

# COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE THE EXPERTS

## THROUGH WATTS COMMUNITY WELLNESS CPHT

By James K Miller Jr.

At the heart of Watts' ongoing transformation stands Anthony Perry, an educator at Los Padrinos Juvenile Center and an active community advocate dedicated to creating sustainable change. As a member of the National Association for Equal Justice in America, Perry has dedicated his work to address crime prevention, employment, and community wellness. His philosophy is simple but powerful: sustainable communities begin when residents are given opportunities to thrive.

Perry's journey with Watts Community Wellness CPHT began through organic community involvement. "I'm just a community member," he says, reflecting on years spent attending local meetings in Compton, Willowbrook, and Watts. "We're all connected—crime, unemployment, everything that affects one community affects the next. It's important that we communicate so we can help each other be neighbors." Perry sees the lack of opportunity as one of the greatest challenges in the Watts-Willowbrook area. "Economics is the biggest key," he explains. "If we create job opportunities—especially for our youth—we can give people purpose, income, and dignity." Ensuring young people can access jobs, training, and meaningful careers is essential to breaking cycles of poverty and reducing recidivism.

As a resident member of the Watts Community Wellness CPHT Advisory Board, Perry is planning to prevent crime through empowerment. Trauma and stress are woven into the fabric of community challenges. From his perspective, economic hardship fuels emotional strain, which can ripple through families and entire neighborhoods. "Low-paying jobs, unemployment—they cause stress. Stress leads to mental health problems. If we can reduce stress by increasing financial stability, we'll see positive effects on families and crime reduction." This wholistic vision is the heart of CPHT—addressing the economic, emotional, and social dimensions of community health together rather than in isolation.



As a teacher and parent volunteer, Perry also saw the value of education in building resilient communities firsthand. "Once I got inside the schools, it was mind-boggling. I saw what our teachers and kids were facing, and I knew I had to be part of the solution," he says. "It starts in the schools—if we can get our youth on the right path, we can focus on prevention instead of detention." Schools, parents, and organizations must work together to nurture and protect the community's future.

Anthony Perry's story demonstrates the necessity of placing residents at the center of efforts to transform community health. Through his work with CPHT and Children's Institute, Inc., he's now a part of the public health infrastructure—forming relationships, opportunities, and interventions that keep a community thriving. "We're just getting started," Perry says with a smile. "And I'm in it for the long haul."

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