

## AALR History

The African American Leadership Roundtable, Inc. (AALR) was established in 2000 as a volunteer and collaborative group of African American leaders to promote the collective interests of African American stakeholders and the community in Du Page, Kane, Kendall and Will counties in Illinois. Since its inception, AALR worked to build relationships and coordinate initiatives with civic, social, municipal, educational, and religious organizations and institutions. The mission of the Roundtable is to work together for a stronger community by creating a legacy of service and leadership for future generations of African Americans.

The founders of AALR—Dr. Henry Allen, Professor of Sociology at Wheaton College; Rev. Andre Allen, Pastor of Second Baptist Church, Wheaton, and Rev. Henry Soles, Associate Minister at Du Page A.M.E. Church, Lisle, and Chaplain of the Chicago Bulls organized this roundtable. They immediately sought out individuals who had established themselves as leaders in the community. Rev. Dr. James Miller, Pastor of Du Page AME Church in Lisle and Olivia Garth, EEOC officer with the Department of Veteran Affairs and community activist were recruited as organizers to aid in this endeavor. Within the first two years more than 30 leaders were invited to share their talents, ideas, and expertise with the fledgling organization.

### **The original objectives of AALR:**

1. To create vital synergy among African American leaders.
2. To pool resources, personnel, expertise, and agendas to pursue or leverage common goals.
3. To create a policy forum for addressing vital issues of concern to African American communities, agencies or interests.
4. To assist current agencies which serve the African Americans.
5. To establish an organizational context for developing, mentoring and sponsoring future generations of leaders.

For over a decade, leaders gathered at the Roundtable to identify and address those salient issues affecting African Americans. AALR was a place to inform, engage, and empower stakeholders. Although the leadership of the organization changed across the years, AALR remained committed to promote the welfare of African American stakeholder in the western suburbs. In 2014, AALR rebranded to focus exclusively on educational issues. The acronym AALR changed to stand for Asserting Achievement, Leadership & Resiliency. Through the DAAWN program and the DAAWN Pare , we began offering a wholistic enrichment program for students in Darien's district 61.

### **Highlights of AALR Activities through the years:**

- 2001 (Nov.)—Hosted its first job fair, including a workshop on developing small businesses.
- 2002 (June)—Hosted a free college seminar. Over 200 parents and students attended.
- 2002, 2003, 2004—Hosted annual Holiday receptions for social exchange and celebration.
- 2004--Invited educators, including Dr. Alan Lies, Superintendent of Naperville School District #203, Presidents of Benedictine University and College of DuPage to address the concerns of academic performance of the African American students and their commitment to their future. Benefits of collaborating with Benedictine and COD were educational opportunities, seminars and forums for the community.
- 2005 (April)—Partnered with the New Wave Computer User Group to sponsor the Youth Leadership and Technology Conference. This event was held for the next 4 years (2006-2009).

- 2006 (Jan)—Partnered with Du Page A.M.E. Church and the R.E.A.C.H. Foundation of Lisle in the annual Diversity Institute held on Martin Luther King’s birthday to provide support and expertise to teaching children and youth about the civil rights issues.
- 2006—Partnered with Naperville Family Resource Center, asked the Roundtable to provide advocacy, leadership and mentorship for African student and families.
- 2006 (July), AALR invited the mayors of the local cities of Aurora, Bolingbrook, Naperville, Lisle, Glen Ellyn, and Wheaton, to honor Mayor George Pradel on the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Naperville’s founding. This was a great opportunity to discuss issues affecting African Americans.
- 2006 (September)—Organized a Political Candidate Forum in collaboration with Benedictine University in Lisle.
- 2006 (October)—Partnered with Resource Link to host a luncheon forum, “Building a Strong Community,” to highlight presentations by experts in education, politics, health, and law enforcement.
- 2007 (March) Hosted a leadership summit to unite leaders of African American social and civic organizations in the western suburbs.
- 2007 (July)—Hosted first ministerial summit of ministers to discuss concerns about education, health and wellness; and political empowerment.
- 2007 (Oct)—Sponsored a Senior citizens forum with information about elder abuse, wills, and power of attorney.
- 2007 (Dec)—Hosted its first ever African American Christmas Celebration at Jubilee Baptist Church with over 300 individuals in attendance representing more than a half dozen churches.
- 2008—Received 501(c) 3 designation.
- 2009— Received a *Special Events and Cultural Amenities* (SECA) Grant from the City of Naperville to host the first ever African American Heritage Festival (AAHF).
- 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011--Partnered with Du Page County Health Department, the Delta Sorority, AKA, American Cancer Society to present Messages of Hope health seminars on cervical cancer, breast cancer, and heart disease and stroke awareness.
- 2009—Partnered with Du Page County Health Department and R.E.A.C.H. to provide a community health fair.
- 2010--Hosted African American Heritage Festival (AAHF), April 16-17, at North Central College in Naperville.
- 2011 (April)—Partnered with the College of Du Page to host “It’s On, A Community Basketball Event” with basketball clinics, contests, a bitty ball, and an old-timers game.
- 2012- Launch of the DAAWN initiative—DuPage African American Workgroup Network—working to improve academic performance of African American students in DuPage and surrounding counties.
- 2012—Hosted first Holiday Luncheon. Continues to present.
- 2013—DAAWN Volunteer Reception. Continues to present.
- 2014—AALR rebrands and focuses exclusively on improving education outcomes.
- 2014—Launch of Parenting Network Program to empower DAAWN parents.
- 2014—Launch of our new website, [www.aalr4success.org](http://www.aalr4success.org)
- 2015—Launch of AALR Scholarship. To date, we have had 8 scholarship recipients and 2 book award winners.
- 2015—Hosted first Donor reception to connect with strategic partners. This continues to present.
- 2017— Raised funds in “Step up to Care” walk for hurricane victims. Donated \$1000 to Midwest Mission Distribution Center.
- 2018—Chicago Hope —Partnered with Metropolitan Family Services, Calumet to support Upward Bound students with a workshop and trunk party.