

2016 national public health week honoring our Michigan pillar of public health

Opinion

“The Road to a Healthier Nation Begins in Detroit, Michigan”

The National Public Health Week (NPHW) which is spearheaded by the American Public Health Association (APHA) is a period of time reserved to highlight the goal of transforming the United States into the healthiest nation in one generation by --- 2030. The NPHW which is held during the first week of April consists of a national collaboration of events addressing public health matters of concern and/or commemorating the work of organizations or individuals such as Vernice Davis Anthony, BSN, MPH whose servant leadership should be emulated by all health care and/or public health specialists as they attend to the welfare of the communities in which they serve.

Ms. Vernice Davis Anthony, BSN, MPH was recently honored by the APHA Black Caucus of Health Workers as the 2016 NPHW Michigan Pillar of Public Health at the University of Michigan Detroit Center for her unwavering dedication and legacy of enhancing the quality of health for all communities within the City of Detroit and Wayne County as well as throughout the State of Michigan.

Some of Ms. Anthony’s accomplishments have included her tenure as the Director of the Michigan Department of Public Health, where she was appointed by Governor John Engler to oversee this agency operating with a budget of over \$600million and a staff of 1400 employees. Her leadership involved the orchestration of programs pertaining to disease prevention, enhancement of the quality and longevity of life, promotion of health through organized community programs for sanitation, protection of the environment, early disease detection especially controlling the onset and stages of severity of communicable and chronic disorders, health education including the promotion of individual behavior conducive to experiencing a higher quality of personal health, and the development of comprehensive quality medical services and facilities for early diagnosis and effective care of the sick. Her other key areas of public health leadership pertained to infant mortality reduction, violence and teen pregnancy prevention, and the survival of the African American male. The leadership of Ms. Anthony’s involvement in infant mortality programs resulted in the lowest infant mortality rate in Michigan history.

As the Director and Public Health Officer of the City of Detroit Department of Health and Wellness Promotion, Ms. Anthony reestablished this entity as a department operating within the City of Detroit which involved the transitioning of public health programs budgeted at \$21million, including state and federal dollars.

As the President and CEO of the Greater Detroit Area Health Council, Inc., Ms. Anthony repositioned this entity as the most influential healthcare collaborative in southeastern Michigan resulting in her being recognized as a national health coalition leader.

As the Health Officer for the Assistant County Executive, Health & Community Services in Wayne County, Michigan, Ms. Anthony provided leadership for the re-design of indigent care funding such as the sale of a hospital replaced by a locally managed capitated system annually saved the region millions of dollars.

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At the celebratory occasion of the 2016 NPHW Michigan Pillar of Public Health, Ms. Anthony was presented with accolades including a certificate from the Office of the Detroit Mayor presented by Dr. Abdul El-Sayed, Executive Director and Health Officer of the Detroit Department of Health and Wellness Promotion, a Detroit City Council Testimonial Resolution signed by all council members presented by Dr. Arthur Divers, Chief of Staff for Detroit City Council George Cushingberry, Jr., a Michigan Pillar of Public Health Certificate received from Debbie Stabenow, United States Senator of Michigan, congratulatory letters from the American Public Health Association, APHA Black Caucus of Health Workers, and Dr. Martin Philbert, Dean of the University of Michigan School of Public Health (alma mater of Ms. Anthony), and a beautiful plaque from the APHA Black Caucus of Health Workers.

The invocation was given by Ms. Jacqueline Gadson, Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) professor and a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem (Star Spangled Banner) and America (My Country ‘Tis of Thee) was sung by the mother daughter duo Mrs. Regina Brown and Mrs. Cornae Malone (a health care professional). WCCCD students presented poster presentations on science related topics that were of special interest to them. They learned how to apply scientific concepts learned in their WCCCD courses to help educate the community of whom they will serve in their future careers. Other guests included academicians, and family members along with health care and public health friends of Ms. Anthony.

Dana Harvey, a communications specialist with TV reporting experience is the daughter of Vernice Davis Anthony. During the 2016 NPHW Michigan Pillar of Public Health celebration she interviewed her mother discussing her life’s journey and desire to help enrich the quality of life present in all communities especially regions composed of vulnerable populations. Furthermore, Ms. Anthony provided the audience with a powerful testimony of overcoming obstacles to become an accomplished public health nurse serving her community in prominent leadership roles in which only a few individuals have experienced. A discussion followed the interview in which health

care and public health leaders sought counsel from Ms. Anthony regarding how they should most efficiently serve communities under their jurisdiction. The program concluded with everyone engaging in laughter and fellowship over lunch provided from the University of Michigan Detroit Center. Everyone was very pleased with the well deserved recognition bestowed on Vernice Davis Anthony, BSN and MPH as the 2016 NPHW Michigan Pillar of Public Health (Figure 1).

Acknowledgements

None.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.



Figure 1 Michigan pillar of public health celebratory occasion of the 2016 NPHW.