

GRAND RAPIDS

African American Health Institute

THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR HEALTH EQUITY

2021
ANNUAL REPORT



Dear Friends,

This was a pivotal year for the Grand Rapids African American Health Institute (GRAAHI). As we reflect on 2021, we are filled with immense gratitude. We would like to thank the Greater Grand Rapids community for your trust, support and encouragement.



Our primary focus this year was to increase our infrastructure in order to strengthen our community outreach and impact, not only against the fight against COVID-19; but against health disparities in general.

As a benevolent community, you listened and responded to our mission and vision, and supported in a way that allowed us to add eight new full time employees and four new independent contractors to our team, all of whom are passionate and dedicated to this work and community.

We are proud of the accomplishments and impact we had in 2021. In 2022, we are confident that with your support and partnership, we will continue to expand our services and achieve optimal health outcomes.



Vanessa Greene
Chief Executive Officer



Paul Doyle
Board Chairperson



GRAND RAPIDS

African American Health Institute

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY RESEARCH EDUCATION

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OUR PURPOSE

The Grand Rapids African American Health Institute is a leading national organization **devoted to achieving healthcare parity** for African Americans. Driven by research and committed to education and advocacy, GRAAHI aims to create awareness and develop programs that achieve **positive health outcomes for all communities.**

MISSION

To promote health care parity in the Grand Rapids African American community through advocacy, education and research to achieve positive health outcomes.

VISION

To ensure that all West Michigan residents will have optimal health care and benefit from health systems without race being an impediment.



GRAND RAPIDS

**African American
Health Institute**



2021 AT A GLANCE

COMMUNITY

Our direct response to COVID19, water shortages and health concerns in marginalized communities created direct impact on local HEALTH outcomes.

ADVOCACY

Formation of an Advisory Council of 17 industry professionals informed and supported our outreach and advocacy work to achieve health equity.

RESEARCH

Turning our RESEARCH with the Health Equity Index into actionable data allows us to help inform and advocate for the health of all black and brown communities.

EDUCATION

Expanding the Pathways program strengthened the pipeline of EDUCATION for future healthcare leaders

Growing the team with 12 new members and strengthening our partnerships with healthcare, education, municipal and business organizations, allowed us to expand our programs, amplify our message and create lasting IMPACT.



GROWING OUR IMPACT



Rhythm HEALTH FAIR

Rhythm HEALTH FAIR

Rhythm HEALTH FAIR

Rhythm HEALTH FAIR

COVID-19



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In collaboration with the Grand Rapids Black Nurses Association, Black Clergy "Shot of Love" campaign, Kent County Health Department, ProActive, and the NAACP, GRAAHI contributed to increased vaccination rates in the African American community. Collectively we influenced the **vaccination of more than 5,000 African Americans in Kent County.**

PROVIDED FACTUAL AND RELEVANT INFORMATION

GRAAHI provided various approaches to combatting misinformation about COVID19, including interviews with epidemiologists and expert leaders to convey factual and relevant information about the efficacy of vaccinations, **reaching more than 400K+ Kent County residents.**



CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

Giving a voice to our youths and teens, GRAAHI created opportunities to ask questions and increase their understanding about COVID-19 vaccinations. **Over 75% of participants indicated these sessions were helpful** and made them feel more comfortable with having their child vaccinated. Wood TV covered the sessions which had a reach of all of West Michigan.



Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, GRAAHI has played a leading role in keeping the community informed and safe through education, awareness, video and social media campaigns, mask distribution, direct outreach and vaccination clinics.



COMMUNITY HEALTH NAVIGATORS

To strengthen impact in our community, we needed "boots on the ground" to connect, educate and provide culturally-relevant resources related to COVID-19. With funding from the Kent County Health Department, we added **two new Community Health Navigators**, who spearheaded vaccination efforts and developed deeper coalitions of support.

COVID SURVEY PROVIDES INSIGHT INTO BARRIERS

To fully understand the impact of COVID19 on Black/Brown communities, our survey identified the barriers to healthcare access and the social determinants of health, including the inherent distrust of healthcare systems. This information helped shape our COVID19 response and outreach.

