

Brooklyn College Cancer Center

Issue 8 | Summer 2026

Dear Members of the BCCC-CURE Community,

Welcome to the summer edition of the Brooklyn College Cancer Center (BCCC-CURE) newsletter. We are pleased to update you on the activities and accomplishments of faculty, staff, and student members who are connected to the BC Cancer Center. The update covers the period of January to June 2026. We would also like to express our thanks to the Gray Foundation, American Cancer Society, Brooklyn College Alumni Association Palm Beach County Chapter, Bernie and Ethel Garil, and other donors, partners, and friends for the continued support of the BC Cancer Center. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter. Feel free to contact us at: BCCC-CURE@brooklyn.cuny.edu

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SPRING 2026 HIGHLIGHTS

BCCC-CURE-GRAY FOUNDATION BRCA CANCER RESEARCH AWARDS

Congratulations to professors **Garumma Feyissa, Ankit Jian, Shaneen Singh, Anjana Saxena, and Murat Cevher**, all active research members of BCCC-CURE, who received awards for hosting undergraduate students in their labs.

BCCC-CURE GRAY FOUNDATION PHD STUDENTS' CANCER RESEARCH AWARD

Congratulations to our seven BCCC-CURE – Gray Foundation doctoral award recipients! We are proud to provide financial support and training to further their work and look forward to the impact they will continue to make.

David Amoh-Boateng will complete research in the Gerona-Navarro Lab, titled “Synthesis and Biological Evaluation of Staple Peptides Targeting PRC2 Complex Function”

BCCC-CURE GRAY FOUNDATION PHD STUDENTS' CANCER RESEARCH AWARD (cont.)

Jutsum Nii Kotei Amon will complete research in the Greer Lab, titled “Singlet Oxygen Priming Amplifies the Cytotoxic Effects of Photodynamic Therapy via Polyprenyl Derivatives in Triple-Negative Breast Cancer”

Pius Boateng will complete research in the Jain Lab, titled “Multiphasic Condensates for Light-Triggered Multifarious Cancer Therapy”

Benjamin James Lesea-Pringle will complete research in the Mieszawska Lab, titled “Enhancing Ovarian Cancer Treatment via Nanoparticle-Mediated Gene Regulation”

Mst Kamrun Nahar will complete research in the Jain Lab, titled “Mechanistic comparison of photodynamic cytotoxicity induced by two polyprenylated phenolic compounds 2,4-bis(geranyl)phenol verses 2,6-bis(geranyl)phenol”

Akshaya Sreedharan Iyer will complete research in the Greer Lab, titled “Investigating Photoproducts of Prenylated Phenols Generated by Extended Photolysis for Clonogenic Suppression in BRCA1/2-Deficient Breast Cancer”

Beyza Yilmaz will complete research in the Murelli Lab, titled “Total Synthesis of Manicol”

GRAY FOUNDATION - BCCC-CURE UNDERGRADUATE COMMUNITY OUTREACH INTERNSHIP AWARD

We are pleased to congratulate our four undergraduate community outreach internship awardees. Under the supervision of our BCCC-CURE Community Outreach Coordinator, they each developed a one-month social media campaign on breast, cervical, colorectal, or prostate cancer prevention. The products of these campaigns were also presented during the BC Annual Student Health and Wellness Fair.

Nikeisha Paul

Breaking the Silence: Prostate Cancer Awareness and Early Detection in the Haitian Male Community

Eniola Adiat

Breast Cancer Awareness and How Early Detection Can Save Lives

Desmond Kraynak

The Impact of HPV Self-collection Tests on Early Detection and Treatment of Cervical Cancer

Mia Muskan

The Impact of Diet on Colorectal Cancer Risk and Prevention

We are excited to announce our 2026 High School Students Research Internship cohort of high school students performing research in BC laboratories. This program provides a funded opportunity for upcoming 11th and 12th grade students in public NYC High Schools to get involved in cancer-related research with BCCC-CURE principal investigators.

Sophia Fitenko will complete research in the Saxena Lab titled “Elucidating the role of RNA-binding protein nucleolin in DNA repair pathway and its functional impact in breast cancer.”

Georgia Klonari will complete research in the Contel Lab titled “Evaluation of Pt(II)-based potential ovarian cancer chemotherapeutics.”

