

The Problem

For students of color attending a predominantly white institution, it can be challenging to feel you belong. Four young adults at Marquette University understood this and, in 2023, re-initiated Black Mindz, a club providing a thriving hub for Black undergraduate students. "There was no intentional home or space for Black students when we started," said Gabrielle Shoulders, Black Mindz Vice President.

The Solution

Black Mindz aims to foster connections, promote mental health awareness, and build a strong community. Club re-organizers noted the need for social support. "As young adults, we are much more alike than we are different, but we don't realize that until we get in a social setting and hear each other's stories," said India Lock, Black Mindz Social Media Manager. **"The power of connection is so important, especially in the context of mental health."**

Black Mindz in Action

The Club meets twice per month and focuses on a mental health-related topic. Each meeting includes a presentation, an activity, a discussion, and snacks. Meetings happen at a set time and take place at the same location so that people know what to expect.

Club leadership is clear that the meetings are not therapy sessions. Club advisors who are mental health professionals help with the presentation content, but club leaders lead the meetings. **People attending can just listen or share – there are no expectations of those who show up.**

Important for the group is to help de-stigmatize mental health. "In our culture there is often stigma around mental health," said Shoulders. "Having a safe space where students can go and talk about their mental health helps break that stigma."

Success

Black Mindz is enjoying success at many levels. Maiya Sabree, a graduate student and one of the four who re-started the group, notices the positive things Marquette faculty and staff say about Black Mindz. "I hear comments about how staff can count on the group and compliments on the strong relationships the club has built with faculty and staff."

The group's reach goes beyond Marquette University and into the community where they have been invited to speak to high school students. Group leaders hope to expand this and reach out to parents of high school students to help them prepare for the changes college life brings.

The group is also stepping beyond a single university presence to forming a non-profit organization. Their hope is to take what they are doing to more universities.

"It is inspiring to see that our idea has been accepted and loved on by so many people," said Jasmine Scott, Black Mindz President. "It is affirming that people say what we are doing is great and there should be more of it."



Black Mindz leadership, L-R: Kari Lewis (Advisor), India Lock, Jasmine Scott, Gabrielle Shoulders, Maiya Sabree, and Marie Humes (Advisor)