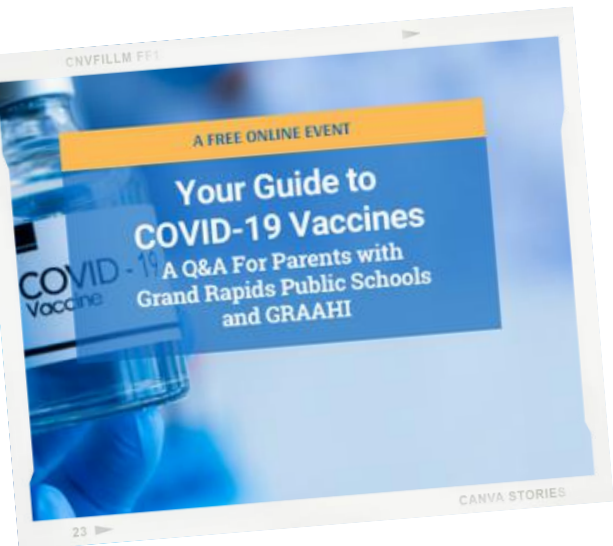


HELPING EASE CONCERNS ABOUT COVID VACCINES

GRAAHI and the Grand Rapids Public Schools hosted **six virtual parent Q&A sessions**. Parents were able to ask questions from providers to help them make an informed decision about getting their child vaccinated.

COVID RESPONSE

To read more about our COVID19 programs, go to: graahi.com/covid19



COMMUNITY

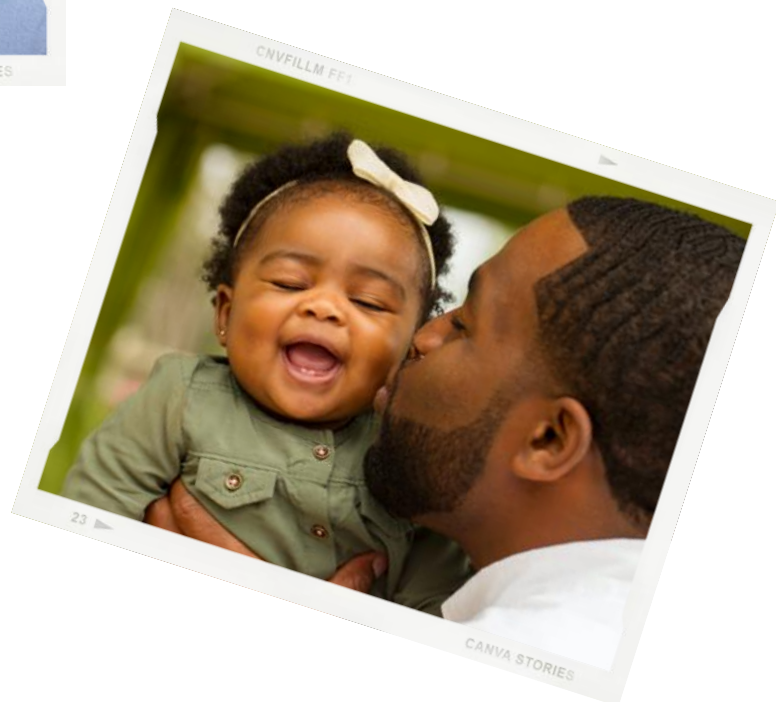
RHYTHM HEALTH AND WELLNESS FAIR

Sponsored our 12th annual **Rhythm Health Fair** to promote health and wellness. This event brought **300+ community members together** in a fun way to learn about various aspects of health, including valuable resources, exercises led by a certified fitness trainer, COVID19 vaccinations, blood pressure checks, and so much more!



FATHERHOOD PROGRAM

In collaboration with Strong Beginnings, GRAAHI effectively engaged fathers with a focus on strengthening families, supporting maternal and infant health outcomes through education, parenting skills, mentoring, and life skills coaching. **Served nearly 100 families and reached several thousand residents each month.**

