

From Seed to Strength:

Growing Together for a Sustainable Future



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Supporters, Donors, and Greater Community,

This year has been marked by resilience, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to promoting the mental well-being of Black women. When I think about how far mental wellness has come in the past few years, I am proud of how Sista Afya Community Care (SACC) has been a part of the movement to shift mental wellness in the lives of those often locked out of high-quality care. Our dedicated team, alongside our invaluable partners and supporters, has worked tirelessly to create positive change and address the challenges faced by those affected by mental health issues. From providing a healing community of Black women through our supportive services to being a thought leader in mental health equity throughout the nation, SACC has continued to rise, advocate, and make mental wellness care accessible to any woman who needs it.

This year we nearly doubled the size of our team—helping to build capacity to address the mental health needs of Black women on the South side of Chicago. We expanded our community partnerships to support women needing maternal mental wellness care, experiential wellness programming, and art and movement therapy. Our team also hosted our first major fundraising event, the **Women in Wellness Awards Brunch**, that highlighted the contributions of women across Chicago who keep our communities healthy and thriving.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of this past year, we are also excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. Our commitment to mental wellness remains steadfast, and we are eager to continue pushing boundaries, breaking down barriers, and making a lasting impact on the lives of women from all walks of life across Chicago and beyond.

I extend my deepest gratitude to each and every member of our community for your continued support. Together, we are making a difference, and our collective efforts are shaping a future where mental wellness is a priority for all.

Sincerely,

Camesha L. Jones, LCSW

Camesha L. Jones

Executive Director, Sista Afya Community Care











How We're Growing

STRENGTHENING THE BOARD

The SACC board's commitment and networking prowess were key to our fundraising achievements this year. Their active participation, especially in organizing events like the inaugural Women in Wellness Awards Brunch, helped raise awareness about SACC and greatly aided in reaching our fundraising target of \$55,000. Their invaluable contributions have played a significant role in propelling our mission forward.

NEW HIRES IN 2023

Abajah Johnkin, MSW, Therapist, enhances our counseling services with her deep understanding of mental health.

Tanya Whitten, MA, Donor Relations Coordinator, strengthens our connections with donors through strategic engagement.

Amin Bell, Wellness Facilitator, develops innovative wellness programs for our Community Care program.

Carlyn LaGrone, Program & Events Manager, brings efficiency and vibrancy to our events and initiatives.

Sameka Gates, Community Care Program Intern, offers fresh perspectives and enthusiasm to our Community Care program.

DIVERSIFYING FUNDS

To further our goal of diversifying funding, SACC has made notable strides this year. We have successfully cultivated new partnerships and deepened our relationships with existing supporters, leading to a significant expansion in both grants and corporate sponsorships.

In 2024, we are proud to welcome new funders like the DEW Foundation, Chicago Community Trust— Unity Fund, and the Julian Grace Foundation. Their support marks a significant milestone in our journey, reflecting the growing confidence in our mission and the impactful work we do. Alongside these new partnerships, SACC continues to receive steadfast support from committed funders such as lululemon, the Logan Foundation, and the Chicago Foundation for Women, among others. This ongoing support has been fundamental to our efforts, helping us maintain and expand our programs.

A pivotal aspect of our growth has been the 63% increase in individual donors. This surge in grassroots support bolsters our financial stability and also reflects a deepening community engagement with our mission.

The combined efforts of our new and existing partners, alongside the growth in individual contributions, underscore a successful year for SACC. These diverse funding sources are instrumental in ensuring that our organization continues to make a meaningful impact in the communities we serve.

WOMEN IN WELLNESS AWARDS BRUNCH

The Women in Wellness Awards Brunch, hosted at Chicago's Hubbard Inn, stood out as a key highlight in our yearly events. This gathering was dedicated to honoring the achievements of women in the wellness sector, with a special focus on those making a difference in the mental wellness of Black women through SACC's initiatives. The brunch featured engaging wellness activations and a VIP lounge, alongside a silent auction that played a significant role in supporting our fundraising efforts.

CONCLUSION

We proudly recognize the growth and impact of SACC in 2023. Our board has grown stronger, our team more dynamic, and our funding sources more diverse. These advancements are transforming SACC into an organization of greater resilience, effectiveness, and inclusivity. We are confidently positioned to face future challenges head-on. Our commitment to providing mental health support and wellness resources to women in our community is at the forefront of our mission, steering us towards a sustainable future for everyone involved.

Thrive in Therapy

In 2023, SACC's Thrive in Therapy program significantly expanded its reach. Serving 133 women, the program provided 1,925 free therapy sessions, emphasizing holistic mental wellness and support, including case management and peer support. We also provided therapy for 18 Medicaid recipients, demonstrating our commitment to offering accessible care for those facing the most significant barriers to quality mental health services. This achievement marks a pivotal step in our mission to support and empower women in our community, regardless of their financial situation.

