

Dentistry in West Louisville: A Walk Down Broadway

Alumni Newsletter, Summer 2020

Last month while I was taking a moment to say goodbye to our five African American graduates and wishing them well in their next adventure, I could not help but reminisce about my own graduation in 1981 and my plans to join a private practice. Take a walk down Broadway with me for a moment and remember (or learn about!) our rich African American alumni presence in West Louisville.



LEON D. FRENCH

After graduation, I went into practice with **Dr. Vernon Graves '79** at 25th and Broadway. Across the street was **Dr. Harold Howard '70**, the first ULSD African American graduate. When Dr. Howard went to work at the Park DuValle Community Health Center, his practice was purchased by **Dr. Leon French '77**. Down the street on Broadway was **Dr. Susie Riley '79** and **Dr. Judy Green '87**. Six blocks away was **Dr. Phillip Williams '77**. Farther down Broadway was **Dr. Madeline Maupin Hicks '75**, ULSD's first African American female graduate. On that stretch of Broadway, we were all African American ULSD alumni proudly serving the community.

Before Dr. Howard began practicing in the area, citizens of West Louisville had their medical and dental needs met by African American men and women that were graduates of Historically Black Universities. To help meet the needs of the underserved, there were two Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC)—Park DuValle Community Health Center and Portland Family Health Center. When I graduated, African American dentists had a strong sense of community and it was expected that you would go into practice in an underserved neighborhood, the military, or a FQHC.



SUSIE J. RILEY

I have officially retired from private practice to teach full time. There was no one to replace me at the West Louisville practice, which is now closed. I cannot begin to describe how I felt, and still feel, about this closing. I used to joke that I served



Judith Greenwell Green

on the admissions committee to allow numerous students to shadow me so that I could find my replacement. Owning a private practice is not as attractive as it used to be. Consider for a moment the loss of neighborhood pharmacies and hardware stores to the larger corporate entities. Most dental school graduates are burdened with debt and an insecurity that they are not clinically and financially ready to be business owners, so the corporate route is very attractive. Unfortunately, corporate offices do not usually open in underserved neighborhoods. There are currently no privately owned African American dental practices on Broadway. Drs. Brown, Green, Riley, and French are deceased, and their practices were not purchased. Dr. Hicks retired and there was no one to buy her practice. Dr. Williams is still at 26th and Market, but for how much longer?

So how are the citizens of West Louisville, the poorest and most densely populated area in Metro Louisville with a large number of Medicaid recipients, getting dental services? Since the 1970's

there has always been a white-owned practice at 18th and Broadway, and now there is a corporately-owned dental office at 13th and Broadway. Thankfully, the Park DuValle Community Health Center, Portland Health Center, and Shawnee Christian Healthcare Center are all located in West Louisville providing dental services. Kare Mobile is also serving the area. The University of Louisville School of Dentistry has also been a great option, and on a bus line, for the folks in West Louisville.

So, my question is, will there ever be a time that we see the African American privately-owned practices come back to West Louisville? The dentists and physicians that practiced in the West End became incredibly invested in the community they served. We showed up at career fairs, health fairs, and other community events. I am blessed to be a part of the Shawnee Christian Healthcare Center through my teaching at the university. I feel like I am still very much a part of the community. I still attend health and career fairs and I will drag dental students along with me to show them the benefits of being in an underserved community. **If you, our alumni community, might be interested in joining me in this incredibly worthwhile work please get in touch. My door is always open. I look forward to hearing from you!**



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