Towrat Uddin will complete research in the Singh Lab titled “In-Silico Analysis of the TARDBP~miR-133 Regulatory Interactome with BRCA1-Associated Pathways.”

Congratulations to our 10 Gray Foundation-BCCC-CURE Travel Grant awardees. These grant funds support conference attendance and research presentations during the Spring, Summer, and Fall 2026 terms.

David Amoh-Boateng (Gerona-Navarro Lab, Chemistry and Biochemistry Department)

Attending the 2026 Boulder Peptide Symposium in Napa Valley, California to present “Development of Staple Peptide Inhibiting dual activity of EZH2”

Philip Asamani (Gerona-Navarro Lab, Chemistry and Biochemistry Department)

Attending the 2026 Boulder Peptide Symposium in Napa Valley, California to present “Structure-guided design of a peptide inhibitor targeting the SUZ12-EZH2 interface to allosterically modulate PRC2 activity”

Kara Duclosel (Contel Lab, Chemistry and Biochemistry Department)

Attending Metals in Medicine Gordon Research Conference in Andover, New Hampshire to present “Development and evaluation of biotinylated Au(II)-based complexes as targeted chemotherapeutics”

Nathanaels Estervil (Feyissa Lab, Health and Nutrition Science Department)

Attending the National Conference on Undergraduate Research 2026 (NCUR) in Richmond, Virginia to present “Investigating the Effectiveness of Aromatherapy and Its Supportive Combinations in Reducing Pain and Anxiety of Breast Cancer Patients”

Ayomide Ijaola (*Contel Lab, Chemistry and Biochemistry Department*)

Attending the Metals in Medicine Gordon Research Conference in Andover, New Hampshire to present “Development of reduced-complexity self-assembling peptides to encapsulate and/or coordinate anticancer gold agents”

Katherine Menendez Borbolla (*Gerona Navarro Lab, Chemistry and Biochemistry Department*)

Attending the Boulder Peptide Symposium in Napa Valley, California to present “From structure to function: Allosteric peptide inhibitors of SETD2 for cancer treatment”

Lina Mohammad (*Koizumi Lab, Health and Nutrition Science Department*)

Attending the 2026 New York State Public Health Partnership Conference in Lake Placid, New York to present “Community-Based HPV Cancer Prevention Education for Newly Arrived Latino Immigrants in Brooklyn, NY”

Raiyan Satti (*Singh Lab, Biology Department*)

Attending AACR (American Association of Cancer Research) in San Diego, California to present “BRCA1, RNA-binding proteins, and miR-18a, a molecular triumph in breast carcinoma”

Akshaya Sreedharan Iyer (*Greer Lab, Chemistry and Biochemistry Department*)

Attending the 2026 Biennial Meeting of the American Society for Photobiology in Scottsdale, Arizona and presented “Extended Photolysis for Molecule Downsizing: A Biomimetic Polyprenyl Chain-Shortening in Phenolic Precursors to Plant Defense Molecules”

Nathaniel Zimmerman (*Singh Lab, Biology Department*)

Attending AACR (American Association of Cancer Research) in San Diego, California to present “A comprehensive computational study of PARP1 isoforms and their interactions with nucleolin: Structural insights and implications for breast cancer”

We congratulate our researchers who published cancer related articles between January and June of 2026. We are pleased to share their recent work!

Cabral, F. V., Xu, Q., Eidenschink, N., **Greer, A.**, Lyons, A. M., & Hasan, T. Airborne $^1\text{O}_2$ Delivery via a Superhydrophobic Dressing as a Pathway to Next-Generation Wound Therapies, an *in vivo* Murine Burn Model Study. *Advanced Healthcare Materials*, e71083. <https://doi.org/10.1002/adhm.71083>

Cevher, M. A., Wijerathne, P. N., Yozgat, Y., Pan, S., & Karlic, S. Biochemical and epigenomic dissection of TFIIE function reveals gene-selective requirement in human transcription. *Scientific Reports*, 16(1), 5797. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-026-36090-4>

Eichner, A. S., Zimmerman, N., San, A., & **Singh, S.** In Silico Analysis of Human NEK10 Reveals Novel Domain Architecture and Protein-Protein Interactions. *Proteins*, 94(3), 756–771. <https://doi.org/10.1002/prot.70067>

