



THE AUSTIN PLUS DIRECT SERVICE

The Austin Plus Direct Service Project is funded in whole or in part from the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Use Prevention And Recovery (IDHS-SUPR) through a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The grant engages substance use prevention activities among high school age youth, with a priority on underage drinking. For more than 30 years, the agency has devoted a considerable amount of its time and resources to aiding Chicago's West Side communities of color. Through the Austin Plus DS grant, the agency has identified and strengthened key partnerships that have led to a multitude of new health promotion and wellness opportunities for community members. The agency is currently providing services to the following West Side Chicago Public Schools: Michele Clark Academic Prep Magnet High School, Al Raby School for Community and Environment, and Community Christian Academy and Academy of Scholastic Achievement Alternative Schools.

Learn more about the impact of COVID on this program at preventionpartnership.org/APDS.



HISTORY OF PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP

Interested in learning more about the history of Prevention Partnership?

Visit our website at

www.preventionpartnership.com/history-prevention-partnership to read about the start of Prevention Partnership and some of the organization's top accomplishments over the years.



Spotlight: Prevention Partnership Founders

SPOTLIGHT: PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP FOUNDERS

Each quarter, Prevention Partnership recognizes a board member or staff member. This quarter, we recognize the founders of Prevention Partnership, Al Orsello, Lee Rusch, Luther Syas, and Congressman Danny K. Davis. Read this interview with the Prevention Partnership founders, highlighting the importance of starting Prevention Partnership and their most memorable moments.

What did you consider some of the most important factors in creating Prevention Partnership?

Luther Syas: Creating a youth driven program of prevention focusing on alcohol, tobacco, and other substances along with HIV + AIDS prevention initiatives.

Al Orsello: Responding to an unmet need of prevention services for youth, initially in the Austin neighborhood focusing on tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

Lee Rusch: Personally, it stretched me to take on an “official” leadership role – Executive Director. Although I had been putting off such a role for quite a while, the experience was exhilarating and one that, looking back, I would have regretted missing had I not taken the leap.

Congressman Danny K. Davis: Introducing Al Orsello to Luther Syas and helping to found Prevention Partnership has been one of the rewarding things in life that I have done. The agency has been a great asset to our community and the field of prevention advocacy.

What are some highlights of Prevention Partnership over the years?

Luther Syas: The Youth Street Outreach Prevention POSSE used to train youth through music and entertainment about prevention methods.

Al Orsello: The 2002 Award of Excellence for Prevention/Education in recognition of Prevention Partnership, Incorporated For Excellence in Providing HIV/AIDS Services Presented by Richard M. Daley, Mayor City of Chicago and John L. Wilhelm, MD., M.PH Commissioner Chicago Department of Public Health on World Aids Day December 1, 2002.

Lee Rusch: The one week that we learned that we were awarded three grants, two to work with Head Start parents at CEDA and Muncie, IN, and the other a Conference Grant from OSAP. (continued)

With the conference grant, we were able to put a 40+ workshop track in the Region V Head Start Association annual conference in Chicago. A national first!

Congressman Danny K. Davis: The development of a real approach to program evaluation. Al and Luther are real pros in this business.

What are some upcoming or current projects going on with Prevention Partnership that you're excited about?

Luther Syas: The West Side Task Force Outreach Team that has provided a record number of Naloxone/Narcan collaboration with 8 support agencies and organizations.

Al Orsello: Working with the Chicago Public Schools Network Chiefs and Building Principals and Westside Black Elected Officials to provide Prevention and Health Promotion Services to schools and neighborhoods in Austin, North Lawndale, East Garfield Park and West Garfield Park over the next few years.

Lee Rusch: The West Side Heroin/Opioid Task Force has grown to be a force for positive change on the West Side, the state of Illinois, and the US.

Congressman Danny K. Davis: Putting boots on the ground in areas known to being drug users' habitats and using interceptors' techniques to try and help them.

What has been one of the most rewarding aspects of Prevention Partnership?

Luther Syas: The current direct service projects with area youth focusing on substance use prevention through curriculums and educational communication campaigns in area schools.

Al Orsello: The opportunity to work with a staff that performs at the highest levels, along with meeting and developing relationships with individuals and agencies who want to "Make A Difference."

Lee Rusch: Working with amazing dedicated and talented staff to bring systems-based prevention services to the community.

Congressman Danny K. Davis: Seeing the interaction with the community issue rising and attracting economic resources by way of grants.

What are some of your favorite memories of your time with Prevention Partnership?

Luther Syas: The Prevention Partnership Bowls held over the years at popular locations in Chicago for hundreds of youth representing area schools. Some of the locations were United Center, Wrigley Field, Solider Field, and Toyota Field which was great exposure for the school youth.

Al Orsello: The fact that we have been able to survive for the past 34 years in providing high impact and cost-effective Prevention and Health Promotion Services to the neighborhoods that we serve.

Lee Rusch: Too many to choose from, but overall the camaraderie and the sense of true purpose that Prevention Partnership provides.

Congressman Danny K. Davis: Prevention Partnership has been a wonderful addition to the Westside community and is highly respected and viewed as having great value.



NATIONAL PREVENTION WEEK

National Prevention Week, observed May 9-15, 2021, is a public education platform that promotes prevention year-round through providing ideas, capacity building, tools, and resources to help individuals and communities make substance use prevention happen every day. This year, SAMHSA's platform is observing its 10th anniversary. Join Prevention Partnership as we come together to raise awareness about substance use prevention and positive mental health.

Learn more about National Prevention Week on SAMHSA's website and Prevention Partnership's website.

For more information on National Prevention Week, visit our website and the SAMHSA website.



DRUG TAKE BACK DAY

Drug Take Back Day is Saturday, April 24, 2021. National Prescription Drug Take Back Day aims to provide a safe, convenient, and responsible means of disposing of prescription drugs, while also educating the public about the potential for abuse of medications. Visit our website to find Austin, East/West Garfield, and North Lawndale safe medication disposal sites.