



Kennedy Heights Blooms



Inaugural Edition Summer 2025





Elsa Caetano

Executive Director

Together, We Bloom

Welcome to the first quarterly edition of Kennedy Heights Blooms. I am the Executive Director of the Kennedy Heights Community Center (KHCC), where we proudly serve the 104 households of Kennedy Heights and many neighbors on Madison's North Side. Our work focuses on youth, families, and especially single mothers—through programming that promotes education, wellness, and resilience in the face of economic hardship.

I stepped into this role in 2022, as the community was still reeling from the impacts of the pandemic. With a background in education and holistic wellness, I helped lead a shift in our approach—centering whole-person care through nutritious food, youth development, mental health support, and family engagement.

Last month, a shooting in our neighborhood brought renewed urgency to our work. At a community listening session, residents shared how alone and unsafe they felt after law enforcement left. Many asked for mental health resources and safer spaces. KHCC doesn't own the property—but it is where our community turns in times of need.

And still—our story is not one of tragedy, but of strength. In the days that followed, families organized, shared ideas, and took ownership of their safety. That kind of community-led action is what makes Kennedy Heights extraordinary—and it's why I created this newsletter

As our team continues serving youth through summer programs, we invite you to join us. Whether you donate, spread the word, or help build new partnerships, your support strengthens this community.

With gratitude,

Elsa



Alder Carmella Glenn visiting our Block party in June, 2025

Tomorrow! Natty Nation Brings the Beat for Kennedy Heights

KTHCC
SUN'S OUT FUNDS OUT
summer camp
FUNDRAISER

FRIDAY, JULY 18TH
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM
@ LAKESIDE ST COFFEE HOUSE

JOIN US FOR FOOD & REFRESHMENTS, LIVE ENTERTAINMENT, AND COMMUNITY BUILDING!

Tickets \$30!

w/ Special Guest **NATTY NATION!**

venmo

paypal



Known throughout Madison and across the country, **Natty Nation** is more than a band—they're a movement. Celebrated for their deep **Rastafarian roots**, genre-blending sound, and a message that uplifts **unity, justice, and global citizenship**, Natty Nation brings energy and soul to every performance.

We're thrilled to invite you to a special evening at **Lakeside Coffee House** on **Friday, July 18, from 5:00 to 7:00 PM**. Enjoy a live performance by Natty Nation in an intimate setting, with good vibes, great company, and a powerful cause behind it all.

Tickets are \$30 and limited to the first **120 guests**—so don't wait to reserve your spot! A **cash bar** will be available for refreshments.

This event is generously hosted at **Lakeside St. Coffee House**, and we are deeply grateful to both Lakeside and **Natty Nation** for donating their space and time in support of Kennedy Heights Community Center.

♥ **100% of ticket sales will directly support our free summer camp**, helping us continue to provide safe, joyful, and enriching experiences for youth in our community.

Join us for a night that feeds your soul and fuels our mission.

Tickets are \$30 and limited to the first **120 guests**—so we encourage early registration!

Admission will also be available at the door (as space allows) and can be paid via **Venmo, PayPal, cash, or check**.

“You can be the reason a child feels safe and seen this summer.”



Make an in-person donation at: 199 Kennedy Heights, Madison,
WI 53704 Or donate over the phone: Tel: (608)-244-0767



Ebony Rose

Board President

Where Education Meets Community Power

I believe community centers like KHCC are vital connectors—bridging the gap between schools, families, and neighborhoods, especially for those who are too often pushed to the margins. As someone working every day inside MMSD schools, I see firsthand how powerful those connections can be when we're intentional.

In my role with Black Hawk Middle School and across MMSD, I'm committed to deepening KHCC's ties to our public schools. I'm especially passionate about positioning KHCC as a hub for literacy—right here in the heart of Northport's subsidized housing corridor.

That vision includes building pathways that are culturally rooted, socially justice oriented, accessible, and grounded in the needs and brilliance of our youth and families.

As both an educator and an inspiring public school administrator, I know KHCC's strength lies in its commitment to community. Whether it's youth learning to grow and cook their own food, after-school tutoring, or resident listening sessions, KHCC operates from a place of respect and reciprocity. That's the work I believe in. That's the work I'm here to help move forward.

Lifting Every Voice at KHCC

Representative Francesca Hong is dedicated to advocating for working-class individuals and families, evidenced by her persistent efforts in environmental, racial, and economic justice. She actively promotes awareness of the Asian community, which constitutes 25-40% of the KHCC population, alongside a majority of residents who are African American. Additionally, she champions the Community Center's positive impact on families and highlights the critical need for increased community resources and supporters to further KHCC's mission.



Francesca Hong

Board Vice-Chair



**Block Parties
That Build
Community**



Summer Was a Hit -

Let's Do It Again This Fall on September 17!

At Kennedy Heights Community Center (KHCC), our block parties are more than just celebrations—they're powerful tools for connection, trust, and resilience. We host two block parties each year, creating joyful, welcoming spaces where neighbors can come together over food, fun, and shared purpose. These events strengthen relationships, foster belonging, and serve as a gateway to vital resources and services.

Our June block party was a beautiful success! Families enjoyed a giant water slide, received free bags of fresh produce courtesy of our Rooted, and earned \$25 gift cards for participating in a consumer food survey by to ensure that the Dane County Food Action Plan includes

recommendations that reflects the whole of our community . We're especially grateful to Alder Camilla Glenn for joining us and showing her support for the community.

Mark your calendars—our next block party is happening on **September 17th!** We can't wait to gather again and continue building a stronger, safer, and more connected Kennedy Heights.

Summer Camp Is in Full Swing at KHCC - Where Kids Thrive and Belong!

Kennedy Heights Community Center Summer Camp

Our summer camp is more than just a place for kids to spend the summer—it's a safe, nurturing, and empowering space where youth can grow, explore, and belong. Designed especially for families navigating economic hardship, our program is completely free of cost and rooted in the belief that every child deserves a joyful, enriching summer.

Campers enjoy a wide range of activities that support their physical, social, and emotional development—from field trips across Wisconsin to outdoor play, gardening, arts and crafts, cooking, and hands-on science. Our dedicated team of staff and volunteers serve as role models, helping kids build confidence, friendships, and lasting memories.

We also weave in opportunities for learning, leadership, and restorative practices to help young people develop critical life skills in a supportive, culturally grounded environment. And of course, healthy meals and snacks are always included.

At KHCC, summer is a time to reconnect with community, discover new interests, and celebrate the brilliance of our youth. We're proud to offer a camp where kids are seen, supported, and free to be themselves.





Community Petition for Safety Improvements

At the request of residents, we developed and circulated a community petition calling for enhanced safety measures at Kennedy Heights. The petition will be formally shared with *Wisconsin Housing Preservation Corp*, who owns our building, and *Meridian*, who manages the property, to elevate resident concerns and advocate for meaningful action.



Our mission:

The mission of the Kennedy Heights Community Center is to create a community support network for low to moderate income families; increase available resources and programs to improve the lives of residents and to develop and present social, educational, recreational and cultural programs for children, youth and adults.

Now's the time to show up for our community.