Essang, S., Iyer, A., Durantini, A. M., & **Greer, A.** Analysis of singlet oxygen transport from air to surface by phosphorescence-slope inflection angle (SIA) approach. *Photochemistry and Photobiology*, 102(2), 351–361. <https://doi.org/10.1111/php.14125>

Mayrata, M., Lopez-Sanchez, A., Urriolabeitia, E. P., McCarrick, S., Manu, A., López-Hernández, J. E., Neary, M. C., & **Contel, M.** NMR spectroscopy stability studies of Ru-IM, a prodrug candidate for triple negative breast cancer. *Journal of Inorganic Biochemistry*, 278, 113254. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jinorgbio.2026.113254>

Santa Maria de la Parra, L., Martínez, V. R., Nayeem, N., **Contel, M.**, & León, I. E. Exploring the Anticancer Properties and Mode of Action of Copper(II)-Furan Acylhydrazones on Human Triple Negative Breast Cancer Cells. *ChemMedChem*, 21(4), e202500836. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cmdc.202500836>

Sahoo, P. R., Aftab, F., Manu, A. A., Roy, A., **Contel, M.**, & Morrow, J. R. Cytotoxicity and Immunogenic Cell Death Studies of Water-Soluble Tetrahedral Ga(III) or Fe(III) coordination Cages Containing a Au(I) Anticancer Drug as Guest. *Inorganic Chemistry Frontiers*, 13(12), 5221–5232. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1039/d6qi00661b>

Samarawickrama, P., Ihalagedara, H., Xu, Q., Boisrobert, C., Mahmudov, R., **Greer, A.**, & Lyons, A. M. A Scalable Singlet Oxygen Reactor for Photodegradation of Active Pharmaceutical Compounds and Disinfection. *ACS ES&T Water*, 6(4), 2068–2079. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acsestwater.5c00915>

Villasi, W., Frederic, R., Qureshi, S., Zheng, B., **Torrente, M. P.**, & Fisher, R. M. A. Histone H3 Post-Translational Modification Changes are Linked to Manganese and Copper Exposure in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. *microPublication Biology*, 2026, 10.17912/micropub.biology.002104. <https://doi.org/10.17912/micropub.biology.002104>

SPRING 2026 EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Scientific Seminars/Trainings

February 13th, 2026, 12:30-2:15PM - BCCC-CURE Joint Scientific and Career Seminar with Chemistry & Biochemistry Department by [Dr. Orrette Wauchope](#) (Associate Professor, Natural Sciences Department at Baruch College, CUNY) “*Bacterial Communication and Biofilm Inhibition*” and Career talk “*Beyond the Lab: Where a Chemistry Degree Can Take You*”. Hosted by Professor Alexander Greer in Room 3143 Ingersoll Hall. Light lunch was provided for students

March 13th, 2026, 12:30-2:15PM - BCCC/Biology Department Joint Scientific Seminar and Career Talk by [Ms. Kathryn Galasso](#) (Licensed Certified Genetics Counselor, Hackensack University Medical Center) “*What is Genetic Counseling? The Career, the Training, and the Impact*” Hosted by Professor Murat Cevher in Room 3143 Ingersoll Hall. A light lunch was provided for students in Room 230, New Ingersoll.

March 19th, 2026, 12:30-2:15PM - BCCC-CURE Joint Scientific Seminar with the Dept. of Health and Nutrition Sciences by [Dr. Jennifer Leng](#) (Associate Professor of Population Health Sciences, Weill Cornell Medical College/Director of Research Development/Associate Attending Physician, Immigrant Health & Cancer Disparities Service, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center) “*Optimizing Lifestyle Interventions for Historically Marginalized Populations*” hosted by Dr. Margrethe Horlyck-Romanovsky. A light lunch was provided for students in Room 3143, Ingersoll Hall.

April 17th, 2026, 12:30-1:30PM - BCCC-CURE Joint Scientific Seminar with Chemistry & Biochemistry Department by [Dr. Ankit Jain](#) (Assistant Professor, Department of Chemistry /Biochemistry, Brooklyn College) “*Amyloid Control of Multiphasic Biomolecular Condensates*” Hosted by Prof. Ryan Murelli. Room 3143 Ingersoll Hall.

