



Ayesha Jaco, MAM

West Side United

Outstanding Community Leader Award | 2024 Annual Philanthropy Awards

Ayesha Jaco, a lifelong resident of Chicago's west side, has dedicated her career to improving the health and economic vitality of the community she grew up in. As Executive Director of West Side United (WSU) founded by Ascension, Cook County Health, Lurie Children's RUSH, Sinai Chicago & UI Health, she leads programs and partnerships with additional anchor institutions, including nonprofits and churches, who work collaboratively to eliminate the 14-year life expectancy gap between Black and Brown residents on Chicago's West Side and Chicago's Loop.

Under Ayesha's leadership, WSU has co created strategies that address social drivers of health including a small business grant program that has awarded \$2.5 million to support the development of more than 175 West Side businesses. Her team has also coordinated \$10 million in social impact investing funds pooled by WSU hospitals, American Medical Association, Illinois Medical District and Northern Trust to increase access to capital for west side communities through 600 low interest loans curated by Community Development Financial Institution partners to support affordable housing, community projects and other economic development projects.

As a member of the Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative, WSU was an instrumental partner along with other anchor and community partners in the selection of the Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative as the 2022 recipient of the Pritzker Traubert Foundation's \$10 million Chicago Prize for the development of Sankofa Wellness Village. The Village will provide programming that seeks to enhance residents in West Garfield Park's economic vitality and quality of life through a Federally Qualified Health Center, arts center, business incubator and community grocer initiative.

Ayesha is a member of the board of directors of Choose Chicago, the City's convention, and tourism bureau, and also serves on the community advisory board for the Chicago Chronic Condition Equity Network.

Website: <https://westsideunited.org/>