



## EVALUATION REPORT

### Creating Connections & Wellness Through Art: Ready Go Art at the People's Center Health Services

**December, 2017**

This publication was produced by Michael Johnson,  
M.A. candidate in Arts and Cultural Management at St. Mary's University of Minnesota  
Program Evaluation Intern, Springboard for the Arts

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## **Ready Go Projects:**

Healing Hands  
Instant Box Camera  
Mobile Spa  
Street Corner Letterpress  
sPARKit  
Temporary Table Tennis Trailer  
The Mobile Sign Shop

REPORT PHOTOS – Bruce Silcox & Uche Iroegbu

# CREATING CONNECTIONS & WELLNESS THROUGH ART:

PEOPLE'S CENTER HEALTH SERVICES UTILIZED READYGO ART  
PROJECTS TO ENGAGE PEOPLE IN ART CREATION & PROMPT  
INTERACTION BETWEEN THEIR CLINIC & THE COMMUNITY.

December, 2017

*In 2017, the Ready Go Art partnership with the People's Center Health Services offered new and innovative ways to improve healthcare, from offering fifteen minute facials that left people feeling relaxed, to offering art activities that prompted interactions and conversations between patients, clinic staff, and community members about art and health.*

*After months of observations and interviews with artists, staff, and community participants, I've been fortunate to witness the project's impressive impacts. This evaluative report is my attempt to tell their story and share our learnings.*



Michael Johnson

[Michaeljohnson597@gmail.com](mailto:Michaeljohnson597@gmail.com) | 605-759-5732

M.A. candidate in Arts and Cultural Management at St. Mary's University of Minnesota  
Program Evaluation Intern, Springboard for the Arts

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## EVALUATION PURPOSE AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation set out to measure if the project was achieving its primary objectives. Through developmental evaluation we also hoped to identify unanticipated impacts and learnings. These findings will hopefully inform future projects and partnerships between artists and health agencies.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2017 Springboard for the Arts partnered with The People's Center Health Services to have Ready Go mobile artists' tools out in front of the clinic. Tools included the Mobile Sign Shop, Instant Box Camera, sPARKit, Temporary Table Tennis Trailer, Streetcorner Letterpress, Healing Hands, and Mobile Spa. **Over 500 people benefited** in some way from seventeen activities held almost every week over the summer and early fall. About one third of participants were clinic staff, one third patients, and one third unaffiliated community members passing by.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS, DESIGN, METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

Through observations at 12, three to four hour-long events, surveys with staff, artist prompts, and interviews with clinic staff, patients, artists, and community members, the evaluation process sought to get a sense of participants' connection to the clinic, one another, and their ability to talk about health issues. The key findings and recommendations from this report emerged through the perspective of one evaluator utilizing a developmental evaluation approach.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

By experimenting with artist driven approaches to health practices, The People's Center and Springboard for the Arts helped create connections and community wellness. We found that the tools were successful at offering patients therapeutic experiences that piqued people's curiosity, prompted conversations about health, created social connections, strengthened affinity to the clinic, increased access to art, and developed a greater sense of agency for artists and participants.



# BACKGROUND



## ABOUT THE PEOPLE'S CENTER & THE COMMUNITY

The People's Center Health Services (People's Center) is a nonprofit community health center in Minneapolis with more than 45 years of experience providing medical, dental and behavioral healthcare. They serve nearly 9,000 patients every year through medical, dental and behavioral health services. The community is more than **60% people of color and 57% of households have incomes below poverty.**

The diversity of the patients is also reflected in the surrounding Cedar-Riverside neighborhood. Nearly half of area residents are Black (primarily Somali), 35% are White and 10% Asian. 47% have income below poverty. The Twin Cities is home to the largest population of Somali immigrants in the United States, 99% who are Muslim. Of those, many call the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis their home.

## ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

Springboard for the Arts and The People's Center have been helping artists to get healthcare and contribute their skills to The People's Center's mission since 2010. They know each other and understand each other's work and missions. Through this reciprocal partnership focused on addressing socio-economic and factors like social support, the People's Center is redefining what it means to be a community health center.