April 23rd, 2026, 12:30-1:30PM - BCCC-CURE Cancer Related Research, Internships, and Partner Opportunities. Seminar by [Dr. Alexander Greer](#), Professor, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Director, Brooklyn College Cancer Center, CTO, SingletO2 Therapeutics. The talk is titled: “*From Lab Discovery to Business: An Introduction to Entrepreneurship for Researchers at Brooklyn College*”. Room 3143 Ingersoll Hall.

April 28th, 2026, 12:20-2:30PM - Brooklyn College’s 40th H. Martin Friedman Lecture by Nobel Laureate [Dr. Martin Chalfie](#) (Professor, Biology Department, Columbia University) Hosted by Gulnara Zaynullina and Professor Ryan Murelli and the BC Chemistry and Biochemistry Department and BCCC-CURE, at the Lecture Hall 148 New Ingersoll.

Educational and Community Outreach Events

February 4th, 2026, 12:15-2:15PM - *BC Goes Red! - Heart Health and Cancer Awareness* Hosted by Health and Wellness Student Office and Immunizations Requirements, with support from BCCC-CURE, BLMI, BC Health Clinic, and the BC Graduate Center for Workers Education and NCNW Flatbush Section and Good Health WINS. (3305 James Hall)

February 5th, 2026, 12:30-2:15 PM – *BC-AMSA and BCCC-CURE Cancer Related Research, Internships, and Clinical Opportunities for BC Students* (with BC Public Health and Medicine Student Club (PHAM) and BC Health and Nutrition Student Club) at the Bedford Room. Lunch was provided. (BC Student Center, Bedford Room)

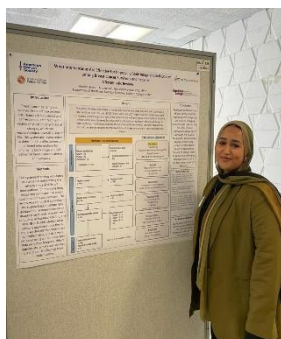
March 10th, 2026, 12:15-2:15PM - Fuel to Fight: How Nutrition Helps Prevent Cancer - With outstanding speakers who are experts on nutritional oncology (Mount Sinai's Rutenberg Treatment Center) colorectal cancer screening options (Exact Sciences Co.) and growing/eating healthy foods (GrowNYC). Hosted by BCCC-CURE and Health and Wellness Student Office and Immunizations Requirements, with support from the BC Department of Health and Nutrition, Center for Health Promotion, Immigrant Student Success Office, BLMI, BC Graduate Center for Workers Education, PHAM Student Club & NCNW Flatbush Section and Good Health WINS. Lunch was provided. (3305 James Hall)

April 30th, 2026, 12:15-2:15PM Blood Cancers and Stem Cell Donor Registration Training by Dr. Martin Hogan from University of Loyola, Chicago. Co-hosted by BCCC-CURE and Windsor Tough. Lunch was provided.

May 5th, 2026, 12:15-2:15PM Brooklyn College Annual Health and Wellness Fair, Hosted by BCCC-CURE and Health and Wellness Student Office and Immunizations Requirements - Free Prostate Screenings will be available through Mount Sinai's Mobile Van, 2900 Bedford. (West Quad)



BCCC-CURE Students Presenting Their Cancer Research at the 2026 Brooklyn College Science Day



Mariam Bekhet, Undergraduate Student, Health and Nutrition Sciences

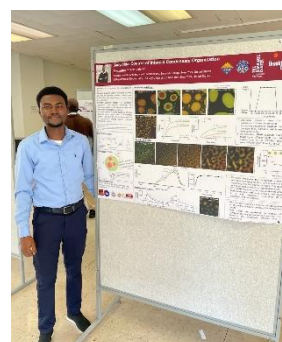
Title: *What Interventions Are Effective for Improving Body Image and Self-Esteem among Breast Cancer Survivors and Patients: A Systematic Review*

