HEALTHIER BLACK ELDERS CENTER (HBEC)

University of Michigan and Wayne State University's Center for Urban African American Aging Research: A National Institute on Aging Grant Program
By Cheryl Deep

Each night in Detroit, 15,000 to 17,000 people have no home. About half of these are African American and many are women over 50. They eat at soup kitchens. They sleep between dumpsters, near steam vents or in crowded shelters.

Fresh attention is being brought to this age-old problem through the creative efforts of Wayne State research. “Telling My Story: Bringing Hope to the Homeless” combines photography, research and autobiography to profile the often-forgotten older woman who becomes homeless. Drs. Olivia Washington and David Moxley, a professor formerly with the WSU School of Social Work, have researched homelessness for nearly a decade to hone a unique perspective on the problem.

Their exhibit features eight homeless women willing to share the intimate and disturbing details of their journey as captured on seven-foot photographic collages. In mid-life, each of these women found themselves suddenly homeless due to reasons such as fire, death, job loss, addiction and mental trauma.

Homelessness has many faces and causes, according to Dr. Washington, that require specialized therapy intervention to be effective. Her guided group support meetings have reduced the psychological trauma of homelessness while building self-esteem, trust and confidence. “Group members become empowered,” Dr. Washington explained. “We help them to master their conditions and their circumstances.”

The “Telling My Story” exhibit is now on display at Focus: HOPE Art Gallery, 1400 Oakman Blvd., Detroit, between Sept. 10 and Oct. 31.

“Telling My Story” is not about hope abandoned but about hope reborn. Today, most of the eight women are self-supporting and living in their own apartments, several of them working in professions that help others find the strength and skill to also escape difficult situations.

The Healthier Black Elders Center (HBEC) continues its commitment to connect Detroit’s seniors and their families to current knowledge about aging and health. This year, HBEC’s free community forums have expanded to include new locations with a broader list of speakers and topics.

Each forum includes presentations by experts followed by a question-and-answer period. Participants say they especially appreciate being able to interact with doctors, health educators and HBEC/MCUAAAR staff in a relaxed setting. Free refreshments are provided.

This year, forums are slated to begin in October. For more details please see the back page of this newsletter (Mark the Date!), contact Ms. Karen Daniels Tucker at (313) 871-0735, or visit us on the web at www.mcuaar.wayne.edu.
WHO’s WHO in the HBEC

James S. Jackson, PhD
Co-Principal Investigator and Core Leader
MCUAAAR Administrative Core and The Healthier Black Elders Center

James Jackson, Ph.D., is the founder and long-term director of the Program for Research on Black Americans and research professor at the University of Michigan’s (U-M) Institute for Social Research. He has been instrumental in obtaining funding, organizing and implementing the community outreach of the HBEC. “This is the culmination of years of work in building effective liaisons with community agencies, elders and their families in greater Detroit,” says Dr. Jackson about this year’s HBEC event.

A graduate of Wayne State University’s Department of Psychology with a degree in social psychology, Dr. Jackson was born in Detroit and raised in Inkster, MI. He is the Daniel Katz Distinguished University Professor of Psychology, and Professor of Health Behavior and Health Education in the School of Public Health. He also is an elected member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. He is currently Co-Principal Investigator and Core Leader along with Peter Lichtenberg of the Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research (MCUAAAR), a partnership between the U-M and Wayne’s IOG, as well as home to the HBEC.

Dr. Jackson’s research and body of published work informs the public and policy makers about African American youth, adults and the elderly. As principal investigator of over 24 funded NIH and National Science Foundation grants, he also directs the most extensive social, political behavior and health surveys on the American and Caribbean populations ever conducted. His current research explores how race, ethnicity and culture influence the relationship between physical and mental health.

Adding Life to Our Years CONTINUED

in cancer rates between African Americans and other ethnic groups. African Americans have a 16-30% higher rate of death from colon cancer, prostate cancer and lung cancer.

“We’ve got important information to share with our elders, but first we have to get their attention,” said Karen Daniels Tucker, the HBEC coordinator who also organizes smaller health forums throughout the city.

This year’s celebration had top quality entertainment from the Charlie Gabriel band with guest Marcus Belgrave, and Motown classics from the Stubbs Girls. It also featured former Detroit Lion Ernie Clark leading chair exercises, plus two dance troupes to demonstrate simple hustle steps that improve heart health. Free screenings for blood pressure and cholesterol were provided by local healthcare facilities.

Dr. Sidney Stahl agrees strongly with the concept of entertaining to educate. As a program chief at the National Institute on Aging, he has long supported funding for MCUAAAR and the Healthier Black Elders Center. This year, Dr. Stahl flew in from Washington D.C. to address the event. “It is not often that the right message is simply and clearly connected to exactly the right audience,” he said. “This event makes that happen in a fun and caring atmosphere. I’ve never seen anything like it.”
Have You Experienced a Hip Fracture in the Last 8 Years?

If you are 55 or older we are looking for you! Wayne State University and the Institute of Gerontology are conducting research to learn how individuals can rebuild their lives after a hip fracture.

No physical or invasive tests will be performed. This project is funded by the National Institute on Aging.

No Travel Necessary • Participants Receive $40

Participation and all information is confidential.

For more information, call: Hip Fracture Project at (866) 665-5501 (toll free).

MARK THE DATE!

HBEC Community Health Forums (10-11:30am)
All forums are held in Detroit and open to the public.
Oct 18, 2007 - Van Dyke Center, 8100 Gratiot, 48213
Nov 8, 2007 - Warren Plaza Apts, 430 E. Warren, 48202
Feb 14, 2008 - Stapleton Center, 9341 Agnes, 48214
Mar 13, 2008 - Northwest Activities Center, 18100 Meyers Rd., 48235
Apr 17, 2008 - Friendship Meadows, 3930 Rivard, 48207

Topics and speakers are to be determined. Dates and times are subject to change.

The 6th HBEC Annual Health Reception
June 3, 2008: 10:00am – 2:15pm - Venue to be determined. For more information, call (313) 871-0735.

Calling All Creative Seniors Do you sew, write, paint, sculpt, sing, or dance? Whatever your artistic passion, the Institute of Gerontology wants you and your art at our next Art of Aging Successfully Conference March 27, 2008. Deadline for submission is Nov. 1, 2007. For information call Donna MacDonald at (313) 577-2297 or email her at ba8841@wayne.edu.

Special Thanks to all who volunteered at the June 5th 2007 HBEC Health Reception.

To volunteer, or for more information on HBEC, please contact Karen Daniels Tucker at (313) 871-0735 or visit www.mcuaaar.wayne.edu.