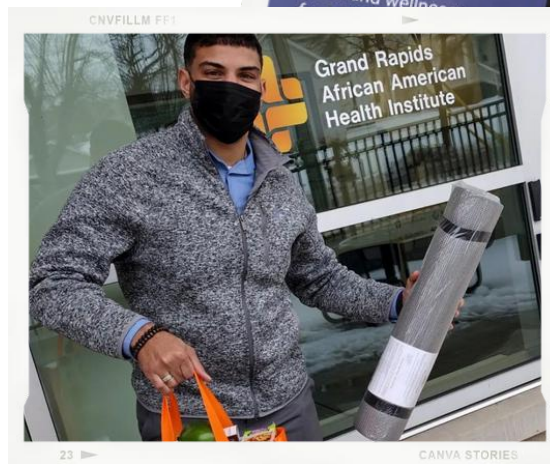
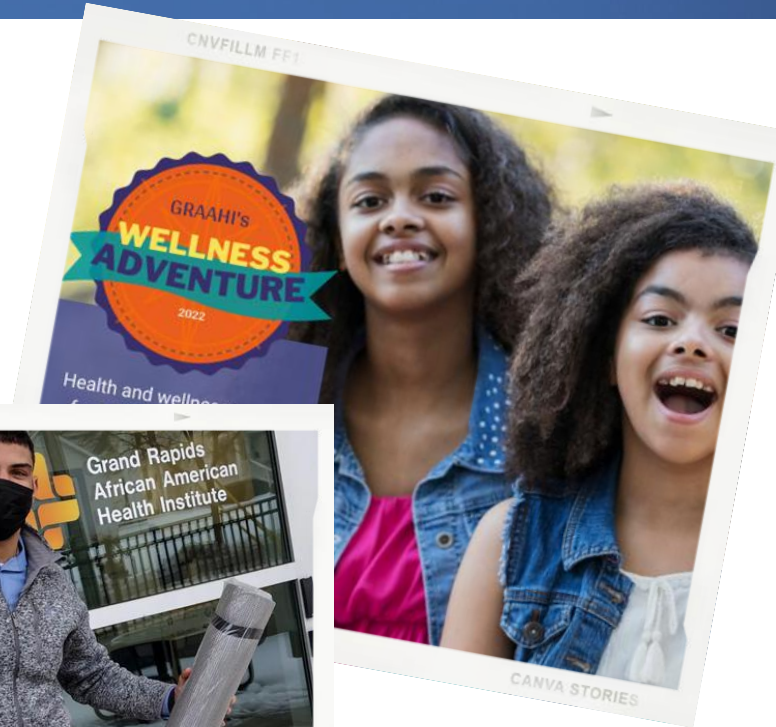




GRAAHI provides programs, education, resources and services to support the physical and mental wellness of our community.

MENTORING OUR YOUTH

GRAAHI received a grant from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, Meijer Corporation, Herman Miller and Blue Cross Blue Shield, to start a youth mental health and wellness initiative. This program will focus on the mental health and wellness of African American youth 8-13 years old.



WATER CRISIS IN BENTON HARBOR

GRAAHI partnered with First Community AME to collect water for Benton Harbor, a primarily Black community in crisis with contaminated water. We collected and delivered **more than 4,500 bottles of water** from The Roeper School, family, friends, local businesses and organizations.

COMMUNITY ACTION

To learn more about our work in community, go to: graahi.com/community



RESEARCH

UPDATING DATA TO REFLECT COVID'S IMPACT

The Health Equity Index, our online data tool, was updated to include COVID19 data by race and ethnicity to highlight the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on Black and Brown communities.

GRAAHI's Index is a public resource tool that serves the entire population, especially health care organizations, lawmakers, universities and nonprofits.

To further update the index, we initiated a remodeling process to develop a responsive, innovative website that will be more user-friendly with easy navigation. Check us out in 2022.



MENTAL HEALTH

A research brief on **Mental Health** was published to showcase the mental health challenges in the Black community as well as to provide recommendations on ways to combat these challenges. This brief has been shared with 15,000+ Kent County residents.

GRAAHI's director of research was appointed to a 16 member Black Leadership Advisory Council, which was tasked with developing and recommending policies to tackle racial inequities and address mental health needs in Michigan. Findings will be developed and shared in 2022.

