

# N.C. campuses react to HIV rise among blacks

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among youth ages 15 to 24 annually. The infections will cost more than \$6 billion in direct medical costs, as reported in the latest issue of the journal Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health published by The Alan Guttmacher Institute.

"These numbers on the human and financial costs of STDs in youth should be a wake-up call for the nation," said Joan Oates, principal investigator of a project at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Journalism and Mass Communication assessing the impact of STDs on young people. "We're not using the tools already available to fight these infections, and we're letting down our youth because of it."

But North Carolina colleges are taking a more aggressive approach to stopping HIV. School health officials are beefing up educa-

tion and testing programs. And students are more involved in sharing information with each other through peer counseling and seminars.

Historically-black colleges are at the forefront of the education effort. An estimated 400 students from all 11 N.C. HBCUs and historically Native American UNC-Pembroke will meet March 19-21 at N.C. Central University in Durham for a conference on HIV/AIDS.

HBCUs have also received \$15,000 grants from the N.C. Dept. of Health for on-campus prevention programs.

Historically-black Livingstone College is using its grant to train up to 24 peer counselors by semester's end, said Pam Henley R.N., director of the school's health services department.

The educational process includes modifying behavior that can lead to acquiring

the virus. Experimenting with drugs and alcohol is often a major contributor to lowering defenses, Oates said. As a result, students are counseled to party in moderation and know whom they hang out with.

"Drinking and drugs is probably the No. 1 thing that people get HIV and AIDS," she said. "There's nothing wrong with having a good time, but you need to know your limit."

Livingstone sponsors "safe sex parties," alcohol- and drug-free gatherings where the emphasis is on having fun in a safe environment.

"You're more likely to get HIV if you engage in risky behavior," Henley said.

"In a college population, it's more of a concern because of close living quarters and some behaviors that are traditional on college campuses," such as excessive drinking and sexual experimentation, Ferguson said.

Oates was surprised by the response of men at the seminars. Instead of taking a dismissive attitude, they were curious, inquiring about the risks associated with HIV.

"When we first did the program with freshmen, there were a lot of questions," she said. "I was shocked to see more men asking questions than females. The guys weren't like they were too good to ask questions."

Henley, who has been at Livingstone for 13 years, said she has seen an increase in students' willingness to ask questions about sexually-transmitted diseases. She attributes that openness to administrative support and aggressive programs that start from the time that students first walk on campus to their senior year.

"We hit them all semester," Henley said. "We hit them in the (residence) halls and all over campus."

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## Prosecutor to seek N.C. pardon for freed inmate

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WINSTON-SALEM - The district attorney who initially opposed a new trial for Darryl Hunt now says he will seek a pardon for the man exonerated in the death of a newspaper copy editor.

Forsyth County District Attorney Tom Keith said he will ask Gov. Mike Easley to pardon Hunt, who was exonerated earlier this month after serving 19 years in prison for the 1984 murder.

For nearly 20 years, Deborah Sykes' rape and killing and Hunt's imprisonment raised tensions among blacks and whites. Sykes was white, and Hunt is black.

He planned to seek the pardon during a clemency hearing Thursday for a man convicted of killing a Winston-Salem police officer.

While Keith said he is certain Hunt is innocent, some people - including Sykes' family - still believe that Hunt had something to do with the brutal stabbing death of Sykes in downtown Winston-Salem.

Keith wasn't elected until after Hunt had already been twice convicted of murder. His office got into the case in 1994 to oppose a bid for a third trial based upon DNA evidence that showed that Hunt was not Sykes' rapist. Hunt was convicted of killing Sykes but not of raping her.

It wasn't until last December, when DNA testing identified Willard Brown and Brown confessed, that Keith said he began to realize that he and so many others may have been wrong.

Hunt's supporters say Keith should have been able to see the evidence for what it was far earlier.

"If he had a passion for justice, he would have done it 10 years ago rather than letting his office and the state

Attorney General's Office continue to argue against fairness for Darryl," said the Rev. Carlton Eversley, a member of Hunt's defense committee.



Easley

Keith, in his fourth term as district attorney, said the Hunt case is about 20 years of accumulated errors by police, prosecutors and even defense attorneys.

In his first extended interview since Hunt's exoneration, Keith said the stumbling led to a catastrophe.

"I wish I'd taken a different view, but I didn't know then what I know now," said Keith, who got a call Dec. 19

from the state crime lab that Brown's DNA matched evidence in the Sykes' case.

At first, Keith said the evidence supported the prosecution theory that two or more people were involved in the attack. Keith said that he meant the remark as one of several possibilities, with Hunt's innocence being another.

The DA's comments set off a round of criticism by Hunt's attorney and members of the Darryl Hunt Defense Committee, who called for Hunt's immediate release and an outside investigation. Within days, the police department gave the case to the State Bureau of Investigation.

Hunt was released Dec. 24 after investigators could find no evidence against him.

A pardon from Easley

would entitle Hunt to compensation of about \$360,000 for his wrongful conviction. Easley's office is not saying how quickly a ruling might come after Keith delivers the court order that exonerated Hunt and his motion supporting a pardon.

Keith said he believes that Hunt deserves the money.

"It is important that the system make amends for the system," he said.

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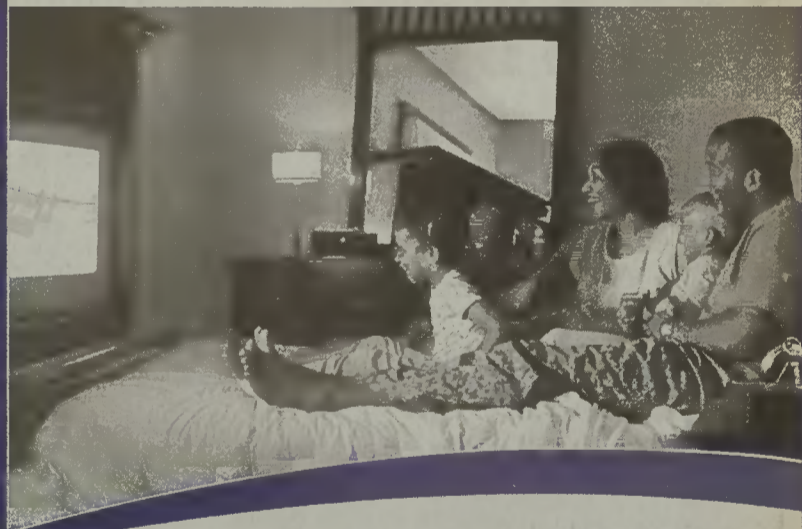
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