



**Mrs. Thomas-Smith** recently retired as the Assistant Director for Illinois Department of Public Health. Prior to her appointment, she served as the Local Health Administrator at the Evanston Department of Health and Human Services, which she joined in 2005. She has been an executive Public Health Administrator and Public Health Nurse leader for over 25 years. During her tenure as a Local Health Administrator, Thomas-Smith helped establish the first federally qualified health center for the City of Evanston, the Erie Evanston Skokie Health Center, where community residents with limited resources can receive medical care. In 2007 she began “Women Out Walking,” a 12-week program which involves health education and walking to promote wellness. The cadre of walkers in recent years totaled over 1,000 walkers. Some of her other

accomplishments included campaigns against tobacco use among young people by implementing Tobacco 21. Evanston was the first municipality to legislate Tobacco 21 and she was an instrumental leader in getting Tobacco 21 statewide for Illinois.

She spearheaded the Evanston project for local needs assessments – a five-year strategic planning process by the Department to identify community priorities and needs, ensuring Evanston Health and Human Services maintains its State certification as a certified health department.

Selected as a Human Impact Partners (HIP) Health Equity Awakened Leadership Fellow in 2017 afforded her the opportunity to explore strategies that advance racial and social justice in public health, data-driven framing, and tools for systems change. “I was excited to be afforded the opportunity to take a deep dive into my personal leadership development, and shape racial and social justice strategies for public health, using inside-outside strategies to advance health equity in Evanston,” said Ms. Thomas-Smith. HIP identifies the need for public health leadership to commit fully and explicitly to racial and social justice. Mrs. Thomas-Smith earned bachelor’s degrees in Community Health and Nursing before pursuing a master’s degree in Nursing at Governor’s State University. Currently, she is working to complete a doctorate in public health at Walden University. Thomas-Smith, who grew up in Chicago, says her interest in public health was inspired by her late grandmother. Thomas-Smith shadowed her grandmother, who had been a public health nurse until the age of 77, visiting homes of members in her community.