THRIVE IN THERAPY BY THE NUMBERS:

140

People Served 1,925

Free Therapy Sessions 18

Medicaid Recipients Served

differently. I came out of the hard shell that I had created from all the wounds and trauma, and could learn and explore the world in a safe way with my therapist. I learned about attachment styles and the eight dimensions of wellness, and all sorts of tips and tools to help me manage stress and life. This was truly a life-changing experience that I never thought would be available to me, so I'm so happy I discovered SACC. I'm here for it!

Developing Mental Wellness Warriors

SACC's Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Trainer, Ami Abdullahi (below) leads the Developing Mental Wellness Warriors (DMWW) program. This year, Ami became a certified Teen MHFA instructor. Offering this course will enhance SACC's ability to support young women in schools by helping teens identify and respond to mental health challenges among peers.



DMWW
BY THE
NUMBERS:

127

People Trained

15

Virtual Trainings

I truly enjoyed the training and the space provided to discuss such important work!

A., Age 32

Community Care

Our Community Care wellness classes, retreats, groups, and workshops have reached over 400 Black women—both in Chicago and in other parts of the country when virtual programming is offered—which is incredible! Additionally, we have had participants ranging from age 22 to 75 attend our events. We are so excited to continue this work and offer additional relevant and empowering topics in 2024 for our community.

COMMUNITY CARE BY THE NUMBERS:

400

Women Served 68

Workshops & Classes 36

Women Attended Retreats



Great experience with women that look like me. ESPECIALLY those dedicated to personal growth. It's hard to find that where I'm from ... to enter into these spaces is refreshing because it brings me reassurance that there's a community out there for me. Thank you all, please continue this great work!

S. Age 27

TOPICS COVERED:

Building Social Connections
Navigating Social Media
Black Women Gratitude & Joy
Embracing Change & Uncertainty
Stop Waiting For Perfect

Doing the Inner Work
Wellness Classes
Inner Peace
Mind/Body Awareness
Embracing You

Stories & Highlights

SACC BECAME A CERTIFIED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINIC

SACC's focus on serving women with multiple barriers in care includes reaching those who encounter some of the most challenges accessing quality care—Medicaid Recipients. SACC's Clinical Team worked for over a year to receive a Behavioral Health Clinic designation from the State of Illinois. We were awarded this designation in March of 2023, opening further opportunities to serve people regardless of ability to pay and allowing us to offer a range of services outside of individual therapy including case management and peer support for women in our community.

OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IS AN INNOVATIVE MENTAL HEALTH THOUGHT LEADER

SACC's Founder and Executive Director, Camesha Jones, was selected to join New Profit's Mental Health **Equity Cohort.** New Profit is a venture philanthropy firm that makes impact investments into promising non-profits that have the potential to address the most pressing issues impacting equity and well-being for marginalized communities in the United States.

As a part of the Mental Health Equity Cohort, Camesha meets with mental health leaders across the country. SACC also receives strategic support with capacity building, leadership coaching, and a \$100,000 investment. We are grateful to New Profit's investment into mental health equity for Black women and our organization has grown our impact as a result of this groundbreaking support.

New Profit's 2023 Mental Health Equity Cohort.



Women in Wellness Awards Brunch

SACC Celebrates its First Annual Awards Brunch

This year's Women in Wellness Awards Brunch, held on Saturday, November 11th at the Hubbard Inn in Chicago, was a significant event in our annual calendar. The brunch provided a platform to honor and celebrate the contributions of women in the field, specifically those impacting the mental health of Black women through SACC. The event included wellness activations that offered engaging experiences for guests, and a VIP lounge that provided a relaxed space for attendees.



A key feature of the brunch was the awards ceremony. This segment of the event allowed us to acknowledge and appreciate the remarkable work of women in the wellness community. Additionally, the brunch included a silent auction, contributing to our fundraising goals. Items of various kinds were offered, and the participation of the attendees in the auction was enthusiastic and generous.

The Women in Wellness Awards Brunch played a vital role in our fundraising activities for the year. The support from those who attended was crucial in helping us reach a significant part of our \$55,000 goal. These funds are essential for SACC to continue our work in providing mental health support to women in our community.

Looking back on the event, the Women in Wellness Awards Brunch stands as a testament to the power of community and the importance of recognizing the efforts of those who contribute positively to the wellbeing of others. It was an event that celebrated our collective achievements and reinforced our commitment to supporting the mental health of women in Chicago.



Partner Spotlight:

Brittney Autry Cole, M.S., MSW, LCSW Cent(HER)ed Collective

Fostering strong community partnership is a cornerstone of SACC's approach. For the past 3 years, SACC has partnered with Cent(HER)ed Collective, a mental wellness social enterprise, to offer retreats for Black women and girls. Founded by the visionary Brittney Autry Cole, Cent(HER)ed has been instrumental in fostering transformative healing practices.

