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*Laura Gordon:* Our first speakers is Jared Hymowitz, who is Director of the Mayor's Healthy City Initiative in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and he'll talk about their Hair & Health Program.

*Jared Hymowitz:* Mayor Sharon Weston-Broome is sorry that she couldn't join us, but I'll be happy to share some of the great work great work that she's been leading.

So, a little bit of background on Healthy BR. Healthy BR is an initiative that was started a little bit over 12 years ago under the previous Mayor, Kip Holden. And what he wanted to do was, he wanted to find a way that we can address health on a local level. Because in Louisiana, we don't have local health departments. So, the most local health department is by region, and so, we're located in Region 2, with our parish or county and six other parishes.

And so, out of this idea of how do we address health on a local level, he started Healthy BR, or the Mayor's Healthy City Initiative. And just under 10 years ago, we became a separate 501(c)(3). And so, I have a really unique job in that I am a politically appointed person in the Mayor's office, but I also am the sole employee of Healthy BR.

Healthy BR has a board of directors, with 17 CEOs that sit on the board. So, all five nonprofit hospitals sit on our board—the Chamber, the Foundation, the local Rec Department, the public school system, Pennington Biomedical Research Center, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Louisiana, which is the largest insurer in our state and also in our parish and city. Dr. Guidry, who is the Chief Medical Officer for the State Health Department, the Louisiana Primary Care Association, which oversees all of the FQHCs in our state. We have the Health District, we have the Mayor. Coletta Barrett is the VP of Mission at Our Lady of the Lake and she is one of the founders of Healthy BR and is still the board chair.

And so, through this coalition, our mission is to communicate, collaborate, and coordinate to make Baton Rouge a healthier place for us. And what we use to kind of drive our work is called a Community Health Needs Assessment. And so, if you're not familiar with what a Community Health Needs Assessment or a CHNA is, it's a tax policy under the Affordable Care Act that all nonprofit hospitals have to provide every three years to maintain their tax exemptions.

And so, in 2012, the Coalition decided to come together and say, "Healthy BR, we'd like you to put together this Community Health

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Needs Assessment.” And so, we came together, wrote it, submitted it to each of the hospitals, and then each of them individually sent them to the IRS. And so, in 2015, we came together again and said, “We wonder if we should be really submitting separate ones or if we should just submit the same one. And, if we're gonna submit the same Community Health Needs Assessment, we should probably also send one implementation plan.” And at that time, no one really knew if you were able to do that. We asked our auditors, we asked our tax attorneys, and no one could give us a definite answer.

And so, the board took the leap of faith and said, “Okay, we're gonna send this to the IRS, and if they come back and say we need to change it, then we'll change it.” And so, they submitted what we believe to be the nation's first joint Community Health Needs Assessment and joint implementation plan with all of the nonprofit hospitals in the county.

And so, we submitted that to the IRS, they accepted it, and as a result, the American Heart Association provided the City of Baton Rouge with the NOVA Award, in recognition of the innovation of coming together and doing a joint Community Health Needs Assessment.

And so, in 2018, Mayor Broom had taken office, and she decided to keep the initiative going, that's when I came on, and we then facilitated the 2018 Community Health Needs Assessment. And from that document, we have four priority areas. Healthy living, which is eating well—sorry, eating well, not smoking, and being active as well as a focus on childhood obesity prevention; Sexually transmitted infections and HIV; Access to Care; and Behavioral Health, which is substance abuse and mental health.

And so, we have these four priority areas, and we like to talk about them being the car that we're driving and the track that they're on is zip code disparities and the social determinants of health. And so, after we wrote the 2018 Community Health Needs Assessment, we started working on the implementation plan. And as a result, we bring stakeholders together. And one of the initiatives that came from that was Hair and Health.

And so, Hair and Health really was birthed out of research that I had found around engaging African-American males in barbershops around high blood pressure. And I had read some articles and I had sent them to some of our stakeholders and our

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partners, and the response was, “This is interesting. We should probably go down this path and see how we can do that.”

And so, we brought some of our main partners. So, Louisiana Primary Care Association, we brought together the American Heart Association, we brought together Pennington Biomedical Research Center, the Louisiana State University, and a nonprofit called MetroMorphosis. And we brought these five entities around the table and said, “We are interested in looking at how we can leverage our resources and our knowledge to try to address high blood pressure in our community.”

And so, each partner had a specific role, and Healthy BR’s role was to be the convener. And so, we bring the people around the table, we help drive some goals and outcomes, and we really are that collective impact backbone organization.

And so, the Louisiana Primary Care Association provided the training to the barbers and helped with finding resources to connect clients at these barbershops to primary care docs. The American Heart Association helped provide the blood pressure cuffs that you can see in this picture. They also provided the connections and technical assistance to maintain the knowledge and ensure that these barbers are adequately taking the blood pressure and have the knowledge. Pennington is looking at how we can look at this from a research standpoint, and so, Dr. Newton at Pennington has actually applied for an NIH grant about this program. LSU is helping to provide some outreach as well as some internship opportunities. And then MetroMorphosis is the nonprofit that is actually connecting us to the community and to the barbershops. And previously, they’ve held community conversations in these barbershops, and so they have those relationships, and so they’re helping us maintain those.

And so, you can see in these pictures that the mayor is engaging with the barbers, and the barbers are engaging in the chairs with their clients. And so, we set up some goals for this. We wanted to engage 300 African-American males by serving them, with 75 percent of them reporting an increase in knowledge around high blood pressure. We want to consistently engage 100 African-American males by taking their blood pressure readings more than 20 times in that year. We want 50 percent of African-American males that have an elevated blood pressure of 130/80 to make an appointment with a primary care physician and attend that appointment. And we would like 50 percent of African-American

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males that have an elevated blood pressure to decrease their blood pressure under the 130/80 by the end of the year.

And so, these are some ambitious goals, but we felt it was necessary to have these goals in place so that when we're working, we're working towards something rather than doing the initiative for the sake of doing the initiative.

And so currently, we have seven barbershops on board, and we have 10 barbers or master groomers who are partnering with us. And so, each of those 10 barbers are then going to engage 10 clients. And so, currently, we have 72 clients on board, and 15 of them have actually started a documentation process.

We're working on targeting clients rather than your average person who's coming into the barbershop, because these clients are coming in twice a month or more frequently and have that relationships with the barber to have these trusted conversations. And so, we're now in the conversations of, how can we incentivize both the barbers and the clients to continue to go down this path?

And so, really, that's, in a nutshell the Hair and Health program. And one of the challenges that we've seen that we've been working through is that each of our partners comes from very different spaces. The American Heart Association as a national nonprofit has goals and objectives that they're looking to work towards. MetroMorphosis has their own goals and objectives. We have researchers who have very specific time frames and thought processes. And we have the Louisiana Primary Care Association, which is specifically looking at the medical side.

And so, we've been doing a good job of making sure that we're communicating and that we're all on the same page, even though we all have different interests into this program. And so, that is Hair and Health here in Baton Rouge.

*John Clymer:*

Jared, thank you very much. That was a great presentation, and it's been very exciting to see Mayor Broom leading Hair and Health and Healthy BR and multiple additional initiatives under your umbrella and the way that you're putting the teeth into it. And I think certainly the very specific goals—measureable goals that you identified for Hair and Health show that this is, as you said, a very serious effort aimed at driving change and health improvement, not just activity. So, thank you, again—you and Mayor Broom—for sharing that with us.