Every artist who engages in this project and previous collaborations can also be a patient at the People's Center if they need healthcare for themselves or their families (whether or not artists have access to healthcare themselves is an important nuance that is often overlooked in other arts and health initiatives).

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Ready Go projects were free for patients and community members, removing any financial barrier to participate in the projects. With this project, artists engaged patients and community members:

**1) To create art via existing mobile art projects.** Springboard's "Ready Go" program is a collection of mobile projects that artists have built to help organizations achieve their service goals. Between June 1 and August 31, 2017, the clinic hosted a Ready Go art project nearly one day per week. Tools included sPARKIT, Street Corner Letterpress, Instant Box Camera, Mobile Sign Shop, The Temporary Table Tennis Trailer.



**sPARKit** is a mobile trailer/ pop up park, with all of the amenities needed to turn a green/ common space in to an activated destination spot. The "sPARKit" mobile trailer is a community conversation tool used to "spark" conversations in a fun family friendly environment. A colorful pop-up park is set up with items that travel in the teardrop trailer. The set up creates a colorful celebratory environment that invites the public to come and play games and engage each other in conversations.



**Streetcorner Letterpress** is an interactive project designed for public or private events. These 100-year-old letterpresses produce 4×6 postcard-style prints with the push of a lever, and can be operated by people of any age or ability. The unique letterpress kiosk draws a curious crowd, who are then invited to print their own postcards with images and colors customized to your event theme. Whether prints are taken home, framed, put on the fridge, or mailed to a friend, they are art worth saving.





**The Instant Box Camera** is a mobile box camera that houses a darkroom that produces one of a kind black and white photographs. Experience sitting for a portrait, 19th-century style, and receive a portrait to take home. There is no negative, so the image made in the Instant Box Camera is the only one that exists, making it a unique piece of art.



**The Mobile Sign Shop (MSS)** is inspired by the vernacular of cabin name signs found in Northern Minnesota. At the beginning of roads leading to a lake with cabins, there can often be found a collection of wooden/engraved/painted/ handmade signs bearing the names of residents. The MSS is housed on a trailer that provides an attention getting location stocked with sign making supplies. Inserting a non-standard, incongruous tool into public space, brings out people's curiosity and willingness to engage.



**The Temporary Table Tennis Trailer (TTTT)** engages residents, business owners, patrons and passers-by in the sport of ping pong (also known as table tennis), through creating Popup Ping Pong Parks. An Olympic sport, table tennis can be played by people of any age or skill level including singles and doubles. The Popup PP Parks are places for play, conversation and connection.

**2) To create a new mobile art project.** Between May 1 and October 31, 2017, two artists worked with patients and community members to create a new Ready Go tool tailored to the clinics' needs. Springboard used an open call process to select the artists based on quality of past work and their proposed plan to engage the community. The call was designed to invite responses from culturally diverse community members, including a partnership with Somali Artist Initiative to reach the large Somali population in the area. The two new Ready Go projects, Healing Hands and Mobile Spa, were utilized four times each in October 2017.

## ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

The Ready Go art projects were catered to people popping into the clinic for an appointment or passing by on the street, making it easy for people to pause, talk openly about healthcare, make social connections and relieve stress through art creation.

The project intended to bring together people from varying socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures, most notably Cedar Riverside's large Muslim population and non-Muslim community members.

And the project also aimed to engage People's Center staff and provide them with an opportunity to interact with patients and community members in a different setting.







[readygoart.com](http://readygoart.com)



*The primary location for the Ready Go projects was the lawn outside of the main clinic on Riverside Avenue, a street-level location easily accessible and familiar to both patients and the general public. Additional locations for the project included the Brian Coyle Center and the People's Center's dental clinic.*

## PROJECT GOALS

These artists-designed interactions set out to:

1. Help educate people about the clinic & get the community to use its services.
2. Prompt the community to speak more openly about their health.
3. Keep patients and their families engaged while waiting for appointments.

