

## New grant hopes to reduce risky behavior of young African-Americans

COURTESY OF STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

The Healthy Choices create Empowered Changes (HCcEC) project, sponsored through WSSU's Division of Student Affairs, began earlier this year. Healthy Choices create Empowered Changes (HCcEC) provides HIV/AIDS and substance abuse prevention education to female students at Winston-Salem State University.

"The grant is specifically for women; however, we hope to impact the choices of the men through their female partners. There are a number of organizations and community agencies working to reduce the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. A common link to this risk behavior is alcohol and substance abuse," said Natasha Jeffreys, WSSU public health educator and university liaison for the grant. "As we work to formulate a list of best practices in these areas, WSSU will

move forward with its education and prevention efforts, gaining insights from those agencies that have proven successes in these areas. According to the Centers for Disease Control, in the United States, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is a health crisis for African-Americans. In 2002, HIV/AIDS was among the top three causes of death for African-American men ages 25-54, and among the top four causes of death for African-American women ages 25-54. It was the number one cause of death for African-American women ages 25-34, and research suggests that these

individuals became infected during their early adolescent years, which suggest that it is important to learn and adopt appropriate health behaviors in the early years.

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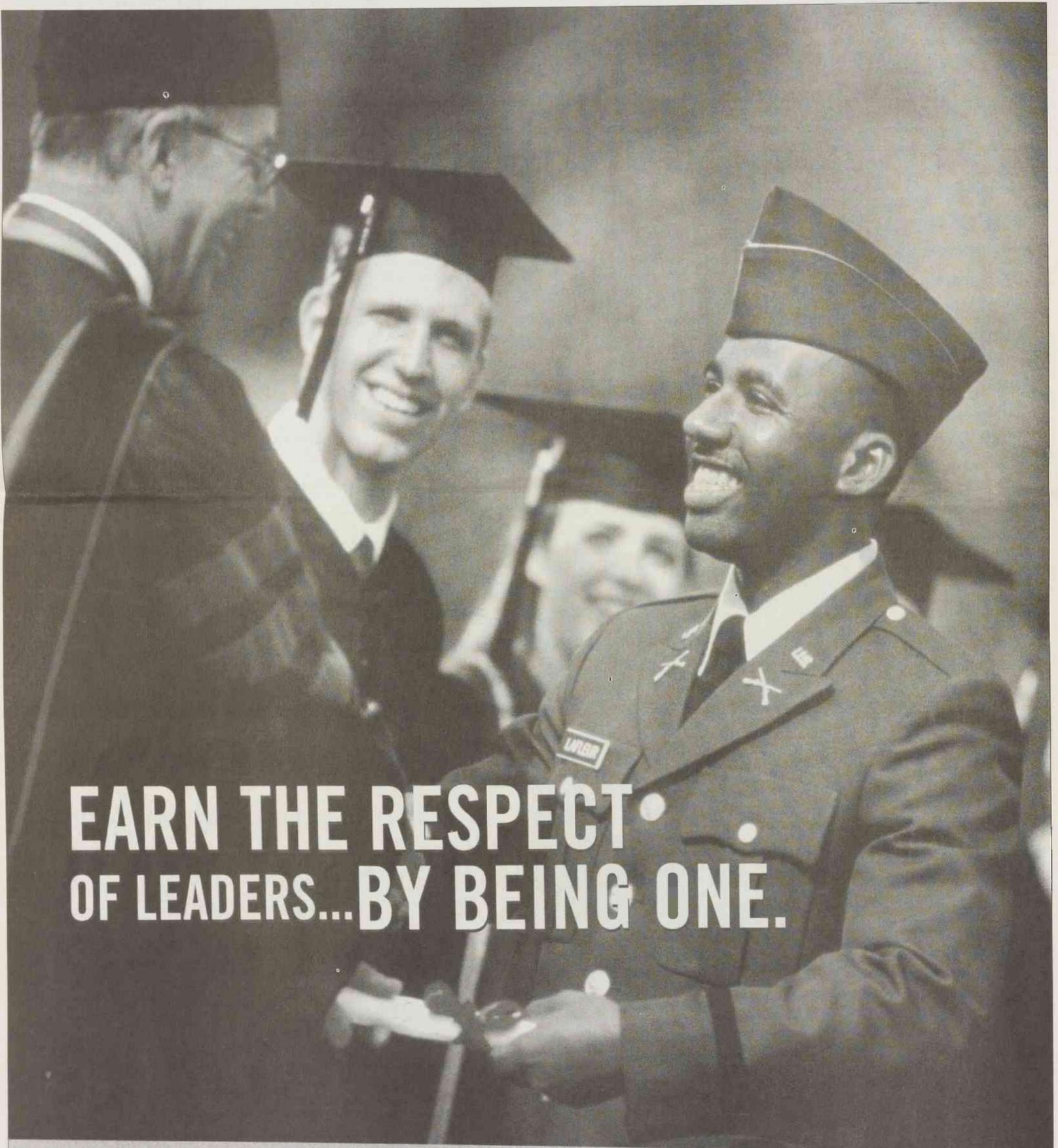
— Natasha Jeffreys

### HCcEC "The Formula"

The HCcEC formula is students educating other students about Substance Abuse and HIV/AIDS Prevention through training, Peer to Peer Education, and campus wide information forums. HCcEC health educators were trained, and their training enabled them to design an approved curriculum for their fellow peers.

The "Peer-to-Peer" Education component brings that "students-helping-students" approach to campus. Peer Educators meet in residential halls, the student union, and within freshman seminar classes to present the HCcEC curriculum and measure the effectiveness of the presentations by pre and post test and through program evaluations after each session.

"We are currently scheduling educational sessions for organization and resident's hall. Please send an email to npoll824@wssu.edu, and our team will bring the program to you," say's Nyela Pollard HCcEC peer health educator. Education is the key, we must be serious about the issues that are negatively impacting our community, and began to make a difference; one person at a time. For more information about HCcEC, "the Formula", contact Jeffreys at (336) 750-2993 or e-mail her at jeffreynh@wssu.edu.



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