AMHC Increases Awareness in the Hispanic Community

The last day of Hispanic Heritage Month, October 15th, has been designated as National Latino AIDS Awareness Day (NLAAD). In 2003, NLAAD was established in response to the impact of HIV and AIDS on Hispanic/Latino communities nationwide.

In commemoration of NLAAD, the Arkansas Minority Health Commission in partnership with the Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Human Development Corporation, UAMS, Vision Christian Academy, and Jefferson Comprehensive Care System, Inc. held the Arkansas Latino AIDS Awareness Day Health Fair, October 15th at Second Baptist-Vision Christian Academy.

The theme for this year was "Latinos Unite! Let’s Stay Healthy! Get Tested for HIV!" More than 350 Latinos “united” to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS. Approximately 48 were tested.

“This event was a true testament of what partnership can accomplish,” said AMHC Executive Director, Dr. Idonia Trotter. “Each organization pulled together skills and knowledge as well as invested their time to increase the awareness of HIV/AIDS and overall health and wellness in the Latino community,” she said. AMHC’s legislative mandate requires outreach and education among minorities, including Latinos. As a result, AMHC has increased its outreach in Latino communities throughout the state.

The event kicked off with a roundtable breakfast where approximately 20 Hispanic leaders gathered to discuss HIV/AIDS in the Latino community. Organizations represented were the Mexican Consulate of Little Rock, the Office of Governor Mike Beebe, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, Jefferson Comprehensive Care System, Inc. and Ventanilla de Salud as well as health professionals and faith-based leaders.

The presenter for the roundtable was Samantha Euraque of the Minority AIDS Initiative Regional Coordinator at Delta Region AIDS Education and Training Center in New Orleans. The discussion centered on stigma and the group was asked to illustrate the definition using the image of a tree starting with the “root” of stigma. Latino leaders were inspired to understand...
the disease and take the lead on encouraging education and screenings broadly in the Latino community.

The health fair that followed was filled with education and entertainment. The master of ceremonies was Al “Papa Rap” Lopez of Springdale, Ark. Just for the occasion Papa Rap wrote a song titled “VIH-T la prueba por que SIDA.”

“I wanted to find a way to create conciseness through music but in a fun and catchy tune that people could dance and sing to, said Lopez. "Vez y haste la prueba" means "go and get tested," so pronouncing VIH in Spanish seems like that’s what you’re saying. "Por que si da" is the other phrase that means "because it happens" and sound like sounds like "SIDA" which means AIDS, so again this was a perfect play of words," he said.

Click here to listen “VIH-T la prueba por que SIDA.”

Presentations were provided by AMHC Medical Consultant, Dr. Creshelle Nash; Dr. Jose Ernesto Turcios, Healthy Smiles; and Samantha Euraque. Entertainment was provided by Mariachi America, Folkloric Dance and Jimmy “Mr. Get Better” Robinson. The featured guest for NLAAD was international comedian, tv presenter, actor, producer Fernando Arau, who educated the crowd on the importance of personal health awareness as well as provided a few laughs.

More than 30 vendors provided health screenings and information. During the event Vice-Consul of Protection of the Mexican Consulate, Carlos Klein took the HIV test on stage to demonstrate the ease of the test.

"The Mexican Consulate in Little Rock, through the Institute of Mexicans Abroad in an effort to prevent disease among the Mexican and Latino community, develops programs and encourages events that can raise the health standards of our nationals," said Consul Edgardo Briones. "That’s why the HIV Latino Awareness Day event sponsored by the Arkansas Minority Health Commission was a great forum for us to promote the prevention of HIV and the efforts made by our Health

Windows (Ventanilla de Salud) to provide health information to everyone. The Latino community not only enjoyed the entertainment at the event, but most importantly, they received basic information and health screenings like HIV aimed at preventing such diseases."
Latinos Unite! Let's Stay Healthy! Get Tested for HIV!

National Latino AIDS Awareness Day planning committee members Elvira Aguirre of Ventanilla de Salud Mexican Consulate, Silvia Fernandez, Bilingual/Latino Liaison for AMHC and Sue Espinoza of Arkansas Human Development Corporation.

Fernando Arau

Carlos Klein Vice-Consul of Protection demonstrates to the crowd the ease of taking an HIV test.

Folkloric Dancers

L-R: Sue Espinoza, Silvia Fernandez, Idonia Trotter, Al "Papa Rap" Lopez, Maura Yancy

NLAAD attracted more than 350 Latinos from Central Arkansas, Springdale and DeQueen.

Mariachi America
Senior State Director, Maria Reynolds-Diaz explains the services offered by AARP

Michelle Trevino of Ventanilla de Salud Mexican Consulate

Arkansas Department of Health, Diabetes Section Chief, Bonnie J. Bradley, MPH, RD, LD demonstrates the sugar content of foods to NLAAD participants

UAMS Volunteers provided blood pressure screenings to NLAAD participants

UAMS’ Dale Gray (right) with Dr. Jose Ernesto Turcios of Healthy Smiles

Jimmy “Mr. Get Better” Robinson of The Movement leads the crowd in an exercise routine.

Click here to view more photos from NLAAD!
AMHC partners with Arkansas Baptist College to decrease illiteracy in Arkansas

AMHC Commissioner Willie McGhee (El Dorado) served on a panel during the Arkansas Baptist College Delta Classic 4 Literacy Black on Black Crime "Action" Summit held Sept. 1st. During the summit those touched by crime were given an opportunity to share their stories and their accomplishments in spite of adversity. McGhee who is passionate about Black youth in El Dorado as well as the state serves as City Councilman and Teen Director of the Boys and Girls Club of El Dorado.