Lab: Prof. Garumma Feyissa

Pius Boateng, Doctoral Student, Chemistry and Biochemistry

Title: *Amyloid Control of Internal Condensate Organization*

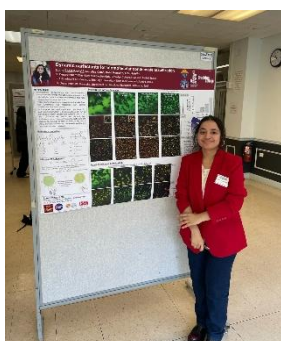
Lab: Prof. Ankit Jain



Pooja Chakraborty, Doctoral Student, Chemistry and Biochemistry

Title: *Dynamic Surfactants for Biomolecular Condensate Stabilization*

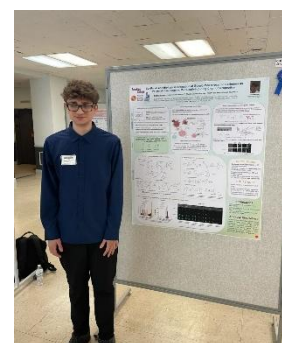
Lab: Prof. Ankit Jain



Brando Marinac, Undergraduate Student, Chemistry and Biochemistry

Title: *Synthesis and Biological Evaluation of Gold(I) N-heterocyclic Carbenes as Potential Immunogenic Cell Death Inducing Chemotherapeutics*

Lab: Prof. Maria Contel

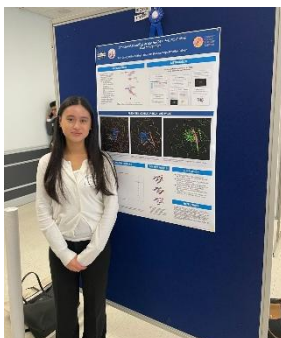


Zuvi Quang, High School Student (Midwood High School)

Title: *Structural Modeling of the BRCA1 and PALB2's Coiled-Coil Interaction*

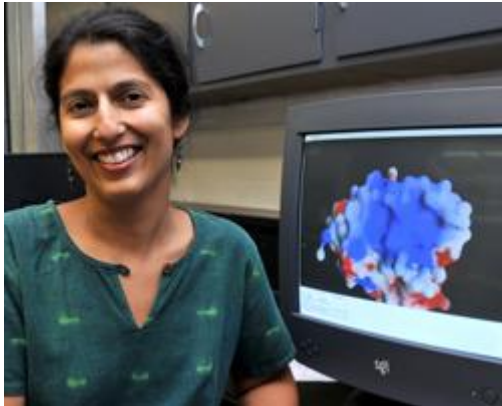
Lab: Prof. Shaneen Singh

* Science Day High School Award Winner!



BCCC-CURE MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

BCCC-CURE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR



Shaneen Singh, Professor, Department of Biology, Brooklyn College, CUNY

[In 2-3 sentences describe your cancer research topic](#)

We are interested in understanding how nucleolin and BRCA1 collaborate in DNA repair mechanisms, specifically in the context of breast cancer. We utilize in silico approaches to unveil and characterize proteins/protein complexes. The goal is to dissect the molecular mechanisms involved in normal and aberrant signaling.

[When and where did you start doing cancer research?](#)

My foray into cancer research began when I started a collaboration with Anjana Saxena to model the structure of nucleolin around 2014. Since then, this has become an ongoing and long-term collaboration to understand the role of nucleolin in cancer from many different perspectives. We have also been studying other proteins as well, such as NEK10 that are associated with cancer phenotypes.

[Briefly, what are the most rewarding and most challenging components of your cancer research career?](#)

Training and exciting undergraduate students to use computational methods to uncover novel findings that can be used as a foundation towards applied therapeutics has always been especially rewarding to me. Since our results are predictive in nature, the biggest challenge for us is finding fruitful collaborations with experimentalists to validate our predictive findings.

[Do you collaborate with external institutions?](#)

Yes, wherever there is mutual interest, I am always happy to collaborate with scientists in other CUNY institutes as well as outside of CUNY. I have several established collaborations in various projects including cancer research.

[What do you do for fun in your free time?](#)

What free time? Ha ha! Jokes a side, I love gardening and writing poetry if time allows.



