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2023: Volume 1, Issue 3

# The MI-CARES Bulletin



Happy Spring/Summer! Just about a year ago, we launched MI-CARES. We are so excited to continue working together with you to reach our goal of being 100,000 Michiganders strong. Below, we talk about the many environment and cancer events we've been to across Michigan during May. The overarching theme is that Michiganders want answers to important environmental and cancer questions. The team is continuing to develop Everyday Science content to help inform Michiganders. Check out our Fact or Fiction below.

As a reminder, over the last month, we rolled out our new questionnaire and initiated the \$10 thank you and \$5 referral code for participants who complete the questionnaire. Thank you to everyone who has participated thus far! Keep referring your family and friends so that we can continue to grow our understanding of environmental injustice and cancer risk. Please consider enrolling if you haven't yet. Ten minutes a day for seven days will lead to a lifetime of knowledge.

Sincerely,  
Leigh and the MI-CARES team

## Community Partner Spotlight



## **Brandi Crawford-Johnson, Environmental Activist from Kalamazoo**

Brandi Crawford-Johnson has shown a deep and genuine concern for the health of her community in Kalamazoo. After relocating to the area in 2012, she experienced the challenges of severe and persistent asthma. Brandi said, "The burning eyes, headaches, and burning nose were also issues for me and my son. He got migraines."

This personal experience became the catalyst for Brandi's commitment to activism. She passionately advocates for the well-being of herself and her neighbors through raising awareness and promoting education. She even co-authored a health study and enlisted toxicologists and an epidemiologist from Chicago to examine air pollution levels and asthma hospitalization rates.

Brandi isn't wrong about her city - Kalamazoo is an environmental injustice hotspot. Many of the city's residents live in fenceline communities in close proximity to factories and other sources of pollution. Consequently, these neighborhoods experience the detrimental effects of poor air quality, contaminated water, and noise pollution. Unfortunately, it is predominantly Black, brown, and poor communities that are more likely to be affected by these harmful conditions.

While MI-CARES provides a glimmer of hope for finding answers, Brandi continues to exert pressure on government officials and industrial polluters, ensuring that the voices of her community are heard. Check out the billboard that Brandi paid for in Kalamazoo!

## **MI-CARES in the Community**

A lot has been happening in Michigan around the environment and cancer, and the MI-CARES team has been very involved.

### **Bailey Park's Earth Fest 2023**

We started off by helping with a neighborhood cleanup at Bailey Park. This was in line with the community's vision to meet local needs and prepare the land for spring planting. Following the cleanup, we joined in the Earth Fest celebration. One of the panelists, Marvin Hayes from the Baltimore Compost Collective spoke about the importance of composting and shared his first [environmental justice poem](#).



## Community Listening Sessions

In addition to our community engagements, lead researchers, Leigh, Justin, and Dana, attended various listening sessions across Michigan. In Flint, they heard about the concerns of residents regarding cancer.

In Wayne County, Leigh attended a community event where residents raised questions and made comments regarding the shipment of hazardous waste resulting from the East Palestine, Ohio train derailment. Michigan representatives to the U.S. Congress, including Debbie Dingle, Rashida Talib, and Shri Thanedar, along with Wayne County Executive Evans and State Senator Camellari, passionately expressed their commitment to the environment during the event.

Justin also joined the Kalamazoo community to hear them voice their concerns about the newly released Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) [report](#) on air pollution in their neighborhoods.



## Detroit Urban Research Center




Leigh, Dana, and Burnley joined the Detroit Urban Research Center for an evening of fruitful discussions on environmental justice, food insecurity, and healthcare, among other important topics. We love being part of these conversations.



## May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month

As the weather is warming up, we're all looking forward to spending time outside. It's important to remember that skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S. Please keep in mind that anyone can get skin cancer, no matter your skin tone. Also, sun protection is important even on cloudy days. Test your knowledge of skin cancer prevention below and remember to cover up!

# Fact or Fiction: Test your knowledge!

 Exams	 UV Rays	 Age
<p>It is important to examine your skin at least once a month to check for any abnormalities.</p> <p><b>Fact!</b></p> <p>Early detection is key in skin cancer.</p> <p>Follow the ABCD rule to evaluate moles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Asymmetry</i></li><li>• <i>Border</i></li><li>• <i>Color</i></li><li>• <i>Difference</i></li></ul> <p>and contact your health provider about any abnormalities.</p>	<p>Unprotected skin can be damaged by the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays in as little as 15 minutes.</p> <p><b>Fact!</b></p> <p>Sun exposure without protection can increase your risk of skin cancer.</p> <p>Additionally, indoor tanning devices can emit UV radiation that is 10-15 times higher than direct exposure from the sun.</p>	<p>Skin cancer only happens in older people.</p> <p><b>Fiction!</b></p> <p>Melanoma, one type of skin cancer, is the most common cancer in people aged 25-29.</p> <p>Use a sunscreen that is SPF 30 or higher to protect your skin from sun damage - even when it's cloudy!</p>

[ABCD Rule Fact Sheet](#)

[Skin Cancer | CDC](#)

## Mini Webinar Series

Please join us for our next webinar! Our expert speaker will provide a 15 minute presentation followed by 30 minutes of Q&A. It's perfect for a lunch-time break. Previous webinars are [available here.](#)

WEBINAR  
SERIES



Do some hair products increase the risk of uterine, ovarian, and breast cancers?



Featured Speaker:  
**Alexandra J. White, Ph.D., M.S.P.H.**

Dr. White leads the Environment and Cancer Epidemiology group at the National Institute of Health. Her work focuses on identifying modifiable environmental exposures that are related to women's cancer risk.

Wednesday, May 31st @ 12pm EST

You may [register to attend via Zoom](#) or join via Facebook livestream the day of the webinar without registering.

## Coming up...

Dr. White will be talking about how use of hair products such as chemical straighteners may impact cancer risk.

Register to save your spot. If registration is filled, you may access the webinar through the livestream on our [Facebook page](#).

**Wednesday, May 31st @ 12pm EST.**

[Register here!](#)

## Team Spotlight

Meet two of our growing team of Community Ambassadors! Thanks to their involvement, we're able to connect with community members all over Michigan. You may have chatted with Burnley as she picked up your saliva samples or with Sailing at a health fair. They wear many hats while supporting our mission.



### **Burnley Traux, MPH**

Burnley just graduated with her master's in Public Health degree with a focus in environmental health sciences. We asked her what she learned while working with the MI-CARES team, "Originally I thought that our role was to inform the public about environmental research and health concerns. Now, I think it's our job to listen as people share experiences and provide the technical scientific language and research to support these concerns. By doing so we can minimize harmful exposures." Please join us in congratulating Burnley on her recent job offer to work with the EPA's Environmental Justice Office in Washington D.C. We will miss her, but she will have the opportunity to do a world of good!



### **Sailing Tang**

Sailing is pursuing a master's degree in public health and geospatial data science. During the past year, she's participated in many events, including the health fair at the Islamic Center of Detroit and African World Festival. She says, "I love the phrase, 'you have to meet people where they're at and learn from them'. Through MI-CARES, I've learned how to expand my communication abilities and effectively discuss serious topics with people with different identities. I've grown so much in this role, and I'm grateful for it." This summer, Sailing is working internationally, but she will be back on the MI-CARES team in the fall as she finishes up her degree!

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Are your saliva and blood samples  
ready for pickup? Please let us  
know.

Email us!

## Stay Connected

Remain up to date on our events, ask a study related question, or suggest a topic for the next issue. We'd love to hear from you!



Our mailing address is:

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**MI-CARES**  
UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF OUR ENVIRONMENT