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From the Boston Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/boston/news/2022/04/12/community-centers-colorectal-cancer.html>

Community centers receive grants for colorectal cancer prevention

Apr 12, 2022, 5:28am EDT

Two Boston community centers have each received \$25,000 in funding from Stand Up To Cancer to boost awareness and screening efforts around colorectal cancer in underserved communities of color in Suffolk County.

Each facility is launching independent efforts, while also partnering on community outreach. Whittier Street Health Center in Roxbury is using the funds to establish a new colorectal cancer program that will focus on community services and host sessions on specialized colorectal cancer workshops for staff members to learn about clinical guidelines and protocols for screening options.

Teaming up with the other beneficiary, Greater Boston Nazarene Compassionate Center in Mattapan, the community health centers will also host workshops to teach about the importance of



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Whittier Street Health Center

screening as well as lifestyle changes that can help prevent colorectal cancer. Each center will trade off hosting community workshops each month, with the first one scheduled for April 29. After the session, Whittier will offer screenings for both centers.

Whittier said it plans to emphasize smoking cessation, limiting alcohol intake, routine exercise, and healthy diet and maintaining healthy weight as methods of prevention to community members.

"We are very happy that we can host a program like this, where people can feel safe and comfortable and get screened and know more about cancer from our organization," said Fania Alvarez, program coordinator at GBNCC.

The 2020 Data Report on Colorectal Cancer in Massachusetts found that colorectal cancer was the third most commonly diagnosed cancer among men and women in Massachusetts and the third leading cause of cancer death for both men and women.

The statewide screening rate is 74.6%, with disparities across Massachusetts, according to Whittier officials.

The report also demonstrated the racial disparities of colorectal cancer, as it found the highest incidence and mortality rates were observed among Black non-Hispanics, followed by white non-Hispanics, Asian non-Hispanics and Hispanics.

"Whittier has been a champion of health equity for decades, and has worked diligently to provide innovative, culturally sensitive, high-quality health care and social services to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in health care and the social determinants of health," President and CEO of Whittier Street Health Center Frederica M. Williams said in a statement. "Our deep dedication to closing the high mortality and morbidity rates in the minority, low-income and immigrant communities, and our innovative programs and strong outcomes demonstrate our capacity to close the gap in colorectal cancer-related issues."

SU2C's Colorectal Cancer Health Equity Dream Team will conduct research in the communities that received grants and work with them to continue colorectal cancer prevention.

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