

## 2018 Westmont West Athens Unity Summit Highlights

As part of ongoing community engagement efforts for the Trauma Prevention Initiative (TPI), Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) staff are supporting community residents and stakeholders in Westmont West Athens and other TPI communities to build local leadership and develop and implement strategic action plans to reduce trauma and violence. **Community Action for Peace (CAP)** groups in each community have been working on planning summits to bring together community members and partners to discuss priorities and take action to promote healing in their communities.



### Summit Events

On Saturday, June 9th the **Westmont West Athens Unity Summit was held on the campus of LA Southwest College** from 8:30am to 3:30pm and hosted 196 participants including residents, stakeholders, and representatives from various agencies and county departments. It was the second TPI summit in this community, and was free and open to all community members. The focus of the summit was to bring stakeholders together to celebrate the achievements of the CAP since the 2017 Summit, continue to refine its violence prevention goals and objectives, and to plan next steps for the coming year. The Washington Preparatory High School Jazz Band serenaded attendees during registration and a continental breakfast, and the day's event began at 9:15am to the sounds of African drummers (Rhythm Arts Alliance) who ushered the crowd into the campus theatre. Participants were welcomed by emcee, Mr. Kevin "Twin" Orange, a local Community Interventionist and member of the Westmont West Athens CAP. Community members led the many performances and the six breakout sessions that were offered in the morning and again in the afternoon following lunch. As one attendee commented, **"The Summit was amazing and distinctly different this year."**

### Community Building Unity

True to the guiding principles of TPI, it is imperative to build strong relationships and trust with the communities in which we operate. The Summit is an example of what equitable community engagement looks like – DPH acting as convener to bring stakeholders together, meeting at times and locations accessible to community, removing agency ego by stepping back and letting community have ownership and top billing, and allowing them to lead in ways that will be most impactful to the community.

Aptly stated by one of the attendees, **"This was led by community. It felt more like being with family and you're able to get a good sense of what Westmont West Athens is."** Attendees heard a message from Crystal Pitts, Executive Director, C.H.A.N.G.E.S, who recognized the CAP and Steering Committee members on stage; spoken word performances by several youth, including Lilyanna and Arianna Smalls-Phenomenal Angels, Janae Burns and Ian Flowers; listened to a musical performance by the Al Wooten Jr. Heritage Center's Youth Drum Line; danced to musical renditions by R&B-Rap singer Mathew Sutton, and developed a community arts project with local artist Bryant Magnum, entitled "Wings", that was unveiled at the end of the Summit.



## Westmont West Athens Community Action for Peace 2018 UNITY SUMMIT

### Celebrating Community Action

The spirit of this year's Summit was one of celebration, excitement, and community. Participants celebrated the fact that there had been only one homicide in the Westmont West Athens community so far that year, compared to eight last year. The Summit's emcee, Mr. Orange, presented local crime statistics and stated: **"We're seeing significant impact and it just gives us a good feeling. This is a demonstration of the good work being done"**. Participants witnessed a special recognition of two local Community Interventionists, Kevin Orange and Reynaldo Reaser, by Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Captain April Tardy, for their outstanding contributions and dedication to reduce violence and trauma in Westmont West Athens.



A sense of coordination and hope was exemplified by the lineup of morning speakers, including Pastor Bruce McCall, retired Deputy Sheriff who gave the spiritual invocation; Dr. Denise Noldon, Southwest College President, who welcomed participants; and opening remarks from **Robert Sausedo on behalf of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas's office**, who shared resources such as the Vermont Manchester development on the horizon.

Attendees participated in morning and afternoon breakout sessions that included: Law Enforcement and Community Engagement; Youth Empowerment: Challenges and Solutions for Youth Empowerment; A Vacation from Trauma; Community Healing through Music; Getting Our Fair Share: Jobs, Services, Sustainability, Entrepreneurship, and Cooperative Businesses; and What is the Role of Faith Based Organizations in Community when Trauma Happens.



Throughout the day, participants expressed their satisfaction with the event and their intent to work hand in hand with other community agencies, stakeholders and residents to prevent violence and trauma now and in the days, weeks and months to come. As Dr. Ferrer, Director of DPH reflected in her lunchtime address, **"We are committed to supporting the community of Westmont West Athens to change this environment and to develop locally driven solutions."**

### Sponsors and Partners

A special thanks to summit sponsors LA Care Health Plan and Kaiser Permanente; county partners including the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Parks and Recreation, Workforce Development Aging and Community Services, and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department; our host Los Angeles Southwest College; and to our local agency partners, including Urban Peace Institute, LA County Arts Commission, Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network, Al Wooten Jr. Youth Center, Apple Spice Kitchen, the many county and community volunteers, CAP members, and community residents who gave their time, energy and encouragement.