# EVALUATION METHODS & LIMITATIONS

## EVALUATION METHODS

Artists, People's Center staff, and community members were surveyed regarding their sense of connection to the clinic, one another, and their ability to talk about health issues. Artist created prompts, interviews, and participant observations were utilized to collect the views and experiences of artists, People's Center staff, Springboard staff, and community members.

### Examples of Interview Questions:

1. How often have you used the clinic in the past year? Why do you continue coming?
2. How did you find out about the People's Center Clinic and its services?
3. How comfortable do you feel at the People's Center Clinic?
5. How would you describe your health?
6. How often do you do art?
7. Describe your connection to the people in your community?
8. How are you taking care of your health?

### Observation Tools and Evaluator:

Springboard intern, Michael Johnson, attended 12 of the 17 Ready Go activities. In addition to documenting the approximate number (20 to 40) and type (passerby, patient, or clinic staff) of participant interactions, Johnson asked participants questions and made observations about their interactions. Additional interviews were conducted outside of Ready Go activities with some participants, staff, and artists. Key findings were developed from synthesizing these activities and interactions.

The evaluator was inspired by Michael Quinn Patton's Developmental Evaluation which is an approach to monitoring and supporting social innovations by working in partnership with program decision makers and project partners. As opposed to conducting a standard evaluation, this evaluation was within a developmental evaluation framework that enabled the evaluator freedom to draw on insights about complex dynamic systems, uncertainty, nonlinearity, and emergence.

## LIMITATIONS IN DATA COLLECTION

The key findings and recommendations from this report emerged through the perspective of one evaluator. Additionally, the decision to forgo a traditional paper survey certainly presented its challenges but the developmental evaluation that was employed was a better fit for this dynamic and experimental project.



# FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## KEY FINDINGS

- 1: Offering Therapy
- 2: Piquing Curiosity
- 3: Prompting Discussions about Health
- 4: Creating Social Connections
- 5: Strengthening Affinity to Clinic
- 6: Increasing Access to Art
- 7: Developing Agency



## ONE: OFFERING THERAPY



Whether speaking to patients, staff members, ReadyGo artists, or community members walking by – a common response to an art activity related to its therapeutic nature:

*“You don’t know how much I needed this. It is such a stress reliever”*

*“You’ve helped my spirit”*

One nurse stopping off after her shift, said this was the ideal break she needed between work and the stress at home. She said she just wanted some folks to talk to and was thankful for someone willing to listen. She talked about how people just need to learn how to let go and be playful. This activity helped her do just that.

The presence of Ready Go projects gave patients something to take their mind off of an illness during their wait. In one instance a woman that had dropped off her daughter for a health emergency actually returned home to get her eight grandchildren just so that they could enjoy the Ready Go projects’ art activities.

For a Native American woman waiting for an appointment, making sketches and then painting a picture of a dream catcher occupied her time and gave her an artistic escape. The woman’s partner commented to the Ready Go artist afterwards, *“This is really nice because you guys are so inviting, and not a lot of people invite you to sit and talk to them.”* The artist recalled the experience saying:

*“She seemed like she was having some anxiety when she got here, but as she sat there painting she just seemed to calm down and was in a little bit better of a place.”*

## TWO: PIQUING CURIOSITY



No matter the project, having art and activities on the lawn at People's Center always caused a couple dozen people to look twice, stop to ask questions, and then participate. People frequently and openly shared their appreciation and curiosity with this project.

*"I grew up in the West Bank." Thank you, these are really cool!"*

At every event there were several pedestrians, a few bicyclists, and even an occasional driver that chose to stop by just to check out what was happening. One asset to many of the projects was the spectacle that they caused in the public realm. Disrupting the everyday was serendipitous for folks and often even caused folks to ask about how much the activity cost.

*"Hi, I want to know what this is about. Is it free?!"*

*"Donations, only?"*

In addition to effectively piquing curiosity, many artists successfully developed tactics to draw people in and entice them to linger longer in the space. The sPARKit trailer was especially adept at keeping participants busy for long periods of time. Another sign of success was hearing staff and patients ask about when projects were coming back and what Ready Go tool they could expect to see next week. One staff member who reached out after the project was completed looked back on the summer with fond memories:

*"I miss seeing you guys on Thursdays...Let me know when you are coming back!"*



### THREE: PROMPTING DISCUSSIONS ABOUT HEALTH

The Ready Go tools were effective at getting people comfortable to talk openly about their health. Several artists created prompts that asked participants to share information about what they were doing to take care for health. This approach generated data but it also opened up a dialogue between artists, patients, clinic staff, and community members.