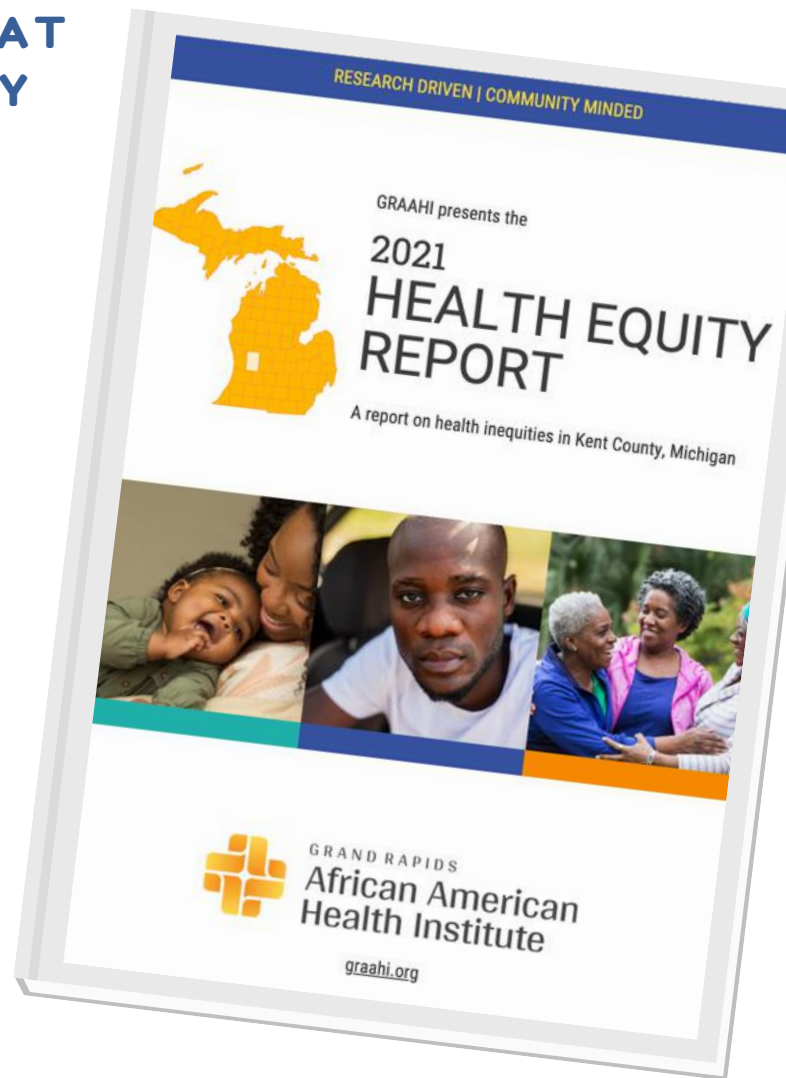


GRAAHI continues to set the standard for responsible data collection and reporting at the community level. Our team works in the community to collect, record, and disseminate data beneficial to improve health equity.

IDENTIFYING FACTORS THAT IMPACT HEALTH DISPARITY

The **2021 Health Equity Report** was published to highlight demographics and behaviors of our community in order to better advocate for health equity.

- Dozens of health disparities were identified between Blacks, Whites and Hispanics with Blacks having the worst and most disparities in Kent County or Grand Rapids.
- Hispanics may be more likely to contract COVID-19 in Kent County, while Blacks and Whites may be at higher risk for COVID-19 mortality than other groups.
- Nearly 100 health recommendations were provided to address health inequities for Blacks.



GRAAHI'S HEALTH EQUITY INDEX

To learn more about our research, go to: graahi.com/research



EDUCATION

CREATING PATHWAYS TO HEALTHCARE CAREERS

Healthcare inequities remain a persistent challenge especially to people of color. African Americans and Latinx suffer from a higher incidence of diabetes, increased prevalence of hypertension, and more deaths from coronary heart disease and stroke than their White counterparts. While the cause of such disparities is multifactorial, it is widely recognized that part of the solution is diversification of the healthcare workforce.

As the nation's population continues to diversify, the need for a more diverse healthcare workforce is more pressing than ever to improve quality of care, foster trust, create better communication, and increase preventative treatment care, access to quality care and better outcomes. Pathways' goal is to increase people of color in the treating and diagnosing roles to improve and address health disparities and inequities.

