

How do individuals make progress in their communities?

CCSSR1 - Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

The following passage is from LISC/Chicago's A Tribute to Community Heroes

Monica Haslip

Monica Haslip's passion for art and desire to portray the importance of African Americans in every aspect of life led her to found Little Black Pearl Workshop, an innovative neighborhood art program designed to show children the vast contributions that African Americans have made to the arts. Created in 1994, the workshop creates an avenue for exposure to art and culture while teaching the profitable connection between art and business. "Art must become and remain a part of the machinery that moves us to change quickly and creatively," she says. "We have always said, and continue to say, the battle we are waging is the battle for the minds of our children. It then becomes very important that art plays the role it should in empowerment, education and survival."

Miguel Morales

In a community struggling with obesity, Miguel Morales understands the importance of proper nutrition and active lifestyles. As coordinator for community Organizing for Obesity Prevention in Humboldt Park (CO-OP HP), an initiative based at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, Miguel has raised awareness of the problem and expanded choices to help neighborhood residents enjoy healthier lives. His mantra is a good diet and regular exercise. His leadership has led to innovative programs to improve diets, such as monthly visits from a ProduceMobile to over 100 low-income residents; weekly programs that deliver fresh, organic produce to local families at lower costs than supermarkets and Homegrown Farmers Market. Exercise is stressed through educational efforts in high school classes, pre-schools and local events.

Gerald and Lorean Earles

After nearly two decades as North Lawndale residents, Gerald and Lorean Earles in 1985 gathered their determination to improve their community and started what would eventually become Slum Busters—a group of more than 100 concerned Lawndale citizens who meet regularly to clean up and beautify the neighborhood, one site at a time, every Saturday. To bring in resources, the Earles write and phone aldermen, commissioners and representatives, leveraging their community ties to influence voting for politicians who have responded positively and acting as a voice for the silenced and a face to the invisible.

The Earles remind young Slum Busters that to do nothing is to be nothing—that they should take pride, not just in their appearance, but also in the quality of education and overall lifestyle offered in their community. Both Gerald and Lorean have an interest in photography and keep an extensive archive of history of North Lawndale that they proudly share with young people. The Earles also continue to share their dreams with the youth of Lawndale, reminding them that education is only as good as what you do with it, and encouraging them to look around, take inventory and then take interest—as they themselves have done.

Write What You Think about Your Community's Heroes

Answer the big question for this reading—how individuals make progress in their communities. Based on what you have read about Community Heroes and your own experience, identify community heroes in your community. Identify and explain the role of at least three persons who have contributed to your community's progress. You can use Our Community Hero (Learning Guide 4) to organize your research and reporting.