From hearing about patients who have a forty-year loyalty to the People's Center to educating community members who had never heard about its services, the Ready Go tools provided a unique opportunity for engagement.

In one instance a woman stopped her car just outside of the clinic just to check out the Ready Go tool. While visiting with her we learned about her background as an artist, discussed her personal health situation, and visited with her about the services of the People's Center and Springboard for the Arts. She opened up about her medical bankruptcy and how she is looking for more affordable care. She left our encounter after about twenty minutes saying *"Wow, I am really glad I stopped."* And so were we. She reminded us about the intent behind this project and she left the clinic feeling better and more hopeful about her future and her health.



## FOUR: CREATING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Making art side by side creates a unique setting that is fertile for striking up conversations, often between people who may not otherwise choose to connect. From People's Center staff getting to know their patients in a non-clinical setting to strangers building relationships and discovering common interests, the Ready Go tools always seemed to generate conversations and social connections.

*“The staff really loves it. There’s always a lot of staff outside getting involved, and for the patients it’s fun to interact with the staff on a non-medical level.”*

Playing chess or table tennis with someone you do not know sounds intimidating - until you do it. Many of the Ready Go tools offered people opportunities to interact in fun and accessible ways, often bridging cultural or language barriers.



*“These are conversations for the heart.”*

## FIVE: STRENGTHENING AFFINITY TO CLINIC

Participants consistently expressed their appreciation that the Ready Go activities were being offered by the clinic. From expressing surprise that all activities were free to asking about opportunities to see the tools again, people were very grateful and demonstrated an affinity for the Ready Go tools as well as for the clinic. In fact, in many cases the tools provided a platform for patients to express their positive associations with the clinic and their staff.

*“This is the best clinic.”*

*“They treat clients as people and not numbers.”*

*“People Center was recommended to me and it has been great.”*

The tools were also effective at drawing people off of the street long enough to engage them in an activity and learn more about how to take advantage of clinic services in the future. Although Ready Go artists were not prepared to answer detailed questions about the People’s Center, most seemed comfortable referring community members. In one instance an artist engaged with a man who asked whether the People’s Center provided dental care. He went into the lobby to learn more and on his way out exclaimed to the artist:

*“Wow, I should have been coming here for years!”*



## SIX: INCREASING ACCESS TO ART

Many participants expressed that they had never really done this type of thing before. For artist, Soozin Hirschmugl, getting people comfortable enough to participate was always a goal:

*“You never know if people will do it or not, especially painting,”*

Hirschmugl recalled a Somali woman insist that she couldn’t do it, she couldn’t paint, until she watched her friend sit down to paint a postcard and eventually sat down herself, painting a beautiful picture of a tea party.

And for many of the projects, participants actually got to take something home, something that may serve as an artifact of the experience and a reminder about their enjoyable art experience.

A later addition to Hirschmugl’s event were customized coloring sheets that were placed in the waiting room lobby. The coloring sheets referenced the clinic and also had several health related images. One woman finished her coloring sheet and brought it out to show us. Soozin then gave her two additional sheets to take home with her. The woman was thankful but said that she did not have anything to color with so Soozin gave her several color pencils and the woman was so grateful!





## SEVEN: DEVELOPING AGENCY



Several Ready Go projects led to participants smiling about a connection with someone else over a shared experience and skill that has given them joy and a sense of dignity.

