

Tuesday Topics January 3, 2023

President Carole Jordan opened the meeting with announcements that the Legislature is back in session on January 9, Martin Luther King Day is January 16, and today is Mary Torrence's birthday. Following announcements, President Jordan introduced our presenter, activist Danielle Twemlow who spoke on the topic "Racism is a Public Health Threat." Danielle provided a handout that identified what we or our organization can do: Co-sign the Declaration, Self-Reflect and Be a Champion. She began by telling us about the Shawnee County "Race Impact Equity Impact Analysis Group (REIA)," the 2017 Race Matters, and how well proposed policy, practices and decisions affect different groups.

According to Danielle, racism is a public health crisis that affects all groups on housing, income, health, education, public safety, transportation and food access. In all areas of life equality is not the same as equity. Danielle showed cartoon pictures to explain the differences: equality, equity, reality, and liberation. Equality is treating everyone the same. Equity is treating people according to their needs.

Health includes Infant mortality. The 2030 goal is 5 deaths per 1000 live births. Currently per 1000 live births in Kansas Whites have 8.8 deaths, Hispanics 14.2 deaths and Blacks 14.8 deaths. Zip code 66604 has the highest infant mortality in Kansas. Kansas has seen lower infant mortalities but Topeka has not. The Healthy Babies initiative holds an annual baby shower to talk about healthy sleep and provide baby items for mothers. The Community Health Improvement Plan developed goals and action steps. Community health hasn't changed much in the last 50 or 60 years.

Housing shows 44.8% of renters spend more than 30% of their income on rent. To afford living in Topeka one adult must earn \$16.80 per hour. Two adults with two children must earn \$36.90 per hour. Those who cannot afford safe and decent housing include 52% of Blacks, 36% of Hispanics, and 31% of Whites.

Income varies by race. In Topeka of the 44.8% living in poverty, 30% spend more of their income on housing. 23.4% are Black, 16.90% are Hispanic, and 9.1% are White.

Education metrics show that more than 16% of Topeka Public Schools students come from families who live in poverty.

Public Safety includes law enforcement use of force. People of color (Black and Brown) make up 46% of those involved in use of force. Mentally impaired (not by alcohol or drugs) are involved in 20% of use of force incidents.

Food access keeps people healthy. Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods is a grassroots organization that has completed a number of positive actions to address food deserts. They worked with the Farmers Market to allow buyers to use food stamps. Also, they provide information on healthy eating, mental health resources, and doctor and dentist access.

Transportation issues are multiple and include riding the bus. Think about riding a bus with small children, a child in a carrier or stroller. Busses run on the hour. If you are a mother taking children to daycare an hour away by bus, you can't work an 8-hour day because you have to pick up the children. Fewer hours means less income.

Danielle encouraged League members and guests to attend City Council meetings and advocate for change. Look at the numbers. Self-reflect, grow and do better. Be INTENTIONAL.

To read and sign the declaration go to <https://bit.ly/Topekaracismhealth> If you want to listen to the recording, it is available on the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library website.