



# A healing life

The Novant Health Equity Fund honoring Dr. Ophelia Garmon-Brown aims to help close the health access gaps for Charlotte's most vulnerable communities

Ophelia Garmon-Brown, MD, lives her life as a healer.

As a physician and community leader, Dr. Garmon-Brown believes that good health shouldn't depend on your ethnicity, address or the size of your bank account. Now her mission to bring health equity to all in Charlotte will take on new strength, with the creation of the Novant Health Equity Fund honoring Dr. Ophelia Garmon-Brown.

The Novant Health Foundation is launching the new fund to widen access to healthcare, develop the Charlotte workforce and erase food insecurity. They're goals Dr. Garmon-Brown has long championed, especially after she co-chaired a two-year study that found Charlotte ranked last among 50 cities for residents' ability to climb up out of poverty.

"If we don't recognize that we have two Charlottes, we won't ever become the city we could become," Dr. Garmon-Brown said about the findings. "There's so much to be done in every arena — and all of us can take a part."

Novant Health has a long tradition of extending holistic care to the community. "We wanted to take that care to new levels," said Ann Caulkins, Novant Health Foundation president, "and at the same time honor the courageous, generous spirit of Dr. Garmon-Brown. Our belief is that through this new fund, we will change lives — and destinies."

Novant Health Foundation aims to raise \$10 million for the new fund's first phase. The fund will pay for a wide range of work — COVID-19 testing sites, mammograms for uninsured women, scholarships for nursing students and much more (see sidebar).

Dr. Garmon-Brown lost her father when she was just 2 years old, and from childhood, she knew she wanted to be a doctor so she could, as she put it, "save all the daddies." She was the first African American female resident in family medicine in Charlotte, and rose in Novant Health to become chief community health and wellness executive. Dr. Garmon-Brown has also served as the medical director of the Charlotte Community Health Clinic, a free clinic for the uninsured and underinsured. She led Novant Health's Remarkable You initiative that brought thousands of people lifesaving health screenings.

As an ordained minister, Dr. Garmon-Brown has preached that God has given each person important work to do. Her belief gained new resonance when she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. With time, Dr. Garmon-Brown said, she began to see cancer as a gift — one that inspired her to even greater service.

"As long as I'm here," she said, "I've got to live this life prayerfully, present and purposefully."

That spirit of resiliency and purpose inspired the creation of the Novant Health Equity Fund honoring Dr. Ophelia Garmon-Brown. We at Novant Health look forward to extending her gifts of healing to even more people — today, and for all the tomorrows to come.

## Novant Health Equity Fund honoring Dr. Ophelia Garmon-Brown

The Novant Health Equity Fund honoring Dr. Ophelia Garmon-Brown will support health clinics, a mobile health cruiser, COVID-19 testing sites, mammography, workforce development, community health screenings and connecting patients with primary care and social services.

By connecting services within existing community assets, and focusing on the universal needs that most adversely affect health-access to care, food, housing, and workforce development — we will create community health hubs that will improve chronic disease management, health outcomes and quality of life, lower unnecessary costs for our healthcare system, and decrease the burden of government to provide public services.



To make a gift today honoring Dr. Ophelia Garmon-Brown, and to include a special note for her, visit [donate.NovantHealth.org/health\\_equity](https://donate.NovantHealth.org/health_equity)