome to Reality” An Innovative Arts Approach to Disability Advocacy

**Mario C. Browne, MPH, CHES
Paula K. Davis, MA
University of Pittsburgh
Office of Health Sciences Diversity**

**Health Disparities Research at the Intersection of Race,
Ethnicity, and Disability: A National Conference
Thursday, April 25, 2013
Hyatt Regency Washington, DC**





Rationale

- **Healthy People 2020¹ notes that people with disabilities are more likely to:**
 - experience difficulties or delays in getting the health care they need
 - not have routine health screenings such as dental examinations or mammograms
 - not engage in fitness activities
 - use tobacco, to be overweight or obese
 - experience symptoms of psychological distress and receive less social-emotional support.
- ¹United States. Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2020 Improving the Health of Americans. Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010. Print



Addressing the Inequity

- Healthy People 2020 recommends that determinants of inequitable access to care for those with disabilities be addressed by increasing:
 - social participation and
 - access to needed technologies and assistive supports.



Local Challenges

- Isolated population of African Americans with disabilities; difficult to reach
- No coordinated support for disabled underrepresented individuals
- Ineffective dissemination of programmatic information to isolated individuals
- Stigma and attitudes about accessing services



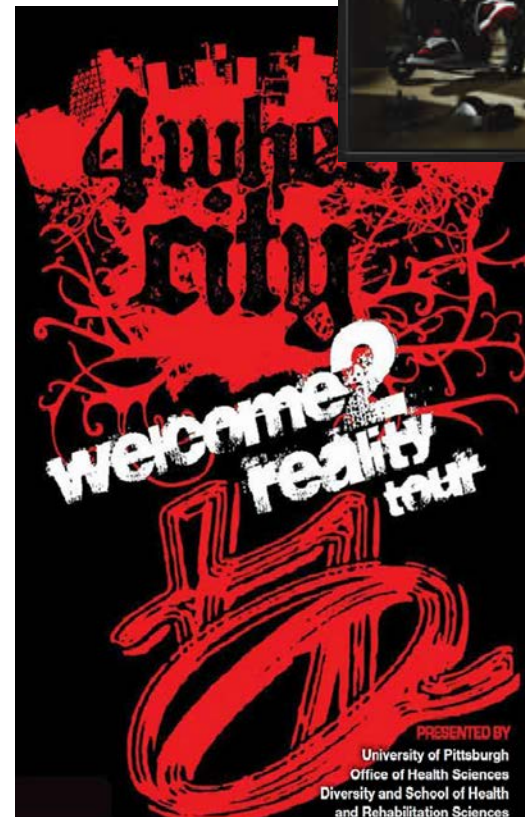
Call to Partnership

- 4 Wheel City ->Dr. Kate Seelman – the archetypal disability advocate
- Given the popularity of hip hop music and culture, we believed we could reach a broad spectrum of area youth, as well as targeted individuals with a variety of abilities and provide adaptive accommodations for all.
- Meetings inviting disability advocate organizations, key health and human service organizations and researchers and other stakeholders
- Capitalized on prior arts accessibility initiatives funded by FISA Foundation, hosted in fully-accessible August Wilson Center for African American Culture, incorporating ALL adaptive technologies.



4 Wheel City

- A motivational hip-hop group
- Namel “Tap Waterz” Norris;
Ricardo “Rick Fire” Velasquez
- Both acquired spinal cord injuries due to gun violence
- Mission includes “using hip-hop music to create opportunities and inspire those with disabilities to strive for greatness.”
- Communicate the realities of gun violence and life with disability.





*Deepest Thanks to Our Supporters
We couldn't have done it without you!*

Our Signature Partner



Sponsors



UPMC HEALTH PLAN

*University of Pittsburgh
Office of Health Sciences Diversity
School of Health and
Rehabilitation Sciences*



PRESENTED BY
University of Pittsburgh
Office of Health Sciences
Diversity and School of Health
and Rehabilitation Sciences



4 Wheel City is a motivational hip-hop group started by Namel "Tap Waterz" Norris and Ricardo "Rick Fire" Velasquez, two talented artists who acquired spinal cord injuries due to gun violence.

Their mission includes using hip-hop music to create opportunities for those with disabilities and to inspire others to strive for greatness. They hope to show the world that people with disabilities have talents and dreams and deserve to be treated equally.



PROGRAM

Emcees

Lester Bennett, Advocate
Three Rivers Center on Independent Living

Jonathan Duvall
University of Pittsburgh, Human Engineering
Research Laboratories

Readings from "Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability"***

Josie Badger, Miss Wheelchair America 2012
Youth Coordinator, PEAL Center

Ashli Molinero, DSc, Assistant Professor
University of Pittsburgh, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

4 Wheel City

Comments

Richard Garland,
University of Pittsburgh Violence Prevention Project

"Talk Back" Audience Feedback

Allen Lewis, PhD, Associate Professor
University of Pittsburgh, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

Mural Presentation

Lester Bennett
Kyle Holbrook, MLK Mural/KH Designs

****Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability*, Bartlett, Black and Northen, Eds. Cinco Puntos Press; 2011







4-Wheel City Community Event: Audience Talk-Back Session Results

Facilitated by Allen Lewis, PhD
Department of Rehabilitation Science
and Technology
University of Pittsburgh
September 2012



Purpose

To understand the impact of the message and the medium (Hip Hop music) used by the 4-Wheel City performers to promote disability awareness and violence prevention.



Main Questions

1. Why did we gather here tonight?
2. Can a person with a disability have a worthwhile life?
3. Where does a person with a disability go to receive help?
4. Why is spinal cord injury increasing in the African-American community?



Main Questions, cont.

5. What should be done next to reduce violence?
6. What should be done next to spread the word about disability?
7. What is the need to address these two matters in the community?
8. How can you be a part of the solution?



Results and Bottom-line Strategies Going Forward

- Work harder to eliminate gun violence and strengthen disability rights.
- Educate and love one another.
- Engage in acceptance, share information, and learn from the innocence of kids.
- Realize that disability is not an inferior status.
- Fight stigma and no blaming.



Outcomes

- Broad audience of 300+ including youth offenders, gunshot victims, individuals with disabilities caregivers, advocates, students.
- Six providers including medical specialty providers, voter registration, TRCIL.
- SHRS students wrote feedback papers following the concert.
- Student volunteers
- Media coverage
- Contact from 4WC on how to duplicate collaborative effort in other cities.



The Partners

- FISA Foundation
- University of Pittsburgh
 - School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS)
 - Graduate School of Public Health Center for Health Equity
- SHRS Student Disability Council and Human Engineering Research Laboratory
- Three Rivers Center on Independent Living
- August Wilson Center
- Disability Resource Center at UPMC

4 Wheel City



Contact

Mario Browne and Paula Davis

University of Pittsburgh

Office of Health Sciences Diversity

mcb77@pitt.edu

pkd100@pitt.edu

(412) 648-2066