HEALTH CARE REFORM FACTS ARE TOPIC OF LEGISLATIVE MEETING

The Senate Subcommittee on Minority Health held a legislative meeting to hear concerns and answer the questions of approximately 60 Monticello residents. The meeting was presided over by Senator Jack Crumbly, District 16 and Representatives Garry Smith, District 7; Eddie Cheatham, District 9; Gregg Reep, District 8 and Willie Hardy, District 5; and County Judge Damon Lampkin were in attendance.

The consensus of the legislative panel was that public health, which encompasses minority health disparities, is a critical issue in Arkansas.

"Health care is paramount in the state of Arkansas, “said Senator Crumbly, “We only have one body and we must take care of it.”

Representative Reep, chair of the House Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee, offered good news and hard facts about health care reform and the cost. He said overall more people will become eligible for Medicaid; however, Arkansas must be prepared for the cost. He shared that initially the federal government will pay 100 percent of the cost but this will drop off over time. “There are going to be some tough decisions that will have to be made,” he said. “The best thing we can do is to get our state healthier…we will all be better off financially.”

Presenters included Steve Jones, Deputy Director of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHS); Dr. Joseph Bates, Chief Science Officer of the Arkansas Department of Health; and Dr. Creshelle Nash, AMHC Medical Director.

Dr. Joseph Bates, ADH chief scientific officer, gave a snap-shot of the health status of Drew County. Dr. Bates highlighted how important oral health is to the overall health of residents in Drew County and Arkansas. He pointed out that approximately 57 percent of third-grade children in Drew County have cavities and 53 percent...
have untreated cavities. He said it is possible for a child to grow up and have no cavities, if sealants are placed on their teeth and the city drinking water has fluoride. He explained that poor oral health can put an individual at a higher risk for heart disease and stroke.

“Maintaining good oral health is the lowest cost prevention strategy for heart disease,” said Bates.

AMHC Medical Director, Dr. Creshelle Nash shared the high points of the health status in Drew County. She said Drew County has a lower rate of new cancer cases, lower death rates, most women in Drew County get prenatal care in their first trimester and most residents over 65 are getting immunizations. She also highlighted Arkansans care about health and Monticello, in particular the VFW grounds, provides opportunities for the residents to be active with a football field and a swimming pool.

“Just looking around today, I noticed people from all walks of life coming out to get screened, that tells me that the community cares about their health,” she said.

DHS Deputy Director, Steve Jones provided the audience a synopsis of what the Department of Human Services is doing to improve the health status of Arkansans. Jones revealed that more than 1.3 million people go to DHS for services each year. He said that through stimulus funds DHS was able to assist these millions of people by adding more jobs that lowered waiting lists and lowered case loads. DHS also invested $3 million in youth services.

“Instead of locking up our youth, we are giving them valuable outlets,” said Jones.

Attendees shared their thoughts and concerns regarding government medical coverage, health care reform, physician shortage and health care access.

Katherine Donald, director of the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Arkansas (CTFA), spoke from personal experience about government medical coverage and in-home care. Her sister recently had a stroke at age 53 that left her paralyzed on the left side of her body. Unfortunately when the stroke occurred her sister had no insurance.

“She doesn’t qualify for full Medicaid benefits nor does she qualify for in-home service, said Donald. “We are on a wing and a prayer; I know we are not alone.”

Allen Nichols of the Mainline Community Health Clinic in Monticello acknowledged these health care gaps but assured Donald and the crowd that during the gap between 2010 and 2014, the community health clinic will be there for the community. The recently opened clinic takes all forms of insurance and accepts patients without insurance, regardless of their ability to pay.

“The key is to tap into the existing resources in your local county such as your community health centers and DHS,” said Nash. “DHS case workers are there to provide additional resources and information to help. But don’t stop there; you can do more by also understanding the provisions in the new health care reform and how it will impact you directly.”

To view the legislative meeting, visit http://vimeo.com and search “Drew County Legislative Health Forum.”
Personal health knowledge throughout the state is the goal of the Arkansas Minority Health Commission. Every quarter AMHC travels to a different part of the state to conduct health fair events and public forums. On July 22, AMHC traveled to Monticello for its first FY2011 fiscal year quarterly health fair. Although the temperatures reached above 100 degrees that day, more than 160 residents came out to take advantage of health information and free screenings.

AMHC was joined by 27 organizations that provided the attendees with valuable health resources information. There were screenings for vision, blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol and HIV/AIDS. Among organizations in attendance were AARP, Drew County Department of Human Services, ARORA, Arkansas Alzheimer’s Association, Mainline Community Health Clinic of Monticello, Arkansas Prostate Cancer Foundation, UAMS’ Spit for the Cure and the Lupus Foundation.

**RESIDENTS SCREENED DESPITE SOARING TEMPERATURES**

**Health Fair attendee receives vision screening from Arkansas Department of Health - Drew Co. Vision and Hearing**

**Boys and Girls Club children learn about the dangers of asbestos and lead based paint from the Arkansas Department of Environmental Health.**

View more pictures from Monticello at arminorityhealth.com or facebook.com/arminorityhealth
Carpe Diem!
The term means “seize the day or seize the moment. It’s a catchphrase to live life to the fullest, getting the most out of each individual day. If you surveyed one hundred people, most of them would say this is what they want from their own life. No one wants life to be mediocre; at least not many are willing to admit it. By nature, we want our lives to be full. The overall purpose of the Arkansas Minority Health Commission is to assist minority Arkansans to live life to the fullest! Specifically, a newly adopted FY 2011 focus area on “nutrition and fitness” is certain to assure the well being of Arkansans.

