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New Mural to Promote Vascular Health in Historic Northeast Kansas City

Mural Focuses on Awareness of Key Community Health Issue: Peripheral Artery Disease

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (March 26, 2021) — In early April, four Kansas City artists will begin creating a mural in the Paseo Gateway neighborhoods of historic Northeast Kansas City, Mo., designed to educate and raise awareness about a critical yet little known community health issue – peripheral artery disease (commonly known as PAD).

“PAD affects 8.5 million Americans over the age of 40, yet awareness of the condition and its causes is low, around 25 percent,” explained Kim Smolderen, Ph.D., FAHA, Project Lead, Yale University. “PAD is a vascular disease characterized by blockages in the arteries of the legs. PAD can cause pain while walking, and if left untreated, can progress to a stage where individuals are dealing with non-healing wounds and amputations. PAD is also associated with a higher risk of having a heart attack or stroke.”

This community art project is built on Dr. Smolderen’s earlier research that was funded through two grants from PCORI* and a grant from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research. This earlier work studied patients’ quality of life as they navigated care for a new diagnosis of PAD. Patients from the Kansas City area and across the U.S., the Netherlands, and Australia took part in that study.

Dr. Smolderen of Yale University, Vascular Medicine Outcomes (VAMOS) program, along with researchers Christina M. Pacheco, J.D., MPH, Saint Luke’s Mid America Heart Institute, and Janette Berkley-Patton, Ph.D., University of Missouri Kansas City, received a second award for funding through the Eugene Washington Engagement Awards Program from PCORI* to create innovative ways to disseminate those research findings back into the community.

“This art project focuses on community involvement and informing members of the Paseo Gateway neighborhoods about PAD, its risk factors, and local resources to help address the condition,” Dr. Smolderen said. “Some of the key risk factors of PAD are smoking, diabetes, and an inactive lifestyle. Research by the American Heart Association shows that people in center city neighborhoods are especially at risk of late diagnosis, and if PAD is left untreated, it can lead to amputation.”

About the Mural

Starting in early April, the mural will be painted on the east wall of the building at the corner of Prospect and Independence Avenue in the Paseo Gateway neighborhoods of Northeast Kansas City. This area is undergoing redevelopment and revitalization through a 2016 Choice Neighborhood grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Weather permitting, the mural will be completed and unveiled to the public with a community event on Saturday, April 10, 1-4 p.m. {Rain date for the event is Saturday, April 17.}

Back in early 2020, under the lead of UMKC and now under the lead of Yale University (Dr. Smolderen's prior and current institutions), Saint Luke's Hospital partnered with the Mattie Rhodes Center to engage local artists to work collaboratively to create a unique, interactive art installation. After careful consideration, four local artists were selected to collaborate on this art endeavor. The four artists are: Carmen Moreno, Jason Wilcox, Isaac Tapia, and Rodrigo Alvarez.

The project leaders held town halls in the neighborhood that helped prioritize topics that were important to the community. Exercise in the community was one of them, as were mental health concerns, recognizing heart disease, and access to affordable medications.

Residents of Northeast Kansas City shared their "Movement Stories," and these narratives inspired themes for the mural. These stories described how physical activity, along with its barriers and facilitators, have impacted residents over the course of their lives.

"Movement, physical activity, and managing other cardiac risk factors are integral to preventing, diagnosing, and treating PAD," said Dr. Smolderen. "We want this mural to help raise awareness for PAD, to educate people about how to get screened for PAD, and to inspire people to walk and be active as a way to improve their health."

The mural will include messages about some of the common symptoms of PAD, such as pain in the legs while walking. It will feature a QR code that will link people to the [ShowMe-PAD.org](https://www.showme-pad.org) website for additional information and resources. The researchers have also developed a resource map that will be distributed throughout the neighborhoods that describes where in the community residents can go for safe walking, exercise, and healthy eating, plus resources for quitting smoking, PAD screening, and mental health treatment.

