



# NEWS FROM THE CENTER

AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER 2024



This summer, in partnership with the City of Madison's Sustainability Program Department, an air quality monitor was installed at Kennedy Heights property. This monitor is designed to provide real-time data to help assess the air quality in our area and determine the necessary steps to protect community members' health. It is the first of several monitors to be installed across the city in the coming months. Anyone can access the data by creating an account here: <https://quant-aq.com/>. Once you've created an account, please share your username with me, and I will grant you access to view and download the data, as well as any additional features you may need.

To inaugurate the air quality monitor, we were honored to have the Mayor and several local leaders attend the event, including Francesca Hong, a member of the Kennedy Heights Community Center Board of Directors.

Wildfires are a growing concern, as they significantly increase air pollution in surrounding areas and can negatively impact regional air quality. Exposure to wildfire smoke can lead to a range of health issues, from eye and respiratory irritation to more serious conditions such as reduced lung function, bronchitis, asthma exacerbation, heart failure, and even premature death.

For news coverage of the air quality monitor inauguration, please click here: [https://spectrumnews1.com/wi/milwaukee/news/2024/08/12/air-quality-monitor--madison?cid=app\\_share](https://spectrumnews1.com/wi/milwaukee/news/2024/08/12/air-quality-monitor--madison?cid=app_share)







Our youth have been keeping busy with a range of enriching activities! Summer wrapped up beautifully with 16 children learning to swim and becoming more comfortable around water—an important skill that will serve them for years to come. We were fortunate to have a fantastic literacy coach, Miss Chan, who worked tirelessly with our children to prevent the summer slide. A huge shout-out to her for providing such a valuable experience!

Throughout the summer, we explored county and state parks, providing the kids with plenty of outdoor adventures. We faced a few challenges with our old vans, but the children showed incredible resilience and handled those moments like true champions.

As the school year began, the transition went smoothly, and we've continued to engage in various outdoor activities through the Dane County Parks' Get Outside program. Our partnership with Troy Community Gardens remains strong, and the children have been busy cooking up delicious meals with fresh, seasonal veggies and fruits straight from the garden, all while learning about our food systems.

Our teens have also been thriving. They've been enjoying weekly workouts at the YMCA, participating in cooking clubs, and spending time outdoors with the Dane County Parks. It's been a rewarding experience to see their enthusiasm and growth through these activities.







## Physical Wellness

In our adult programming, we remain committed to promoting holistic well-being through a balanced approach to physical fitness and nutrition. As we age, maintaining a healthy lifestyle becomes even more crucial—not only for our bodies but for our minds as well. Integrating regular physical activity, such as the weekly fitness classes led by Johnny Winston, helps improve strength, mobility, and overall vitality. Just as important is a diet rich in vegetables, which nourishes our bodies and supports our mental clarity and emotional resilience.

## Food Equity

We are grateful for the opportunity to continue offering free organic produce through our generous partnerships with Rooted/Troy Gardens, ensuring access to fresh, nutritious foods that can make a difference in our residents' lives.

The Free Organic Vegetables initiative, was a great success this year.

Through this effort, we aimed to engage our community and introduce them to the benefits of a plant-based diet. We hosted outdoor cooking demonstrations featuring fresh produce straight from the farm, allowing families to experience new vegetables and learn simple preparation techniques. Many participants tried new vegetables for the first time and were pleasantly surprised by how delicious and easy they were to incorporate into their meals.

Alongside our weekly food pantry, which is seeing much higher demand than before, this access to healthy produce is a cornerstone of our community's well-being.

## Mental Health Support

In addition to these resources, our monthly community conversations have become a vital emotional support system for those who participate. These gatherings provide a safe space for sharing experiences, finding connection, and fostering a sense of solidarity during challenging times.

However, the rising need for mental health support is clear. As more people seek guidance and resources to cope with the stresses of everyday life, we have noticed increased wait times and longer lines for mental health services. This underscores the importance of physical fitness, nutrition, and community support as part of a comprehensive approach to wellness, offering a way to strengthen our resilience as we navigate these challenges together.

## Director's Note

As we transition from summer to fall, it feels like time is moving at a rapid pace. August and September brought moments of joy and reflection on the world around us, but now, in our community meetings, we've noticed a shift. Using NVC (Nonviolent Communication) cards to guide our conversations, we've uncovered some recurring themes that reflect the struggles many families face—especially those working hard yet barely making it through the month: feelings of overwhelm, stress, and anger.

This time of year is challenging in many ways. Not only are we adapting to the changes in weather patterns as we shift from summer warmth to the cooler air of fall and winter, but we are also navigating the expectations placed upon us. These expectations don't pause for our wellness needs or the mental strain that often accompanies such transitions. As a community, we are striving to acknowledge these realities while finding ways to support each other through them.

*Elsa Castano*

Today I'm flying low and I'm  
not saying a word  
I'm letting all the voodoo of ambition sleep.  
The world goes on as it must,  
the bees in the garden rumbling a little,  
the fish leaping, the gnats getting eaten.  
And so forth.  
But I'm taking the day off.  
Quiet as a feather.  
I hardly move though really I'm travelling  
a terrific distance.  
Stillness. One of the doors  
into the temple.

A poem by Mary Oliver

## OFFICE CONTACT INFO & HOURS

199 Kennedy Heights | Phone: (608) 244-0767 | Fax: (608) 661-9190  
director@khcommunitycenter.org | office@khcommunitycenter.org  
School Year Hours: Monday and Tuesdays 9:30 AM–5:30 PM  
Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays hours: 9:30 AM–7:00 PM  
Summer Hours: Monday–Friday 9:30 AM–5:30 PM  
Computer Lab Open: Monday–Friday 9 AM - close  
Closed: Holidays and days that Madison Metropolitan School District closes

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Most Mondays Food Pantry from 8:30-11 AM (No Pantry 10/14)
- Free Veggies 12: 4 PM Last Offering 10/11
- Wednesdays Fitness Classes from 6-7 PM
- Open Gym Thursdays 6-7 PM and Most Week Days from 10 AM-2 PM
- Board Meeting Every 4 Wednesday of the month 5:30-7 PM
- Community Meetings Every 4 Thursday of the Month
- Joining Forces for Families (JFF) Social Worker on Site Each Wednesday from 9:30 AM-2 PM

## OUR PARTNERS



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