

Parmon, Adams re-elected to NC Black Caucus posts

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Rep. Alma Adams, a Guilford Democrat, was unanimously re-elected Dec. 4 to a second term as chair of the NC Legislative Black Caucus.

The caucus promotes legislative policies and actions responsive to the needs of all North Carolinians, particularly African Americans, people of color and other disparate groups.

Other elected officers included Senator Malcolm Graham as 1st Vice Chair; Forsyth County's Rep. Earline Parmon was re-elected as 2nd Vice Chair; Representative Annie Mobley, secretary; Sen. Tony Foriest, Treasurer; Rep. Garland Pierce was re-elected as Caucus Chaplain; and Sen. Floyd McKissic Jr. as Parliamentarian.

As the General Assembly prepares to re-convene in January, the NC Legislative Black Caucus looks forward to serving the NC General Assembly and the faithful constituents of North Carolina.



Rep. Parmon



Rep. Adams

Health

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ty, physical activity in youth and seniors; and mental health.

In accordance with state law, the Health Department releases a comprehensive report on key health issues in the area every four years. says Ayo Ademeyero, director of the Surveillance Division of the Forsyth County Board of Health. Researchers compare findings to those of similar metropolitan areas and state averages to get a read on where Forsyth County ranks with regard to important health concerns. The report is based on focus groups and random surveys that give researchers insight into the things that are ailing the community, Ademeyero explained.

The constant in virtually every health problem identified in the 2008 report was racial disparities, she said.

"In all of this, racial disparity is (the) number one (problem)," Ademeyero noted. "The disparity health indicator is higher (locally) as compared with the state percentages."

Infant mortality also remains a large thorn in Forsyth County's proverbial side.

"Forsyth County has one of the highest infant mortality rates in North Carolina," Ademeyero said.

The Health Department is working closely with area obstetricians to find ways to combat the statistic, she added.

Not all of the report was negative, however. Researchers noticed some positive trends as well. Here in the heart of tobacco country, strides are being made in blocking its consumption. Ademeyero says area merchants are also taking a stand against tobacco, by making their places of business tobacco-free zones.

"The number of kids who smoke has gone down," she remarked. "And we have 330 (local) restaurants that are smoke free, compared with 11 in 2006."

Community involvement is a key component in positively affecting any negative health statistic, Ademeyero

believes.

"We need to get (more) citizens involved; they should champion these causes," she commented. "What affects one person affects the whole community."

Assistant Researcher Jennifer Staten said the 2008 report revealed some upward mobility in the county.

"I am actually rather impressed (with the findings)," Staten said. "It seems like (community task forces) are doing a

lot to eliminate health disparities in the area. They seem to be making quite a bit of headway, generally speaking."

Raising awareness about key health issues remains a difficult task for the Department, in Staten's estimation.

"I think the greatest challenge is going to be making people aware of the health concerns in the community," she remarked.

The fervor of task force members who work to address local health concerns is a good sign for the department, Staten surmised.

"It seems like the community is really interested in what's going on. It's really great to know that what we're doing here ... is helping people," she commented. "People really do care (about health issues) and people are benefitting (from the work of the Health Department); the numbers reflect that."

The 2008 State of the County Health Report is available online at www.co.forsyth.nc.us/publichealth. For more information about the Healthy Community Coalition, visit www.healthycommunity.ws or call (336) 703-3110.

HIV

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should get into medical care as soon as possible. People who are diagnosed sooner after infection and who receive medical care are much more likely to live longer and with fewer complications. Those who delay testing or medical care are likely to become much sicker, much faster, and are more likely to die.

Discussing one's HIV status with friends and family or a sexual partner can be difficult and frightening, but it is very important that someone who is diagnosed with HIV share that information with all sexual partners and practice behaviors to prevent the spread of the infection. These behaviors include using condoms for every sexual encounter, refraining from using injection drugs, and obtaining medical care if you want to become or think you are pregnant. The support that can be gained from the love of friends and family can also make the difference in life or illness and death for many people living with the virus. If someone you love has been diagnosed with HIV, you can be supportive by acknowledging their diagnosis, learning more about the disease, listening to your loved one, talking to others about the disease and advocating for better ways of treatment or change in attitudes about HIV. You should also get tested if you are at risk.

What can I expect when I go see the doctor?