This year, the Commission was challenged to take the Delta Classic 4 Literacy one step further by including "health literacy." Health Literacy impacts an individual's ability to understand information and services and use them to make appropriate decisions about health. On September 3rd, the Commission held a health fair and wellness expo during the Classic Tailgate Party at War Memorial Stadium. Approximately 270 screenings were given.

Act 909 and State of Arkansas used as model for using research to impact policy

On September 14th the Arkansas Minority Health Commission participated in a national webinar titled "Translating Research to Policy." The discussion addressed the questions how can a researcher's work become more policy relevant, what should researchers know about policymaking and what should policymakers know about research? The webinar was presented by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Human Capital Grantee Network and moderated by Dr. Shawn Bediako, associate professor in the department of psychology at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

AMHC Executive Director, Dr. Idonia L. Trotter, Arkansas State Representative Reginald Murdock and Dr. Sophie Lanzkron, director of the Sickle Cell Center for Adults at Johns Hopkins University served as panelists and used Act 909 as a basis. Act 909 was signed into law in April 2011 by Governor Mike Beebe and will allow the creation of an adult sickle cell clinic to be housed at UAMS.

Read Act 909
The Arkansas Minority Health Commission, for the second year launched the Face Sickle Cell awareness campaign, September 1 in commemoration of National Sickle Cell Awareness Month.

Three 30-second spots appeared on KATV Channel 7, Today’s THV, KARK Channel 4 on September 1st-30th. In the spots, viewers saw faces of different ages and ethnicities morph from one to the next.

As part of the campaign, Representative Reginald Murdock sponsor of Act 909 and Dr. Joycelyn Elders, member of the Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Sickle Cell Disease appeared on Today’s THV.

"I chose to support Act 909 because of the need for an adult sickle cell clinic in Arkansas, because of the recommendations provided by the Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Sickle Cell Disease and because of the potential positive economic impact on our state," said Representative Murdock.

"This clinic allows for state of the art care and training for doctors and students," said Dr. Elders. "This clinic is crucial." Others interviewed during Sickle Cell Awareness Month were AMHC Chair, Vivian Flowers; AMHC Executive Director, Idonia Trotter; Sickle Cell Support Services Executive Director, Germaine Johnson; UAMS Living Well with Sickle Cell Program Director, Ruby Brown, and Former Vice Chair of the Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Sickle Cell Disease, Dr. David Becton of Arkansas Children’s Hospital.

Spotlight: Germaine Johnson, Sickle Cell Support Services

The life of someone living with sickle cell anemia can be filled with severe pain, exhaustion and emotional strain. Sickle Cell Support Services’ Executive Director, Germaine Johnson, was born with the disease and knows the experience all too well.

As a child he lived a relatively normal life with minimal problems—until adulthood. He describes his life following his teenage years as one filled with numerous hospital stays and trips to the emergency room.

Soon after getting his condition under control, Johnson found that connecting with a doctor as an adult with sickle cell was extremely difficult and wanted to do something about it. In 2001, he started the organization Sickle Cell Inner Circle Support Group which incorporated in 2005 to become Sickle Cell Support Services. The mission of the organization is to enhance the well-being of sickle cell patients and their families in the state of Arkansas.

Johnson is also former chair of the Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Sickle Cell Disease. Sponsored by Representative David Rainey and enacted into law by way of Act 1191 of 2009, the taskforce examines how the state of Arkansas responds to sickle cell consumers.

"Germaine has become a champion for sickle cell consumers in Arkansas and AMHC applauds his commitment to improving and broadening Arkansas’ response to those impacted by this painful disease," said Dr. Idonia Trotter, AMHC executive director.
AMHC attends conferences with topics centered on improving the health of minorities in the U.S.

AMHC Commissioners Raul Blasini, Dr. Carmen Paniagua and AMHC’s Bilingual/Latino Liaison Silvia Fernandez attended the 34th Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute’s Annual Public Policy Conference at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center on September 11-13 in Washington, D.C.

Each year the conference assembles Latino leaders, experts and scholars to participate in timely discussions of major policy issues affecting the Latino community. Key issues discussed this year were health and social determinants of health such as education, housing and financial services, job creation and workforce training, among other subjects.

On September 21-24, AMHC representatives attended the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Foundation’s 41st Annual Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. The CBC brings together a cross-sector of leaders and organizations to discuss issues concerning the African American community and to find solutions.

The theme for this year’s conference was iLead iServe. AMHC attended several seminars during the conference related to examining the progress made combating HIV/AIDS over the past 30 years; the politics of race and health equity; and health, nutrition, wellness, and obesity in minority communities. AMHC representatives visited each of Arkansas’s six Congressional leaders to provide updates on minority health disparity issues in the state.
Racial and Ethnic Disparities Discussed in Relation to Healthy Living During Health Food Summit

Dr. Creshelle Nash, AMHC Medical Consultant, and Dr. Eddie Ochoa were presenters during the Little Rock Healthy Food and Active Living Summit. Their presentation was titled “Racial-Ethnic Health Disparities in Arkansas: Theory, Experience and Elimination.”

The summit was called by Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola “to find ways to improve access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food for all citizens of Little Rock.” Other session topics included developing and implementing local food shed polices; social justice and local food access; attracting healthy food retail to underserved neighborhoods and community organizing strategies for food policy change.

Dr. Nash presents the Gardner’s Tale from Dr. Camara Jones. The story demonstrates the three levels of racism institutionalized, personally mediated and internalized racism.