Beyza Yilmaz, Ph.D. Program in Chemistry, The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, CUNY | Chemistry and Biochemistry Department, Brooklyn College, CUNY

In 2-3 sentences can you describe your research topic

My current research project is the total synthesis of a pretty scarce natural product called manicol. Manicol has potent anti-HIV activity and targets the virus through a novel mechanism of action. No FDA approved anti-HIV drugs that are currently on the market target the virus through the same mechanism of action as Manicol. This is significant as HIV treatment predominantly relies on combination therapies and to combat viral resistance, thus it is important to keep coming up with novel ways to target the virus. HIV significantly increases the risk of various cancers by severely weakening the immune system, which is the reason my work relates to cancer research.

When and where did you start doing synthetic and cancer research?

I started this research project at Brooklyn College with the recommendation and under the guidance of my PI Ryan Murelli around a year and a half ago. We are a synthetic chemistry lab that primarily works on compounds with similar scaffolds to that of manicol so we thought that we could efficiently produce a total synthesis for it built around our chemistry.

Briefly, what are the most rewarding and most challenging components of your research career?

The most rewarding aspects of my research are the end goal of my project, the synthetic chemistry skills and I am gaining and strengthening, and the opportunity to mentor undergraduate researchers and see them succeed. The most challenging aspect is the very nature of a total synthesis project which requires a ton of trial and error, constantly having to start over from the very first step as I run out of material to work with, being stuck on optimizing one step for months at a time, and the uncertainty of whether the synthesis will be successfully completed at all. I am happy to say that I am currently on an advanced step of my synthesis, and it all looks promising.

Do you collaborate with external institutions?

After completing the synthesis of manicol and related molecules, we will send out the molecules – to our collaborators John Tavis (SLU Medicine) and John Beutler (NCI-Frederick) who will test them for HIV RT RNaseH inhibition (Tavis) and run HIV-based cell-survival assays (Beutler).

What do you do for fun in your free time?

I like to knit and crochet in my free time! I am also slowly getting into sewing. I want to eventually learn how to write patterns for garments for all three crafts.



Mariam Bekhet, Undergraduate, Department of Health and Nutrition Sciences, Brooklyn College, CUNY

In 2-3 words describe your cancer research topic

My research project, which I am working on with Professor Garumma Feyissa, is an ongoing systematic review examining which interventions are effective in improving body image and self-esteem among breast cancer patients and survivors worldwide. We focused on body image and self-esteem because they can play a significant role in the overall quality of life of breast cancer patients and survivors throughout their cancer journey. This research is supported by the American Cancer Society Institutional Grant DICRIDG-22-1012253-03-DICRIDG, a pilot grant awarded to Professor Feyissa.

What and where did you start being interested in cancer research?

When I started my freshman year, I knew I wanted to work in cancer research, but I was especially interested in research focused on the patient's experience at every stage of their cancer journey. I recall visiting the Brooklyn College Cancer Center and seeing numerous opportunities to collaborate with professors in various areas of cancer research. That really sparked my interest and encouraged me to reach out to professors whose research projects I was interested in.

What do you hope to accomplish when you complete your master's degree?

One thing I hope to accomplish by the time I complete my degree at Brooklyn College is to conduct research abroad related to my current project. I also hope to continue developing this work and eventually contribute to a publication. After graduating, I hope to attend medical school and eventually become a physician with a focus on women's health.

What is one of your favorite things about Brooklyn College so far?

One of my favorite things about Brooklyn College so far is the endless opportunities available to work on projects you are passionate about with professors in fields you are interested in. There are also so many faculty members and programs, such as the Tow Mentoring and Research Program, that guide students throughout their college experience, offer mentorship, and provide professional advice. These opportunities make achievements that may seem impossible feel much more reachable. Personally, getting connected with the Brooklyn College Cancer Center opened so many doors for me in the research world. It taught me how important it is to seek out opportunities and take advantage of the support available at Brooklyn College. I was also selected to receive the American Cancer Society Summer Internship Award, which will allow me to continue contributing to cancer research this summer.

UPCOMING BCCC-CURE EVENTS

**LIST OF FALL 2026 SCIENTIFIC SEMINARS AND COMMUNITY/EDUCATIONAL EVENTS
COMING SOON!**

Stay Connected!



Please visit our [website](#) to find timely information about our past and upcoming educational opportunities, community outreach events, and information about becoming a BCCC-CURE member.

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