

McMurry, Valerie

Page: Basic Information
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Letter of Introduction Valerie McMurry is an award-winning, Oklahoma City-based community leader and 26-year employee of Metro Technology Centers (MetroTech) currently serving as Director of Community Outreach and Wellness. In 2022, she was selected for three major awards: "50 Women Making a Difference," "100 Women Leaders," and for the prestigious Clapham Award presented by the SALLT (Salt and Light Leadership Training) organization. McMurry is recognized for her energy, inclusiveness and enthusiastically serving those in need with her time and her talents. She serves on Boards – Freedom School, Adventure District, Latino Community Development Agency, Lynn Institute for Healthcare Research and Salvation Army – and is an active committee member for Integris Health System, Oklahoma City Community Foundation and the Oklahoma City County Health Department. She is a member of ACTE, OACTE, Life Church and the founder of "One Block at a Time," a neighborhood initiative to improve living conditions in one of Oklahoma's most vulnerable neighborhoods. She has served MetroTech as community liaison, program coordinator and creator/administrator of Metrotech's community wellness efforts. McMurry assisted with Metro Tech's successful multi-million-dollar bond campaign in 2019 and was direct supervisor of the program integration of the \$10 million MetroFit Wellness Center, which opened in September 2022. During the pandemic she provided virtual fitness classes to more than 1,000 people. Since its opening, the Wellness Center has restarted all of its classes in person, maintained virtual services for those who need them and introduced a comprehensive employee fitness program. McMurry has a bachelor's degree in business management from Grambling State University and studied for Master's in adult education from the University of Central Oklahoma. She is a certified Strata Leadership Executive Trainer, Women in Leadership graduate, an ordained minister, a DDI Certified Trainer and an Oklahoma Quality Foundation examiner. In 2020, McMurry moved into her new home – which she designed, served as general contractor, and financed – in the heart of NE OKC's most vulnerable neighborhoods, and now is a lightning rod for neighborhood friendship, bonding, and improvements. She is the proud Mother of two adults: Justin, a corporate pilot, and Leia, a financial internal wholesaler.

Support

In 2019, the opening of a MetroFit Wellness Center was a dream, dependent upon many things including financing, creation of innovative design/programming, and leadership.

For Valerie McMurry, who had led MetroTech's wellness programs in many capacities over the years, the MetroFit Wellness Center offered the opportunity to fill many needs: (1) Provide more programs, services at more times in a safe, energetic atmosphere, (2) Reach more people, increasing diversity and building community, helping people of multiple age, physical conditions, educational backgrounds, ethnicities and genders, to improve communication/understanding among diverse populations, and to (3) Help patrons, staff, community leaders, partners, friends, and family, live a healthier life. It was a lofty set of goals but with determination and the help of many – the voting public, the MetroTech Board and administration, the Metro Tech neighborhood, and the tenacity of Valerie McMurry, the MetroFit Wellness Center became a reality in September 2022. It took a bond issue, hundreds of hours of research and planning, and focus on the prize – a MetroFit Wellness Center serving ALL – to open its doors three years later, now serving more individuals with more classes at more different times than even the best of plans could have predicted.

MetroFit Wellness Center Planning, Construction/program Start-up Oversight, Opening and Ongoing Operations Oversight: Valerie McMurry was involved in the construction and supervised programming for the MetroFit Wellness Center and upon its opening, -- in her role of Director of Metro Tech Community Outreach and Wellness -- assumed the operational oversight of all programming and services offered.

The pre-construction period was intense with planning, dreaming, surveying the various publics regarding needs, accessibility issues, timing of programs, etc. She reviewed all current services available within the market area and assessed the void of accessible, inclusive wellness services, need for easy access, program diversity, participants diversity in age, gender, ethnicity, physical/mental abilities, and special needs patrons. She polled multiple leaders and prior program participants, reviewed best practices across the nation, and with determination and joy, created and has implemented a multi-faceted program attracting/serving all generations, genders, ethnicities, financial situations and physical/mental diversities. MetroFit's primary market has one of the lowest health scores in Oklahoma County, extreme poverty, reliance on public transportation, and shorter than average life expectancy. The initial market has a higher-than-expected rate of extreme poverty, excessive single parent homes, high drug and alcohol abuse, high unemployment and lower than average education.

The Wellness Center is beautiful, inviting, and there is intentional attention to increasing diversity: gender diversity, individuals from different decades of life, needs diversity. Recruitment features videos, emails, brochures ... distributed to/at schools, community events, churches, bulletin boards, traditional/social, public media. Promotional information includes pictures and testimonials from multiple generations, genders and ethnicities. Class subject matter is diverse: from yoga to senior wellness, from line dancing to hip hop, from support groups to partnerships. A minimum of one new subject matter class is offered and promoted every six weeks; opinions/comments solicited from program participants resulted in the recent addition of a personal trainer scheduled by individual appointment. Diversity is intentionally achieved among teaching staff of the classes: from 20-year-old to 60-year-old teachers, male and female instructors, ethnicities from African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, multiple formal and informal educational backgrounds ... are all present.

Special Attention to Enrolled MetroTech Students, Faculty and Staff Wellness Needs: McMurry has created and makes speaking engagements to students regarding fitness and nutrition. Her classroom lectures are in demand, and she frequently observes increased campus fitness efforts following her presentations. The workout facility at the new MetroFit was designed by McMurry and provides faculty/staff with onsite access to state-of-the-art exercise equipment and an inclusive, supportive environment. Both students and staff are also informed and invited to participate in the community classes and services.

Community Partnerships: Partnerships are vital to MetroFit's ability to reach out successfully to diverse segments of the community. They allow Metro Tech to make the most of its existing resources, and the relationships established form a secure foundation for new programs to sustain wellness outreach efforts into the future. McMurry recruits diverse partners who provide programs, educators, research and other in-kind and financial support. She works with each of them regularly to determine how the relationships can best benefit all the partners. Community partnerships include, but are not limited to NE OKC Healthy Community Collaborative, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health, ReMerge, Integris Health System, American Heart Association, Oklahoma City Community Foundation, Oklahoma City/County Health Department, Latino Community Development Agency, Adventure District Activities, the Oklahoma City Science Museum, The Oklahoma City Zoo, the Oklahoma City Public Schools and area churches and civic groups.

Other Partners/Support Comes from Community Grants, Etc.: Metro Fit is dealing with several major initiatives in the 2022 - 2023 school year that have/will elevate services to an entirely new level and expose large numbers of community members to customized healthy lifestyle possibilities, including a grant from the Oklahoma City Community Foundation to fund a program targeted to families in zip code 73111. The program's goal is to get sedentary people up off the couch, by inviting families to enroll in free MetroFit programs to help them improve their physical, mental and nutritional health. MetroFit will track the results of the two-year program through research led by the Lynn Institute.

Contributions to the CTE community (can include activities within institutions, communities, or ACTE and other organizations). McMurry is an active member of ACTE and creates and conducts workshops for the ACTE. She is a frequently requested speaker across the CTE community, as well as for numerous civic, philanthropic and faith-based organizations. Most recently, in January 2023, she presented at the OkACTE Mid-Winter conference, presenting a session on self-care for teachers. In July, she will present on Diversity to the Friends of the CTEEC Conference. MetroFit/MetroTech actively participates in food distribution, lobbying for safer neighborhoods, sidewalk developments and healthy environments for families within Metro's target five zip code area.

Page: Photo

Please submit a photo/headshot of the program/project. The photo should be digital, high resolution (at least 300dpi), and submitted in .jpg format. Files 2MB or larger are preferred. Photographs will be used for publicity purposes only.

Photo

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