

W-S firm is researching chronic disease in black men

Active and Healthy Brotherhood study is largest of its kind in nation

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

Chronic disease has been studied before, but Dr. Melicia C. Whitt-Glover and her company, Gramercy Research Group, are doing it on a large scale. African-American men are the focus this time, in the largest study of its kind for that group in the nation.

Whitt-Glover, President and CEO of Gramercy Research Group, based in Winston-Salem, said she is excited to bring the program to the area. In the past, the company has conducted similar projects for women, but this will be the first time men have had a chance to participate.

"For several years, we have been conducting projects to improve health in women," Whitt-Glover said. "The men have been asking when they would have a chance to participate, and now we finally have a program for them."

Gramercy Research Group, 7990 North Point Blvd., Suite 108, has been approved for a \$2.1 million funding for Active and Healthy Brotherhood (AHB).

The Active and Healthy Brotherhood is the largest study in the country for

chronic disease self-management and prevention for African-American men. Dr. Whitt-Glover believes if the program is successful, it could pave the way for similar programs across the country.

"There isn't a program like this anywhere in the country, and for us to have the first one right here in Forsyth County is a big deal," said Whitt-Glover.

The program will provide information on over-

all health, healthy eating, physical activity, stress management and how to get medical care when needed. The purpose of the program will be to investigate ways to improve health/behaviors using an intervention that has been designed specifically for African-American men.

The study eventually will involve 440 African-American men between the ages of 30 and 64. More participants are needed. During the study, researchers will periodically

collect information from participants related to their physical activity and health.

That information will then be used to determine whether the program works to increase physical activity, increase the amount of fruits and vegetables eaten, decrease the amount of salt taken in, participate in medical care, and improve overall health.

Tiffany Williams, project coordinator for the study, said that currently 31 males from Forsyth County are enrolled in the program, but word is traveling fast and she is seeing new faces everyday.

"As more people come in and hear about the program, the more others will come," Williams said. "A lot of people come in then they go out and tell their friends and family members about the program. We've even had sets of brothers come in and do the study together."

If all scheduled study



Photo by Erin Mizelle for the Winston-Salem Chronicle

Tiffany Williams (MPH, MLS), Gramercy Research Group project coordinator, back left, leads a new study participant through the initial information meeting on Wednesday, June 3, at Gramercy Research Group, 7990 North Point Boulevard - Suite 108.



Glover

visits are completed, participants will receive a number of incentives, including \$75 for completing all the scheduled study visits.

Victor Stevenson of Winston-Salem attended a recent information session and is confident the study will help him stay healthy as long as possible.

"I want to stick around as long as possible," Stevenson laughed. "I believe this program will help me to do that by eating better and leading a healthier life style."

For more information or to become involved with the Active & Healthy

Brotherhood Project, contact Melicia Whitt-Glover via telephone at 336-293-8540, extension 110, or email: mwhittglover@gramercyresearch.com. For more information about Gramercy Research Group visit www.gramercyresearch.com.

2 N.C. brothers seek to find normal life after being pardoned

BY EMILY MASTERS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — Two brothers will receive more than \$1 million from the state of North Carolina after they were wrongfully imprisoned for three decades in the killing of an 11-year-old girl, but for one of them, the windfall isn't the issue.

"It ain't about money," said Henry McCollum, 51, who, along with his 47-year-old brother Leon Brown, was pardoned by Gov. Pat McCrory. "It was about just being able to see that I was innocent of a crime I was charged with. It was just a blessing to be out here, to live a normal life."

The pardon qualifies each of the brothers for \$50,000 from the state for every year they were imprisoned, with a limit of \$750,000 each. The compensation still needs to be approved by a state agency, but it is considered a formality. It's not clear exactly when they could get the money.

McCrory's office announced Friday that he had signed the pardons.

Defense attorneys have said the brothers were scared teenagers who had low IQs when they were questioned by police and coerced into confessing. "It ain't about money," McCollum was then 19, and Brown was 15.

—Henry McCollum

The DNA from cigarette butts found at the scene doesn't match Brown or McCollum, and fingerprints taken from a beer can also found there didn't belong to them, either. No physical evidence connects them to the crime, a judge and prosecutor acknowledged last fall.

Based largely on their confessions, both were initially given death sentences, which were overturned. Upon retrial, McCollum was again sent to death row, while Brown was convicted of rape and sentenced to life.

The path to freedom began in early September after a judge vacated their convictions and ordered their release, citing new DNA evidence that points to another man killing and raping 11-year-old Sabrina Buie in 1983. The inmate whose DNA was on the cigarette is already serving a life sentence for a similar rape and slaying that happened less than a month after Sabrina's killing.

Current Robeson County District Attorney Johnson Britt, who didn't prosecute the men, has said he's considering whether to reopen the case and charge the other man. The cigarette butt was tested as part of the recent investigation by the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission, a one-of-its-kind investigative panel.

The brothers are still trying to come to terms with the changes that occurred in the outside world while they were behind bars. When McCollum walked off of death row, he needed help putting on the seatbelt in his father's car. At the time, he had never owned a cellphone and was unaccustomed to the Internet. Each man was given \$45 by prison officials when they left.

Brown learned the governor had pardoned him and his brother on Thursday night as he watched the news at his sister's home in Fayetteville.

"I was upstairs in my room, because I wanted to be by myself when I hear," he said. "Well, when he said it, right, tears start coming from my eyes. Tears of joy. And my sister, she ran upstairs. When she had hugged me, right, I had laid my head on her shoulder, crying. I couldn't stop crying, you know? It felt _ it felt good."

And now that he's free, Brown suggests that he's ready to get about.

"I do want to learn how to drive," he said. "Because I wasn't able to do that years ago. But now I have the opportunity to do it."

Associated Press writers Jonathan Drew in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Skip Foreman in Charlotte, North Carolina, contributed to this report.

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