With funding from the W.K.Kellogg Foundation, Pathway to Healthcare Careers aims to:

- Achieve racial diversity in the West Michigan healthcare workforce that mirrors the region by 2040.
- Establish a cadre of African American and Latinx healthcare leaders by 2040.
- Provide early exposure to and information about healthcare careers for K-12 students.



In 2021, GRAAHI expanded the Pathways program by adding new team members and creating a steering committee representing decision makers and key stakeholders in the healthcare systems, K-12, colleges/universities, and mental health organizations to formulate structural changes in the educational and career path system to remove barriers for people of color to enter healthcare careers.

We also formulated our pilot program schedule with kickoff dates in January 2022 in Grand Rapids Public elementary, middle and high schools.

"Thank you GRAAHI for your education series. I was so inspired by one of the speakers sharing her mental health challenges, her testimony helped me tremendously and helped to get me on track.

HEALTH EDUCATION & EQUITY SERIES

Hosted 10 virtual panels throughout the year, each highlighting some aspect of COVID-19, vaccination opportunities, mental health issues, chronic diseases and health disparities, reaching more than 20,000 community members.



EDUCATION SERIES

To learn more about our Educational programs, and watch the videos, go to: graahi.com/education

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HEALTH EDUCATION AND EQUITY SERIES

**Influencing Change
A Quick Guide to
Effective Advocacy**

Thursday, April 22
4pm - 5:30pm

grahi.org

Zoom LIVE EVENT

Speakers:
 - Jayne Kossler, Ph.D. (Retired) Community Empowerment Specialist Michigan League for Public Policy
 - Melissa Young, Commissioner, 2nd Ward City of Grand Rapids
 - Robert S. White, Jr. Commissioner, District 17 Kent County

In partnership with: **SPECTRUM HEALTH** | Sponsored by: **meijer** | **Genentech** (A Member of the Roche Group) | **HermanMiller Cares**

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Family Stories of Triumph in the Black Community (Pt. 1)

Tuesday, May 25th
6pm - 7pm

#NoLimitsNoBoundaries

grahi.org

f LIVE

Speakers:
 - Dr. Valenda Agnew, Director, Adolescent & Family Behavioral Health Services
 - Mechell Bridges, IT Analyst & Producer
 - Taylor Calloway, Engineer and Diversity Educator
 - Aerica Hurt, Nurse and Oncology Ambulatory Memory Care
 - Shawn Hurt, Principal Educational Consultant

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HEALTH EDUCATION AND EQUITY SERIES

**The Power of Our Voices:
A Candid Roundtable
with Women of Color**

Thursday, March 25
4 pm

grahi.org

f LIVE

Hosted by: Vanessa Greene, CEO GRAAHI

Speakers:
 - Carleita Coates, Superintendent West Village Academy
 - Alicea Starke, Ph.D. Student University of Virginia
 - Khatereh Berni, Clinical Social Worker Accession Health Center
 - Lisi M. Lowery, MD Adolescent Medicine Spectrum Health

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HEALTH EDUCATION AND EQUITY SERIES

**COVID: A Call to Conscience
Addressing Racism
as a Heart Disease**

Thursday, Feb 25
4 pm

grahi.org

Speakers:
 - Heidi Ashley Irene Lee, Grand Rapids Community Foundation
 - Dr. Peter A. Knaeuper, M.D., Anesthesiologist Practice Consultants
 - Dr. Khan Nedd, M.D., Infusion Associates

In partnership with: **Spectrum Health** | Sponsored by: **Genentech** (A Member of the Roche Group) | **BlueCross BlueShield** | **Mercantile Bank of Michigan** | **HermanMiller Cares**



OUR TEAM

GRAAHI is proud to have a dynamic team that never settles, a board and advisory council that pushes us to greatness and partners that inspire and support our mission. We believe that when we come together with community, we can accomplish the extraordinary.