About the Artists

Carmen Moreno

As the daughter of an immigrant farm worker, Carmen Moreno is inspired by the natural world, science, and art. The early years of her life were spent in the open Midwest fields where she learned about the world through nature and solitude. It was during these times that she studied natural movement – lines, flow and migrations. Carmen is a visual artist, poet, performer, and ecological designer. She received her BFA in 2010 from the Kansas City Art Institute in Interdisciplinary Art and Creative Writing with a certification in Community Arts and Service Learning. She currently works as an independent artist in Kansas City and her work is driven by her interests in science, art, ecological theory, and Latinx Futurism. She is also a community gardener and arts educator, and she works with refugees and immigrant populations throughout Historic Northeast Kansas City. She was recently accepted to the Rhode Island

School of Design, where she will be working towards her Master's in Nature, Culture, and Sustainability. You can follow her work on Instagram at @carmenchristinamoreno or learn more about her work at her website: <http://www.ccmoreno.com/>.

Jason Wilcox

A Kansas City native, Jason Wilcox has always been passionate about art. From an early age, art was a strong influence in his life. His artistic mission is to entice viewers to escape reality and live an alternate life within his paintings. J Art Pro is born out of Jason's creative mind and influenced by a collaboration of painting, graphic design, video production, and music. Jason attended Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts in Kansas City, Mo., where he was awarded Best Visual Artist of his Senior Class of 2000. His current media include acrylic, gold, silver, copper and green leaf, ink, paint, marker, oil, pastel, spray paint, and watercolor. Jason's work shows a contemporary outlook on realism, abstract, and pop art styles. You can follow his work on Instagram at @jasonjartpro or learn more about his work on his website: www.jartpro.com.

Isaac Tapia

A Kansas City, Mo., based muralist and painter, Isaac Tapia's work is a visual tribute to the many stories of struggle and triumph within his community. Using a blend of classical techniques and bright, fluid imagery, he exalts the narratives of individuals who have been erased throughout history. Through his art, Isaac strives to honor the least visible members of society and carve out a space for their stories in the world of fine art. Isaac's diverse body of art is united by themes of representation and dialogue, reminding his audience that a voice is a voice; even when it isn't speaking English.

Isaac was born in Mexico and moved to the U.S. when he was 9. As he was learning English, art became his tool for mediating the confusion and isolation he felt. Isaac attended the Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts. Isaac went on to attend the Kansas City Art Institute, where he studied painting. In 2019, he attended the Illustration Academy by the National Endowment for the Arts and Interurban Arthouse. Isaac is also a Youth Development Specialist for the Mattie Rhodes Center. You can follow his work on Instagram at @tapia.isaac.

Rodrigo Alvarez

Born in Uruguay in 1988, Rodrigo Alvarez lived most of his life in the state of Colonia until he moved to Kansas City, Mo., on October 29, 2002. He graduated from the Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts in 2007. He continued his studies at the Metropolitan Community College where he studied graphic design. His education furthered his interest in the field of art. Also known as "Rico," Rodrigo centers his work on organic natural figures and takes those concepts to create three-dimensional metal sculptures. His work showcases the persistence and relentless nature of mother earth; bending, melting, and bracing commonly used metals into harmonic organisms that portray the resiliency and power of nature. You can follow his work on Instagram at @alvarezrodrigo4.

IT-RA

Together, Isaac and Rico make up the muralist duo "IT-RA." IT-RA has completed over 36 murals in the Kansas City Metropolitan area since their founding in 2017. Notable works include the "Troost Angel," in the Troost corridor, Café Corazón's "Frida," and the Olathe Library's "Sunflowers." You can follow their work on Instagram at @itraicons, Facebook @RicoandIt, or learn more about their work on their website: <https://www.itraicons.com/>

About PCORI

PCORI is an independent, nonprofit organization authorized by Congress in 2010 to fund comparative effectiveness research that will provide patients, their caregivers, and clinicians with the evidence needed to make better-informed health and healthcare decisions. PCORI is committed to seeking input from a broad range of stakeholders to guide its work.

For more info on Dr. Smolderen's research:

<https://www.pcori.org/research-results/2019/promoting-easy-step-program-take-charge-vascular-health-greater-kansas-city>

This program is funded through a Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Eugene Washington PCORI Engagement Award (EA #14505).

<https://showme-pad.org>

*IP2 PI000753-01; CE-1304-6677

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