

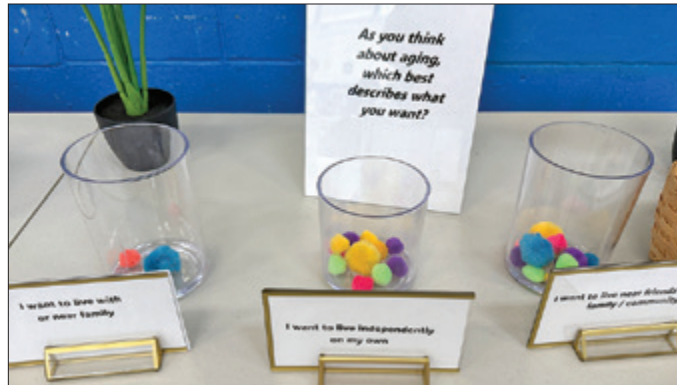
# ABIPA – ASHEVILLE BUNCOMBE INSTITUTE OF PARITY ACHIEVEMENT

## The Heart of Home

By JéWana Grier-McEachin, Executive Director



JéWana Grier-McEachin. Photo: Red Angle Photography



### What does it take to age in place in our community?

AARP of the Mountain Region has been a long-standing partner of ABIPA. Our shared focus this year, Aging in Place, “The Heart of Home,” is an initiative I am deeply proud to support. Affordable housing is the broad umbrella under which this work falls, but within it are many intricate layers, almost like peeling an onion.



At the center of our conversations is a foundational question: What does it take to age in place in our community? On April 8, 2026, we continued exploring this question during the second session of our four-part series. We opened with a community discussion on Aging in Place and Intergenerational Living.

I was reminded of a quote from my grandfather that has stayed with me: “People plan to live, but they don’t plan to die.” As someone in the “sandwich generation,” both a parent and a caregiver, I’ve adapted that wisdom into something that reflects

our current reality: People plan to live, but they don’t plan to decline. We often think about death as a clear endpoint, but what about the years in between? How do we want to live as we transition away from being fully self-sufficient?

Living in a popular retirement destination, these questions matter. The policies shaped by Planning and Zoning and approved by City Council directly influence how we age in place. And, it’s worth remembering that we are all actively aging. In what feels like a blink, we find ourselves at 50, 60, 70, 80 years of age—and with good fortune, 90 and beyond, heading toward becoming centenarians.

As a homeowner in Shiloh, a Legacy Neighborhood, I am keenly aware of how decisions made by City of Asheville staff and the Planning and Zoning Commission affect our community. With potential developments pressing in, both from within Shiloh’s core on Caribou Road and along the outer band of Sweeten Creek, it is more important than ever to stay engaged. We must be part of the conversations and the mobilization happening right at the doorstep of The Heart of Home: Aging in Place.



Celebrating 22 Years of Being the Community Health Connection for Asheville and Beyond

### Help Us Celebrate Our Birthday by Gifting ABIPA a Donation of \$22

Tax-deductible donations can be made by sending a check to ABIPA, PO Box 448, Asheville, NC 28802, or donate online at [www.abipa.org](http://www.abipa.org). Thank you for your support!

## Booker T. Washington and Minority Health Month

by JaiEssence McEachin, MPH

### Health is foundational to freedom and progress.



JaiEssence McEachin, MPH. Photo: Red Angle Photography

Most people know that Carter G. Woodson was the founder of Black History Month, which began as Negro History Week in 1926. That week was expanded to a full month in 1976 to recognize the vital, often overlooked, contributions of Black people to US history and culture.

As I began my research for this month’s article, I was surprised to learn that the roots of National Minority Health Month stretch back even further.

In 1915, Booker T. Washington established National Negro Health Week, a nationwide effort to improve the health and well-being of Black communities.

Eighty-seven years later, in 2002, Congress passed a concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 388) supporting the creation of National Minority Health and Health Disparities Month. The resolution encouraged “all health organizations and Americans to conduct appropriate programs and activities to promote healthfulness in minority and other communities experiencing health disparities.”

You would think that 111 years after Washington’s call to action, conditions would be significantly better. Yet, to our cultural and collective detriment, the abyss of health disparities continues to deepen.

We have information. We have improved access to care. We have more resources than ever. But we also continue to face both covert and blatant racism—forces that affect



Booker T. Washington established National Negro Health Week in 1915.

our bodies, our health outcomes, and our spirits.

When I reflect on this year’s National Minority Health Month theme, “Be the Source for Better Health,” I’m reminded of Richard Smallwood’s *Total Praise*. One of its most powerful lines declares, “You are the source of my strength.” God’s presence and power grounds us, fuels us, and anchors us. As we are strengthened, we in turn become a source of better health, both personally and within our communities.

By centering the role of culture, community, and connection in health, and by addressing the Social Drivers of Health (SDOH), we create a pathway for real, actionable change. We can work to improve non-medical factors such as food access, transportation, and housing. We can show up for community events as volunteers or participants at free screenings, health fairs, and mental health summits. We can advocate for local nonprofits addressing chronic disease, maternal health, and mental health disparities by writing to City Council, the County Board of Commissioners, and state leaders to request funding and support.

Booker T. Washington understood that health is foundational to freedom and progress. More than a century later, his message still calls us to action: to be informed, to be engaged, and to be the source of better health for ourselves and for one another.

Listen to ABIPA's Body & Soul Radio Show on WRES 100.7 FM, Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. on [wresfm.com](http://wresfm.com).

### ABIPA

PO Box 448, Asheville, NC 28802  
Office (828) 673-8195 • Fax (828) 251-8365  
[Facebook.com/ABIPA.CARES](https://www.facebook.com/ABIPA.CARES)  
[www.ABIPA.org](http://www.ABIPA.org)

ABIPA promotes economic, social, and healthy parity achievement for African Americans and other underserved populations in Buncombe County through advocacy, education, research, and community partnerships.

