

2024 OKLAHOMA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION (OPHA) CONFERENCE: BUILDING COMMON GROUND IN PUBLIC HEALTH

5 CHW Awardees Attended the conference

The *2024-2025 OPHTC Conference and Continued Education Fund* supported five community health workers (CHWs) from organizations across Oklahoma to participate in the annual OPHA conference held in Broken Arrow, OK on November 8 & 9, 2024. This educational fund was designed to support CHW professional development by increasing access to training, education, and networking opportunities. The five CHWs deeply appreciated the opportunity to attend the *2024 OPHA Conference*. They described the conference as a powerful educational experience that broadened their understanding of public health policy, practice, and health equity in Oklahoma. Developed and presented through the *OPHA CHW Section*, the panel on building sustainable CHW infrastructure and reducing health disparities was especially impactful, with one participant noting: *“This year there was a presentation that highlighted CHWs called ‘Building A Sustainable Community Health Worker (CHW) Infrastructure in Oklahoma: Updates on an Ongoing Applied Public Health Project’ which was awesome to see. It was great to hear questions from the audience as well as having the chance to meet a lot of other CHWs face-to-face in today’s virtual environment. ... I believe that public health is crucial to our well-being as humans and community health work is a key component to successful long-term outcomes.”* Three CHWs were actively involved in the panel, two serving as panelists, one as moderator. One panelist shared: *“As a panelist, I enjoyed the opportunity to give information out to the public to better understand about the community health workers and the important role they take in the community.”* Networking was highly praised, with one CHW reflecting: *“The OPHA conference brought together a diverse group of professionals, including public health officials, researchers, community organizers, policy advocates, and students. This group creates opportunities for meaningful dialogue and the exchange of ideas, offering insights into different facets of public health in Oklahoma and beyond.”* The conference inspired some CHWs to pursue advanced degrees and further involvement in public health organizations, reaffirming their commitment to community service and growth. As one CHW concluded: *“I left the conference reassured and inspired. I love seeing people as passionate about community and public health as I am.”*