

Our partner, The [African American Male Wellness Agency](#), or “the Agency,” hosts walks in cities across the country each summer to raise funds and awareness for its cause of reducing health disparities among African American males. We’ve been pleased to not just sponsor walks across the Midwest this summer, but to walk in support of our shared goal of addressing racial gaps in health outcomes.

The Agency held its annual Columbus, Ohio walk on Aug. 14, and our team members were right there handing out water and participating as a team. More importantly, during the walk and the activities leading up to the event, people took part in 5,400 health screenings.

The walk is part of a health initiative started by the Columbus organization’s founder, John H. Gregory, who wanted to help men in his community live longer by understanding what steps they could take to prevent diseases. The event allows men and their families across the country to obtain free health screenings and raise awareness about living a healthier lifestyle.

“The big issue in the community isn’t necessarily that people don’t have insurance or can’t afford health care. It’s that they just don’t go to the doctor because it’s not a very pleasurable experience,” explained Marlon Platt, the Columbus nonprofit’s Executive Director. “We’re really just creating a community space that makes people feel welcome and fun to lure them in to get their screenings and to get with a physician to review their results.”

Since the first walk, held in 2004, the event has expanded to 16 cities around the country, many of which are located near our stores. In addition to Columbus, we’re sponsoring walks in Detroit, Toledo, Akron, Cleveland and Youngstown.

“We really want to remove that barrier to health care,” Marlon said. “With Meijer getting involved, we were able to do more activations to serve a lot more people and, most importantly, provide free health screenings throughout the year.”

Lancaster, Ohio Store Director Jonathan Jones, a longtime admirer of the organization, was thrilled to see the partnership. Thanks to the work of the African American Male Wellness Agency and other groups, he’s seeing attitudes changing.

“There’s a new phrase in the African American Community: ‘Health is the new wealth,’” Jonathan said. “It’s about being more health-conscious and focusing not only on our physical health but our mental health, as well.”

Jonathan and members of his leadership team also took part in the African American Male Wellness Job Fair. It provided a venue to connect with people and share our company history, core values and employment opportunities.

He’s also seeing more support for African American males from the greater community as people become aware of disparities and social injustice.

“I think people are just starting to lift us up a lot more,” Jonathan said. “That’s why it was such a big deal that there was a huge turnout at the walk and Meijer is involved.”

Beyond sponsoring the walks, our support of the Agency underwrites programming provided throughout the year to the community for free that focuses on fatherhood, financial health, mental and physical health and wellness, research and mentorship.

It isn’t too late to participate in the African American Male Wellness Walk in [Detroit](#) on Sept. 25. Keep an eye out for our team members while you’re there!

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Additional assets available online: [\(5\)](#)