*“I love old technology!”  
“Hey, I used to do this twenty years ago.”*

Many people also expressed learning from the Ready Go projects. Springboard staff member, Nikki Hunt, noticed this especially with the Instant Box Camera project:

*“The amount of questions people asked was impressive. People asked...how did you build the box camera? Why do people not smile in old fashioned photos? Why do the lightbulbs smoke in old fashioned photos? And Lacey gave people the history.”*

The sense of agency that was developed was not limited to participants. New Ready Go artists Anthony Emanuel and Ifrah Mansour both described the joy of learning through this process and the value of being able to get feedback on their new projects. For Emanuel, this process was inspiring and informed what he wants to do going forward:

*“Healing can transcend culture. Somali women let me touch their face. I was nervous and I was scared but I was honored. It felt sacred that they let me work with them...”*

*“Encouragement was something I learned. Being able to learn something about someone and then give encouragement. What I want to do is bring this to homeless people. Maybe I can bring this to old folks’ homes, police precincts, places where people are hurting. I want to take this there.”*



## CONCLUSIONS

Initially the project goals were to: help educate people about the clinic and get the community to use its services; prompt the community to speak more openly about their health; and keep patients and their families engaged while waiting for appointments. However, artists were not limited to this blueprint and many were operating their tools in an experimental manner that challenged me to both evaluate initial goals and find ripple effects from their varying approaches to this broadly scoped project.

### **Accomplishing Project Goals to:**

- 1. Help educate people about the clinic & get the community to use its services.**

Although many artists were not aware of specific details about The People's Center, all seemed comfortable referring anyone with questions. Additionally, Springboard staff were frequently on site to support artists and serve as liaisons for addressing this project goal. Having marketing materials to hand out about the clinic would have been helpful for shorter interactions and could have also educated artists who expressed concern about their lack of knowledge regarding the clinic. However, the lack of such materials and solicitation techniques may have added to the casual and inviting atmosphere where many positive interactions between patients, staff, and community members were occurring.

- 2. Prompt the community to speak more openly about their health.**

While several artists offered prompts that focused on igniting conversations on health, many did not directly address this project goal but had participants engaging in this manner anyway. The art tools seemed to pre-condition participants for health conversations by making them feel more comfortable to converse. However, it was notable that the artists who dedicated resources to this particular goal had more people that disclosed information about their health. Additionally, the personalities of individual artists were also a factor.

- 3. Keep patients and their families engaged while waiting for appointments.**

The most commonly and frequently accomplished impact of the project was keeping participants actively engaged. Each project was very different but together they were effective at offering everyone respite from a long wait or work day to stress associated with their health situation. The engagement value for the project was crystalized for me when a grandmother traveled back home just so that her eight grandchildren had the opportunity to play at one event while waiting for an appointment. What was so special about each Ready Go project was its unique ability to look like entertainment to participants while also functioning as an effective tool for building connections and wellness. These specific effects are laid out in the key findings section of this report.

### **Inspiring Partnership:**

The success of this project has already inspired the next phase of the partnership between Springboard and The People's Center. In response to recent incidents dividing non-Muslim and Muslims in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis, the partnership hopes to enlist artists to establish The People's Center as a creative, community hub for neighbors to get past their fears, build understanding, and create durable relationships. The People's Center is also in the midst of a multi-million dollar build-out to turn their gymnasium into a community center. Projected to open in 2018, the physical space is set, but the programming is not. In light of these needs, the partnership is seeking to deploy an artist organizer who will apply their artist perspective to shape the identity of the new community center as well as the existing outdoor lawn where the Ready Go projects took place.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Communication was an area of growth that emerged in interviews with ReadyGo artists about the project. Some artists identified that they wish that there had been greater comradery and communication between clinic staff and the artists before the projects began. Although Springboard staff and People's Center administrators were in communication about the project planning, it would have been useful for other clinic staff and administrators to meet with ReadyGo artists before the project in order to gain a greater sense of understanding about the partnership so that all sides could have had a clearer idea of how they fit into the larger vision for the project. Additionally, participants would have benefited from receiving brochures or marketing materials about The People's Center, Springboard for the Arts, and this particular project.

For anyone interested in replicating this project between a health agency and artists designing engagement tools and experiences, I would recommend starting small and testing out ideas that have a limited set of objectives. Some things will fail or not go quite as planned so it will be important to be flexible and have an established partnership that will enable an iterative process throughout. By providing all parties with awareness about project goals, as well as ample opportunities to influence the process throughout implementation, the partnership will be more likely to create the kind of changes that are critical to redefining what it means to be a community health center and what it means to be an artist and art organization doing social practice.

