# Faiths join to fight AIDS

By Jeri Young THE CHARLOTTE POST

The HIV/AIDS crisis among African Americans is getting

"I have been watching the trends," said Mike Case, an educator for the Metrolina Aids Project. "Ten years ago it was a predominantly gay disease. In 1994 it was the leading killer of African American males between the ages of 15-

Locally, the statistics are not much better. Of the 496 new AIDS cases reported to the Mecklenburg County Health Department through June 30, 72 percent where African Americans adults. Of the 1,087 women currently diagnosed with AIDS in North Carolina, 897 are African American.

To help stem the epidemic and disseminate information about aids and aids prevention, several local congregations have banded together to present "The Revival of the Faith African-American Community for the Healing of AIDS" conference, Oct. 13-19.

The programs, which will be held in African American churches, will provide area residents, as well as church members, an opportunity to hear about AIDS from experts.

"We hope that people will leave this week knowing the causes and response to AIDS"



Rev. Curry

said local organizer Pastor Gwen Curry of Present Day Ministries of Jesus Christ.

Curry and the Rev. E.L. White of Mt. Sinai Baptist Church of Thomasville are co-sponsors of the event, which is funded by the state's HIV/STD Control Section.

Curry, whose church holds weekly AIDS testing sessions, hopes the sessions will provide a forum for open dia-logue on AIDS among church"This is the first time this

has been done through the African American churches," she said. "We hope that people will want to know what they can do to help.'

AIDS educator Mike Rogers, who works in the African American community, sees the often pressing social and economic conditions that plague African American communities as reasons why it has been so devastated by

"(Blacks) want access to services," he said. "But it is often difficult to get there. When services are provided in the community they are more apt

"It is very important to raise awareness," Rogers said. "It is kind of a taboo subject. It is not talked about openly. This is an opportunity to bring AIDS out in the open in a way that is not taboo.

"We want people to be compassionate to people infected with AIDS," said Curry. "We want them to share the prevention message with their constituency."

For a listing of program times and locations, please see page 13B.

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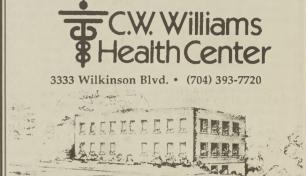
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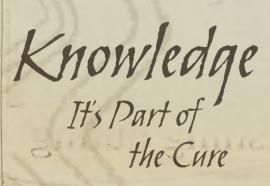
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