Through this collaboration together we have offered 2 wellness retreats per year, reaching over 35 women. In the city of Chicago, where the rush of life can often overshadow the need for self-care and mental well-being, these breaks have become a beacon of hope and healing for Black women.

FROM PERSONAL JOURNEY TO COLLECTIVE EMPOWERMENT

The journey of Cent(HER)ed began with Brittney's personal quest for mental wellness. In 2016, feeling stressed and disconnected, she sought the guidance of a therapist, who challenged her to embrace solitude. This led Brittney to a life-changing solo trip to Bali, where she found peace and connection within herself. Inspired by this experience, she envisioned creating similar transformative experiences for other women. Through focus groups and research, the Cent(HER)ed took shape, officially launching in October 2019.



A PARTNERSHIP OF HEALING AND GROWTH

The partnership between SACC and the Cent(HER)ed has been nothing short of transformative. Brittney notes the significant impact of this collaboration, highlighting the referrals from SACC and the joint events they have hosted. These retreats, held twice a year, offer a day filled with rest, relaxation, and connection, exclusively catering to up to 20 women each session. The partnership has provided exposure for Cent(HER)ed, leveraging SACC's reputable standing in the community. It's a testament to Black sisterhood, showcasing unity and mutual support without competition.

ALIGNING MISSIONS AND VISIONS

The alignment between the two organizations lies in our shared commitment to addressing the unique challenges and strengths of Black women. This partnership has facilitated a space for sharing resources and promoting continuous wellness work, critical in the ongoing healing process. The synergy between these organizations extends beyond mere collaboration; it fosters a community where Black women can find not only support but also empowerment and understanding. Together, we are addressing immediate needs and nurturing long-term resilience and self-awareness in the women we serve.

HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

Brittney dreams of expanding Cent(HER)ed's partnership with SACC by increasing the frequency and capacity of the wellness retreats. She envisions hosting two-day retreats, offering meaningful gift baskets, and providing attendees with ongoing wellness opportunities to continue their healing journey well after the retreats end.

EQUITABLE MENTAL WELLNESS CARE

While Cent(HER)ed might be relatively new in the mental wellness space, their dedication to providing high-quality care and systematically closing the mental health gap for Black women is unwavering

Through this strategic partnership, we are crafting a future where mental wellness is not just a possibility but a reality for Black women and girls.



@centheredcollective



@centheredcollective



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Cent(HER)ed is
working hard and
diligently to make sure
Black women and girls
have access to high
quality care, and to
systematically close
the mental health gap

Looking Forward to 2024

- Launch a teen MHFA with girls-serving organizations in Chicago
- Peer Support Program for Black women
- Provide free therapy to Black teen girls in partnership with girls-serving organizations in Chicago
- Moving to a new location, Bronzeville

As we step into 2024, SACC is poised to launch several impactful initiatives. We're excited to introduce a Teen Mental Health First Aid program, partnering with girls-serving organizations across Chicago, to empower and support teenage girls in their mental health journeys. Additionally, we're launching a peer support program specifically tailored for Black women, providing a much-needed platform for shared experiences and mutual support.

A significant milestone for us this year is our move to a new location in Bronzeville. This move symbolizes our growth and commitment to being more accessible to our community. These initiatives are just the beginning of a transformative year for SACC, as we continue to strengthen our services and reach within the Chicago community.



THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE & FOUNDATION PARTNERS

We are grateful for our corporate partners, whose dedicated support and collaboration have been vital in strengthening our community and driving our mission of providing quality mental wellness care forward.

FOUNDATION PARTNERS



chicago foundation for wonen









the Reva & David Logan Foundation

CORPORATE PARTNERS

CHICAGO CENTER FOR RELATIONSHIP COUNSELING

























Join Our Community in 2024

Each of us has a role to play in providing opportunities for Black women to have access to mental wellness care. Your involvement, whether through volunteering, donating, or simply spreading the word, is crucial in sustaining our work and making a significant impact. Together, we can ensure the availability of vital mental wellness services and create a positive, lasting change in our community.

Here is how you can be part of our community:

- Become a monthly donor and join our Collective Care Giving Circle or give a one-time gift at communitycare.sistaafya.com/donate
- 2 Sign up for our email list to have a more intimate experience getting to know us and our work at communitycare.sistaafya.com
- Share our services with women in your area seeking holistic mental wellness care by signing up for services at communitycare.sistaafya.com/get-support
- 4 Spread the word—share our posts that resonate with you and others on social media and tag us ossale.com

Leadership

Executive Director Camesha L. Jones, LCSW

President

Vice President LaCreshia Birts

Treasurer

Secretary

Board Members Kiesha Williams



(i) @sistaafya

@sistaafya

Learn more:

communitycare.sistaafya.com

Email:

donor.relations@sistaafya.com

Donate:

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