Vanessa Greene
Chief Executive Officer

Miguel Gonzales
Program Coordinator

Mikisha Plesco
Director of Operations/Pathways
Program Manager

Barbara Lash
Marketing & Communications

Andrae Ivy, MPH
Director of Research

D'onna King
Business Coordinator/Office Administration

Ashlie Jones
Senior Program Coordinator

Kalon Shackelford
Community Health Navigator

Stacey Baker, MA
Pathways Program Coordinator

Dr. Vicki-Lynn Holmes
Grants & Programs Director

Taylor Bays
Community Health Navigator

Dr. Bernice Patterson
Mental Health Consultant

Stephanie Charles
Education Consultant

Raven Odom
Advocacy Fellow



EXECUTIVE BOARD

Paul Doyle

Board Chairperson | Founder & CEO at Inclusive Performance Strategies

Jean Nagelkerk

Board Vice Chairperson | Vice Provost for Health at Grand Valley State University

Keri Koehn-Madden

Board Secretary & Treasurer | Treasury Management Sales Officer at Old National Bank

Laura Moody, RN

Faculty at Grand Rapids Community College

Dr. Khan Nedd, MD

Founder & CEO / Infusion Associates

Eddie Rucker

Consultant

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Robyn Afrik,
Director, Ottawa County
Office of Diversity, Equity and
Inclusion

Teresa Branson
Deputy Administrative Health
Officer, Kent County Health
Department

Cassonya Carter
Sr. Academic Advisor, Grand
Valley State University,
Kirkhof College of Nursing

Kenyatta Hill
Principal of the University
Preparatory Academy, Grand
Rapids Public Schools

Dr. Peter Knoester
Anesthesiologist, Anesthesia
Practice Consultants

Dr. Lisa Lowery
Section Chief Adolescent/Young
Adult Medicine, Spectrum Health
and Assistant Dean of Diversity,
Equity & Inclusion, MSU College
of Human Medicine

Tonja Moyer
Director of Performance
Improvement, Metro Health
University of Michigan Health
Metro Health Hospital

Christine Mwangi
Director of Fund Development,
Kent District Library

Dr. Bernice Patterson
Founder and CEO, Infinity
Consultation Group

Elisa Perez-Arellano
Founder and CEO, Inclusive
Empowerment Services

Ashley René Lee
Vice President, Strategic
Communications, Grand Rapids
Community Foundation

Kareem Scales
Manager of Innovation &
Technology, Greater Grand
Rapids NAACP

Vernella Shackelford Retiree,
State of Michigan Corrections

Misti Stanton
Vice President of Diversity,
Equity & Inclusion, Mercantile
Bank

Beca Velazquez-Publes Executive
Director, Urban Core Collective

2021 GROSS INCOME

PPP Loans	\$47,650.00
Donations	\$3,630.00
Donor Perfect	\$11,130.00
Grants/Sponsorships/Contracts	\$1,130,850.00
Total	\$1,193,260.00



2021 PARTNERS

At GRAAHI we realize it does "take a village" to accomplish excellence and create change, that's why we are so grateful to include these partners in our widening circle of CARE.

Sponsors



Community Partners



Education Partners



VISION



Twenty years ago, GRAAHI was born out of a need to dismantle health disparities due to widespread studies showing that African Americans experienced the most and worst health disparities in Kent County and the US in general compared to all other racial/ethnic groups.

Although great progress has been made over the past 20 years, the COVID-19 pandemic and national reckoning on racial justice amplified that health equity is still not a reality. There has never been a time in which African Americans have not suffered disproportionate burdens of death and disease. Unprecedented progress requires unprecedented action. As we turn the page to the next chapter of GRAAHI's journey, we must act with fierce urgency to eliminate health disparities.



WHAT'S NEXT?

IN 2022, THE GRAND RAPIDS AFRICAN AMERICAN HEALTH INSTITUTE WILL DEVOTE ITS RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE THESE KEY STRATEGIC GOALS:

Eliminate health disparities by developing a systems-level infrastructure to achieve strategically sound and evidence-based outcomes around multiple health categories.

Our top priorities* are creating measurable improvements in:

- Mental Health
- Diabetes
- Infant & Maternal Health
- Senior Care
- COVID
- Cancers
- Sickle Cell Disease
- Expanded Research on Black Health

**These priorities are based on research data from our [Health Equity Index](#) indicating high disparities in these areas.*

We invite you to partner with us as we impact the health of our community. Contact us to learn more at info@graahi.org.



500 Lafayette Avenue, NE Grand Rapids, MI 49503 616-331-5831 info@graahi.org

graahi.org