

# NORTH BIRMINGHAM MATTERS



## There Are Steps You Can Take to Help Keep Your Asthma Under Control

Asthma is a disease that affects the paths that carry air to the lungs, causing the inside walls of the airways to become swollen. Asthma is common among children and teenagers, but anyone can have asthma. According to the American Lung Association, the most common risk factors for developing asthma are having a parent with asthma, having a severe respiratory infection as a child, having an allergic condition, and being exposed to certain chemical irritants or industrial dusts in the workplace.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), indoor asthma triggers include dust mites, mold, cockroaches, pet dander and secondhand smoke. Cigarette smoke is known to trigger asthma attacks and it irritates the lungs, causing redness, swelling and destroys lung tissue—quitting smoking reduces your risk and your loved one’s risk for asthma symptoms.

There are several types of medicines available to treat asthma. While some asthma medicines work

quickly to relax your airways and help you breathe easier, others help in preventing symptoms. Since each person’s asthma is different, you and your doctor will need to work together to establish the best treatment plan based on your symptoms and needs.

There are four steps you can take to keep your asthma under control.

- 1. Make Your Medical Visits More Productive.** Make it a habit to write down the things you want to discuss with your healthcare provider.
- 2. Assess and Monitor Your Control.** Keeping track of your symptoms will help you stay in control.
- 3. Understand Your Medication.** Each person’s asthma is different and your doctor will work with you to set up a personalized plan.
- 4. Reduce Asthma Triggers.** Identify your asthma triggers and learn simple ways to limit your exposure or avoid them altogether.

## Chris Mosley: An advocate for quality health and equality



Everyone knows when Chris Mosley is in the room when they see his trademark smile. While naturally easygoing, Mosley becomes laser focused when it comes to issues of health, equality and improving the conditions for all Birmingham residents.

His years of activism and working behind the scenes in the offices of local, state and national government have prepared Mosley for his current role as Director of Outreach, Marketing and Public Affairs at Alabama Regional Medical Services (ARMS) and an advocate

for quality healthcare in some of the city's most often overlooked communities.

Mosley calls his current job at ARMS the one that most directly impacts the people he wants to serve. He is often the person who connects residents to the services and information that they need. Mosley called his participation on the UAB Superfund Research Center Community Advisory Board an extension of what he does every day.

"To adequately address concerns, research and data is very important to move the needle in the right direction," Mosley explained.

ARMS exists to help deliver a holistic approach to healthcare that impacts the entire community. He personally shares those goals. It is at ARMS where all of Mosley's greatest passions converge.

## Sharron Barkley: An educator and an advocate for Collegeville

Sharron Barkley has dedicated her career to educating the youth of the community that she has called home nearly all her life.

Barkley chose to make the Collegeville neighborhood the center of her professional and civic life. She spent 29 years as a special education teacher in Birmingham City Schools, much of it at Carver High School, the same institution from which she graduated.

"I had a connection with the students because I either knew their parents or their grandparents," she said. "I wanted to make sure that those students received the same type of education that I received."

Now in retirement, Barkley remains committed to the betterment of her neighbors in Collegeville and the North Birmingham Community, this time through environmental education and advocacy.

"Whatever the community gave to me, I want to be

able to give it back," Barkley said.

While she grew up in a community where heavy industrial plants and railroads were as close as residential neighbors, Barkley was unaware of the long-term environmental threats that surrounded her.

"You grew up with it, and you were used to seeing black dark smoke coming out," she said. "There are people out here who have lung diseases, and it is primarily because of the toxins that are being put out by the plants."

It is her hope that work by the UAB Superfund Research Center will produce meaningful evidence to deliver lasting assistance to her neighbors.

"This community is as important as any community, and they deserve whatever all of the communities are receiving," Barkley said. "They deserve a life where they don't have to worry about being sick because of what's being done out here."

**Community Advisory Board Members:** Charmell Hicks, Barbara Goudy Thomas, Chris Mosley, Omar Harvill, Keisha Brown, Melodie Agnew, Jimmy Coleman, Chester Wallace, Letitia Collins, Sharron Barkley.



## Introducing the Superfund Lung Ambassadors Program

The Superfund Lung Ambassadors program is a community-centered initiative to deepen the interest of high school students in science, research, and health-related fields such as environmental and public health. Our work will be guided and informed by our commitments to: Representation, Participation, Honesty, and Quality.

This program is designed to help identify and develop motivated students to align their interests with opportunities that will lead to pathway discovery for their future. By exploring various pathways in which health sciences can create future opportunities, with a focused interest in lung health and knowledge of environmental exposures.

- At the end of the program, we intend for students to have a better appreciation for the health sciences and to feel confident bringing awareness about lung health to their communities.
  - Health science career pathways
  - Lung health introduction

We believe that by displaying representative role models, we can make available to students exposure and recognition of goals, that will influence students to continue to strive for academic success.

- We would like to provide resources for future endeavors: mentorship, networking, and curriculum support to help build the next generation of community leaders and society contributors.
  - Academic rigor
  - Extracurricular activities
  - Community service and volunteerism

### Fall Semester

- Introduction and presentations to capture community members in health science roles
- Focused content of lung, environmental, and pollution health impacts

### Spring Semester

- Curriculum provided after ACT to prepare for preceptorship

### Summer Semester

- Youth community health advisory training
  - Identify community concerns
  - Population level interventions
  - Prepare to implement senior level projects with monthly assessment

The UAB SRC is conducting a survey to learn about the health and environmental issues that are most important to people who live in *Acipco-Finley, Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park, Hooper City, and North Birmingham*. For taking the time to complete the survey, you will receive a \$25 gift card. Participation is voluntary but your opinions will help us better understand and address concerns you have about your health and neighborhood environment. For more information, please email us at [UABsuperfund@uabmc.edu](mailto:UABsuperfund@uabmc.edu) or call us at (205) 934-6839.

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**PROJECT 1:** Pollution & Chronic  
Obstructive Pulmonary Disease



**PROJECT 2:** Asthma in  
Children Exposed to Pollution



**PROJECT 3:** Pollution & Lower  
Respiratory Tract Infections



**PROJECT 4:** Measuring Toxic  
Particles with Laser Technology



**PROJECT 5:** Using Natural Materials  
to Clean Soil Contamination



## UAB SRC

North Birmingham Matters wants to share  
items of interest to you. Please submit your  
stories ideas for consideration.

Contact: Sharonda Hardy (205) 934-1717  
sharonda@uab.edu

You can change the community by  
volunteering for SRC research projects.

- Must be 18 & up
- Compensation Provided
- Learn more about your health

Contact: Crystal Stephens (205) 975-3255  
ctstephens@uabmc.edu