

# Memory Walks for Healing

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Many African Americans believe memory loss that is severe enough to impair daily functioning is natural to aging, even though it's not, she added.

The results of the study are still fresh, having just been wrapped up in May. But so far, the benefits to overall mental health seem evident, though Croff cautions that she's unsure if its due directly to participants' behavior during the study or changes in behavior overall as a result of having gone through it, such as being inspired to walk, socialize, or reminisce more in their day-to-day life.

For 86 percent of the participants who completed the study, half of them had improved cognitive assessment scores at the end. In addition, 77 percent had decreased blood pressure, half experienced lost weight, and all of them reported improved mood since starting the walks, Croff said.

Qualitative research, like focus group evaluations and interviews, revealed that many of the participants were engaged and dropout rates from the study were low due to the sense of purpose participants gained from activities that recorded Portland's African American history.

"What we've heard is that there's a real healing aspect -- healing from the trauma of gentrification," Croff said.

She said the participants also warmed up to the ethnically diverse college students who participated in the study, which Croff said ranged from undergrad to post grad researchers from Lewis and Clark College and Pacific University.

Croff was born in Portland to a black father and white mother. She said her mother saw to it that she was taught black history and would check up to see what she was learning in school. After high school she went on to study the African Diaspora Cultures—which describes the mass dispersion of people of African descent during the Transatlantic Slave Trades from the 1500s to the 1800s—as an archaeologist in Senegal and Guadeloupe, as well as African American burial grounds in the U.S.

After taking a job as a qualitative researcher at OHSU, Croff conceived of the SHARP study with the support of a trusted mentor who told her "why not?"

"That gave me the confidence that there is a place for an anthropologist in neuroscience. There is a place for oral history. If it's aligned with participants' cultural worldview and their passion, which is community, then there's a way," she said.

Croff hopes the program, which she says is highly adaptable, can eventually be used in other cities impacted by similar issues.

"Gentrification is happening all over the U.S. and wouldn't this be a great way...to have those people go through their historical archives, just the way we did, and form themed routes and images and questions and be able to do the study in their cities."

The SHARP study was supported by funding from the Alzheimer's Association and



Raina Croff, Ph.D., assistant professor of neurology at OHSU, and designer of a program called *Sharing History through Active Reminiscence and Photo Imagery, or SHARP*. The study focuses on brain health while also serving as a way of preserving the stories of community black elders.

performed out of OHSU's Layton Aging & Alzheimer's Disease Center, one of the National Institute of Health's top ranked facilities of such research. The original pilot program, which launched in 2016, was supported by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

You are invited to join  
**Antioch Missionary Baptist Church**  
 and  
**Greater Mt Gillard Missionary Baptist Church**

For **Vacation Bible School 2018**  
 5935 North Minnesota Avenue  
 (corner of Minnesota and Ainsworth)  
 July 16 - July 20; 5:30-8:00 p.m.

Ages 3-Adult  
 (age appropriate lessons for everyone)

Activities, Refreshments, Crafts,  
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**MULTNOMAH COUNTY**

**CAREOREGON**  
 315 SW 5th Ave, Portland  
 ► July 11..... 9-11 a.m.  
 ► July 18..... 9-11 a.m.

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
 50 SW 2nd Ave, Portland  
 July 3 ..... 9-11 a.m.  
 July 10..... 9-11 a.m.  
 July 17 ..... 9-11 a.m.  
 July 24..... 9-11 a.m.  
 July 31..... 9-11 a.m.

**HOME FORWARD RESOURCE FAIR**  
 16126 SE Stark St, Portland  
 July 19..... 3:30-7 p.m.

**JOIN**  
 1435 NE 81st Ave, Suite 100  
 Portland  
 July 12..... 12-2 p.m.

**MOUNT HOOD FARMERS MARKET**  
 38600 Proctor Blvd, Sandy  
 July 13..... 3-7 p.m.  
 July 20 ..... 3-7 p.m.

**PORTLAND RESCUE MISSION**  
 111 W Burnside, Portland  
 July 12..... 8-10 a.m.  
 July 26 ..... 8-10 a.m.

**ROSEWOOD FAMILY INITIATIVE HEALTH CENTER FAIR**  
 8935 SE Powell Blvd,  
 Portland  
 July 26 ..... 1-5 p.m.

**UNION GOSPEL MISSION**  
 3 NW 3rd, Portland  
 ► July 24 ..... 2-4 p.m.

**WASHINGTON COUNTY**

**BEAVERTON LIBRARY**  
 12375 SW 5th St, Beaverton  
 July 11..... 1-3 p.m.

**PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT**  
 6701 NE Campus Way  
 Hillsboro  
 July 27..... 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

For information, or to host our team, call Tamara at 503-416-1479 or Caleb at 503-416-4883.

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