Depending on immune status, an HIV-positive person may or may not need to start antiretroviral medications. If one's immune status is good, most doctors will delay medication therapy and continue to monitor the person's immune status and HIV levels with

blood tests. If one's immune status is fair to poor, most doctors will choose to prescribe the person a combination antiretroviral regimen, also known as a "drug cocktail." Some people may also need to take other medications to help prevent certain types of infections if their immune systems have been damaged by HIV.

Most people with HIV who need medications will likely have to remain on the medications for life. All HIV drugs generally cause temporary side effects but these usually improve after taking the medications for a few weeks. In order for the medications to work best, they must be taken every day with no missed doses. Missing doses of antiretroviral medications can lead to HIV resistance, disease progression, and death.

In addition to medical care, many HIV specialty physician's offices also provide specialized nursing care, social work services, pharmacy services, nutrition counseling and mental health services including substance abuse counseling and referrals. Many offices also bill on a sliding scale to help people who are without insurance, are unemployed, or have lower incomes avoid paying big medical bills.

What do I need to do to take care of myself in the long run?

HIV-positive persons should see their doctors regularly for life. Regular lab tests, health checks and care team support are essential for living well with HIV. Most will live better overall if they have a friend, partner or family member with whom they can share the challenges of living with HIV. People living with HIV should also remember the basics: exercise regularly, eat well, get good sleep, and stay engaged in work, hobbies and activities.

Stay tuned for next week, when we will discuss the current treatments for HIV/AIDS.

— Contribution by: A. Lynn Cochran, RN

Do you need further information on this topic or resources in your area or have

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Monroe

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year, he underwent a laser procedure for his prostate condition.

As the chairman of Albert Einstein's Medical Center urology department, Dr. Phillip Ginsberg encounters a large number of men who have BPH. He said it is easily treated with medication.

"As we get older, the prostate gets bigger and it keeps growing, so that's why symptoms can get worse. It's very important not to sit and suffer," said Ginsberg, who was on hand for the presentation.

Ginsberg said doctors can tell whether a patient has BPH or a more serious condition such as prostate cancer by administering a rectal examination and a prostate specific antigen blood test.

According to the National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse, severe BPH can cause serious problems over time such as urine retention and strain on the bladder that can lead to urinary tract infections, bladder or kidney damage, bladder stones and



Earl Monroe soars during his college days.

incontinence - the inability to control urination. When BPH is found in its earlier stages, there is a lower risk of developing such complications.

During his 13-year career with the NBA, Monroe played for the Baltimore Bullets (now the Washington Wizards) and the New York Knicks. The basketball Hall of Famer is known for his flair and showmanship on the court.

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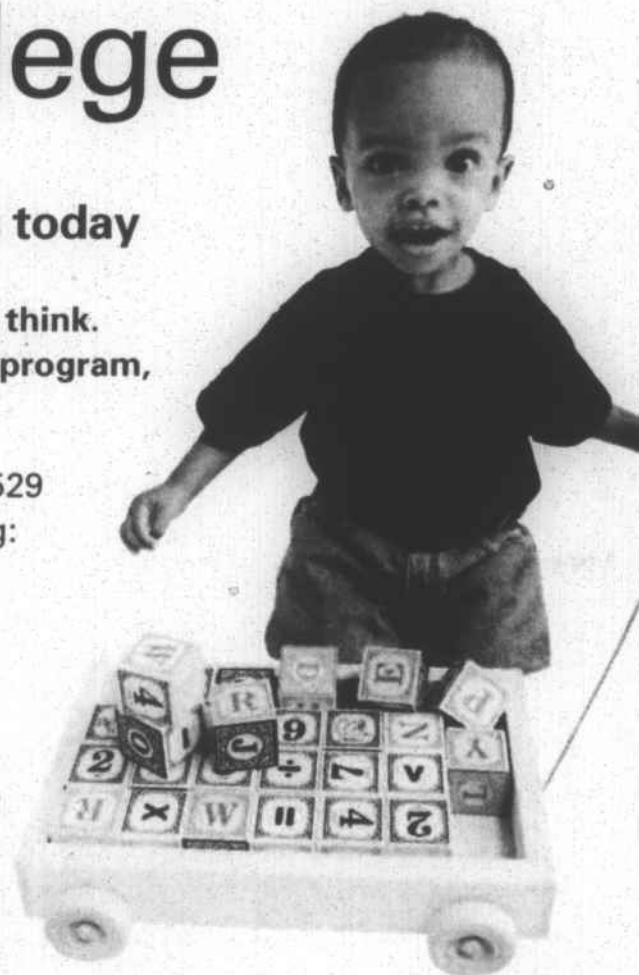
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