

FRIEND OF MEDICINE AWARD: *Ruth Ramsey*, OUR HEALTH MATTERS

Making Health Matter to Everyone

By Jim Braibish, *Kansas City Medicine*



Back in the early 2000s, **Ruth Ramsey** became more keenly aware of the sharp health disparities facing African

Americans and other minorities through the experiences of family members and her business clients. The evidence was strong about how hypertension, type 2 diabetes, cancer and other diseases are much more prevalent among Blacks. If only people had more understanding about how to take care of themselves and get preventive screenings, she thought, that could make a huge difference and keep more people healthy.

Thus was born the idea of starting a health magazine—one that is visually appealing, easy-to-read and packed with valuable health advice. And, what’s more amazing is the magazine would be made available at no cost to readers. *Our Health Matters* magazine was launched in 2005.

Sixteen years later, some 15,000 copies of *Our Health Matters* are distributed five times a year throughout greater Kansas City, mostly through more than 100 free pickup stands at area CVS pharmacies, hospitals, grocery stores, community centers and other sites. More than 4,000 copies are mailed each issue, and thousands more people read *Our Health Matters* online.

For her contributions to health in greater Kansas City, Ramsey has been chosen to receive the 2021 KCMS Friend of Medicine Award.

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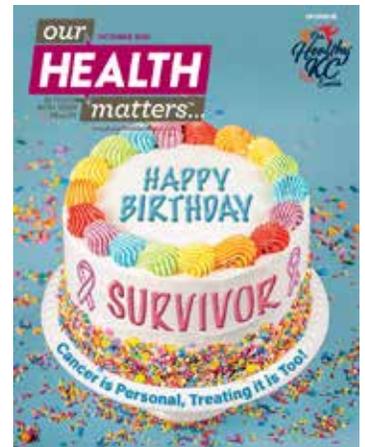
Topics covered in recent editions of *Our Health Matters* include current trends in cancer treatment and the importance of early diagnosis, how a patient-centered care team improves health outcomes, the science behind COVID-19 vaccines, better sleep health and much more. Content is shaped to reach a diverse audience reflecting the Kansas City community racially, ethnically, culturally and socioeconomically.

She reflected on the impact of *Our Health Matters*: “We have helped people increase their level of health literacy so they can understand what influences their health. We have equipped people with information ... knowledge is power! We are concerned with the whole community. Everyone should know they matter. That’s why, regardless of race, ethnicity or neighborhood, everyone should get early screenings and see their doctors regularly.”

Articles typically are contributed by local experts; some are staff written or compiled from federal government resources. Graphic design is provided by Ramsey & Associates Design, the firm she founded in 1990.

Partnerships have been a key ingredient of the success of *Our Health Matters*. These, along with advertising, provide the main sources of revenue to ensure the valuable information *Our Health Matters* provides is sustainable. Ramsey explained, “Throughout the years we have developed relationships with a number of organizations including Blue Cross Blue Shield KC, Truman Medical Centers, the University of Kansas Medical Center, Children’s Mercy and Saint Luke’s Health System. One special partnership is the Health Forward Foundation, where their sponsored ads feature the extraordinary services offered by their grantees.”

A reader survey in 2013 showed that the publication has a strong, loyal following. Nearly one third of respondents indicated they have read every issue over the past 12 months, and more than two thirds pass along their copy to family, friends and others.



Our Health Matters has been recognized with numerous awards including the 2017 Black Girls Rock Award from the Alpha Kappa Alpha Xi Tau Omega Chapter, the 2011 Delta Sigma Theta Women of Courage Award, the 2007 Black Health Care Coalition Media Award, the 2007 Missouri Public Health Association Media Award and the 2006 Kansas City Chronic Disease Association Health Media Award. Ramsey also served as a member of the Kansas City Minority Health Commission for six years.

Daphne Bascom, MD, chair of the KCMS & Foundation Wellness and Prevention Committee, praised Ramsey's work: "Ruth has been a key leader in providing resources to our community about health, wellness and care. As the publisher of *Our Health Matters*, Ruth has focused on developing partnerships with key stakeholders across the KC metro to bring timely, relevant and digestible information to all members of our community."

About the award, Ramsey said, "I'm surprised and honored. This award shows

that someone believes in what we do and that this health education work is important for our community. We invite and encourage other health organizations to consider partnering with us."

To learn more, pick up a copy of *Our Health Matters* at a local CVS, hospital or community center or download digital editions at kcourhealthmatters.com. ☺

DR. MICHAEL L. WEAVER (continued from page 18)

Dean Mary Anne Jackson, MD, said, "Dr. Weaver is a pioneer in medicine and has been my colleague and friend for over four decades. A leader at the local, state and national levels, Dr. Weaver's mentorship for underrepresented minority students who aspire to a career in medicine has always been center stage in his focus. His continuing dedication to the Mission Vision Project KC will assure that underrepresented Kansas City students of all ages will follow their dream and pursue a career in medicine."

In retirement, Dr. Weaver looks forward to spending more time with family as

well as pursuing the Mission Vision Project KC. After years of devotion to emergency medicine, he got married for the first time a little over a year ago. With his wife, Jami-la, he gained two sons, ages 13 and 18, the latter a senior at Rockhurst High.

Reflecting on his career, Dr. Weaver said, "I am so thankful for the educational and health care institutions in our KC metro area. If not for the opportunity to be educated at Rockhurst High School, the six-year program at UMKC School of Medicine, and to begin and grow my professional career at Saint Luke's, I wouldn't be prepared to give back to the community

in this chapter of my life."

He continued, "I spent my professional career at a hospital that was progressive and innovative. Saint Luke's supported my ideas where we were able to improve patient care, both in forensic medicine and in diversity, equity and inclusion." ☺