

Celebrating a Local Heroine

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Five years ago **Rosazlia Griller** was depressed, nearly immobile at 480 pounds, and sick with cancer when two women persuaded her to attend a meeting at Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI), a longtime CFW grantee. Today, thanks to COFI's inspiration and her dedication, Rosazlia—Rose for short—has become a nationally recognized grassroots leader.

COFI trains low-income Chicago women in leadership skills and community activism. Rose is on the citywide leadership council of POWER-PAC (Parents Organizing to Win, Educate and Renew - Policy Action Council), a group of diverse parents and grandparents who want to create better opportunities for their children.

"My mission is to encourage parents to get involved in their children's education," Rose says. "When I first went to Springfield, it opened my eyes to all that had been going on but that I had never gotten involved in, because I had never asked questions."

A mother of two teen daughters, Rose wants to use her voice to make big changes in her neighborhood of Englewood. Over the past year, Rose helped get two new playgrounds built and raised pre-school participation by 25 percent as a Head Start Ambassador. Rose has also improved herself by losing nearly 250 pounds.

Recently, Allstate Insurance Company chose Rose as one of four Give Back Day Heroes, honoring volunteers who support the African American community. Ellen Schumer, executive director of COFI, says, "Rose has been fighting to make real change in her neighborhood and throughout Chicago for several years. We are excited that her transformative leadership is being recognized nationally."

Rosazlia Griller stands outside the Granville T. Woods Math & Science Community Academy, a public elementary school in Englewood which gained a new playground thanks to her organizing efforts.