For years, research has linked health and wellness to nutrition and fitness. An August 3, 2010 New York Times article (http:www.nytimes.com/2010/08/04/health/nutrition/04fat.html) identified Arkansas as one of nine states that has obesity rates of 30 percent or more. In particular, non Hispanic black women were reported to have the highest obesity rate, 41.9 percent. Persons who eat whole foods rich in nutrients enjoy vital health, longer life and a reduced risk of many diseases. Eating nutrient-rich foods can also help people to maintain healthy body weight. Being overweight or obese has been found to be linked to numerous chronic diseases including heart disease, diabetes, stroke and some cancers, the very diseases that disproportionately plague the minority community. Chronic diseases are not prevented by vaccines or generally cured by medication, nor do they just disappear. To a large degree, the major chronic diseases—heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes—are an extension of what people do, or not do, as they go about the business of daily living. Although chronic diseases are among the most prevalent and costly health problems, they are also among the most preventable. Clearly, promoting healthy behavior choices, through education and through community policies and practices, is essential to reducing the burden of chronic diseases.

Two other focus areas of the Arkansas Minority Health Commission that will continue for FY 2011 include “sickle cell and HIV/AIDS.” Sickle cell is an inherited, chronic blood disease where the red blood cells become crescent shaped and function abnormally. When the blood cells become crescent/ sickle shaped, they are unable to deliver adequate amounts of oxygen to other cells. As a consequence, the disease results in anemia (low blood counts), episodes of pain and increased susceptibility to infections. Sickle Cell disease impacts 1 in 500 African Americans each year. The Commission has partnered with the Sickle Cell Support Services to provide sickle cell disease education through community education workshops. Patient education is also provided to hospitalized patients. A sickle cell camp, for persons with the illness, focused on teaching children coping and management skills for their disease and life. Though the goal was to service 12 to 150 persons, more than 50 persons had been contacted. FY2011 will allow continued education and community awareness, advocacy and support services.

The Commission has made a 3-5 year commitment to the HIV/AIDS initiative. In 2008, the Commission partnered with the Black Aids Institute, established the HIV/AIDS Prevention coalition and launched the Youth Rally. In 2009, the Commission committed $340,000 to provide grants to community based organizations throughout Arkansas, and in 2010 partnered with the Arkansas Department of Health to launch an awareness and testing campaign, providing $250,000 Arkansas Minority Health Commission grant dollars to community based organizations. The HIV/AIDS initiative for FY 2011 will specifically focus on training and policy development. Train-the-trainer workshops geared toward empowering community and faith based organizations and the youth on best practices to educate persons about the importance of knowing their HIV status will be conducted. The Commission will advance policy measures to address the needs of Arkansans affected by HIV/AIDS by educating legislators and the congressional delegation about HIV/AIDS disparities. Yes, the Arkansas Minority Health Commission is poised to seizing this day and each day thereafter as we seek to better the health, and subsequently the life, of minority Arkansans.

Dr. Carolyn Mosley, Ph.D., R.N., C.S., F.A.A.N.
Dean, College of Health Sciences
University of Arkansas-Fort Smith
AMHC Commissioner Appointed by the Governor
Congratulations Commissioner Raul Blasini!

The AMHC would like to congratulate Commissioner Raul Blasini for receiving a Community Service Award in July at the 33rd Annual Community Service Award Ceremony. The event is sponsored by KARK Channel 4 and the Duncan Law Firm in conjunction with the Office of the Governor and the Department of Human Services, Division of Volunteerism. The award recognizes individuals for their exceptional volunteer work in their communities.

Blasini was honored for his work in Pocahontas as an organizer of Prostate screenings. More than 60 men showed up for the first-of-its-kind Prostate Cancer screening in Northeast Arkansas in 2001. Since then, Blasini has established men’s health screenings in Walnut Ridge, Corning, Newport, Osceola and Blytheville. In 2009 alone, more than 1600 men received screening in Northeast Arkansas.

“I don’t like to be recognized for what I’m doing because I am doing it from the heart,” said Blasini. “I never like to take credit. After my cancer, God gave me the ability to help others and that is all I have been trying to do—help others.”

Congratulations Freeman McKindra!

Congratulations also goes to former AMHC Commissioner, Freeman McKindra. He was also honored in July with the “Distinguished Citizen Award” at the 33rd Annual Community Service Award Ceremony. This award goes to an individual who has distinguished himself or herself in service to the people of Arkansas.

The Arkansas HIV/AIDS Minority Task Force
Public Health Forum

Thursday, August 26 • Reception 5pm • Forum 6pm
Heavenly Kingdom Ministries
3825 N. Washington
Forrest City, AR 72335

Free HIV testing will be available.

For more information:
Rick Collins • 501-563-7477
Connie Roebuck • 870-270-3052

www.arminorityhealth.com
Health Care Access:
28% of nonelderly African Americans and 40% of nonelderly Hispanics are uninsured in Arkansas.
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation

82% (114,844) of black children live in low-income families

Quality Health Care:
More minorities state that people like themselves are treated less fairly when seeking health care, specifically, 40% of urban blacks, 29% of rural blacks and 25% of Hispanics.

42% (199,879) of white children live in low-income families

Behavioral:
More than 73% of African Americans are overweight or obese; compare to 66% of all Arkansans.
Source: 2008 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System—Arkansas

Watch for our “Face Sickle Cell” media campaign starting September 1!