# ANNEXES

## ANNEX I: Evaluation Statement of Work

People's Center Health Services will utilize existing and new Ready Go artist projects that engage people in art creation and prompt interaction between their clinic and the community they serve.

### OUTCOMES

These art activities are intended to spark social connections while helping the clinic better learn about and engage with the community they serve.

The anticipated benefits of these Ready Go projects to participants:

1. Participants will make social connections, aiding in the clinic's mission to help the neighborhood achieve optimal health.
2. Participants will have enjoyable experiences while waiting for appointments.

The anticipated benefits of these Ready Go projects to the Clinic:

1. Clinic will learn about the community they serve.

### OUTPUTS

These artists-designed interactions intend to help educate people about the People's Center, get the community into the clinic, prompt the community to speak more openly about their health, and keep patients and their families engaged while waiting for appointments.

Measurement	Output	Outcome	Impact
Surveys, interviews, & observations	More people will learn about the People's Center and its services	People's Center will learn about the community they serve	Patients will see improvement to their health through social connectedness and greater willingness to use services
Surveys, interviews, & observations	More members of the community will go into the clinic	People's Center will learn about the community they serve	Patients will see improvement to their health through social connectedness and greater willingness to use services
Surveys, interviews, & observations	Community members will speak more openly about their health	People's Center will learn about the community they serve	Patients will see improvement to their health through social connectedness and greater willingness to use services
Surveys, interviews, & observations	Patients and families will be engaged while waiting for appointment	Patients will have enjoyable experiences and make social connections while waiting for appointments	Patients will see improvement to their health through social connectedness and greater willingness to use services

## MEASUREMENT

Springboard will establish baseline numbers to measure against in order to know how community participation at People's Center changes over the course of this project. Artists, People's Center staff, and community members will be surveyed regarding their sense of connection to the clinic, one another, and their ability to talk about health issues. Special survey tools will be created by Springboard that can be used to measure changes. In addition, interviews and participant observation will be utilized to collect the views and experiences of artists, People's Center staff, Springboard staff, and community members.

### Participant Interview Questions:

1. How often have you used the clinic in the past year? Why do you continue coming?
2. How did you find out about the People's Center Clinic and its services?
3. How comfortable do you feel at the People's Center Clinic?
5. How would you describe your health?
6. How often do you do art?
7. Describe your connection to the people in your community?
8. How are you taking care of your health?

### Online Survey Questions for People's Center Staff

Was this project enjoyable for you and/or your patients?	Did Ready Go help you interact with your coworkers and/or patients more?	Did you learn more about the community you serve?	As a result of Ready Go, did you spend more time outside on the clinic's lawn?	Did Ready Go help you see People's Center's space in a new way?	Did you see any other effects- positive or negative- from this project?	Other thoughts/comments are welcome.
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### Other possible open-ended questions for artist to explore:

- "What does the People's Center mean to you?"  
"I want to live in a community where... \_\_\_\_"  
"I feel connected to my community when... \_\_\_\_"

### Observation tools and evaluator:

Springboard intern, Michael Johnson, will attend all ReadyGo activities and ask participants to fill out surveys. He will also document the number and types of interactions, count patrons who are engaging with the art activities, interview participants, staff, and record his thoughts after each session.

## ANNEX II: Development Evaluation Selection

Since there is no single, best approach to evaluation which can be used in all situations, it was important to assess early on the purpose of the evaluation, the questions that we wanted answers to, and which methods would give us usable information.

While using traditional paper surveys as an evaluation instrument would have provided the most consistent tool, Springboard staff were reasonably concerned that it would be intrusive for clinic patients. Instead it was decided that the evaluator would assess the project impacts through conducting on site interviews and observations. This approach was supported by developmental evaluation research (see references).



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## **SPRINGBOARD FOR THE ARTS**

308 E Prince St #270,  
St Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 292-4381