

100 Black Men gala benefits academics, tutoring

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Youth, a mentoring and education program, works with about 50 students annually from grades 7-12. The goal is to encourage students to graduate from high school and obtain a post-secondary education and to prepare them for success beyond academia.

"The whole philosophy around it is if we could move these kids educationally, if we could move them culturally, then certainly we could move them in society," said Lenny Springs, founding president of the Charlotte chapter of 100 Black Men. "The success of the kids that are in the mentoring program has just been astronomical."

This year, there are nine Charlotte area high schools seniors who are mentees of the program and who are eligible to receive the scholarship money raised from the event. Thomas Washington, vice president of special

represents the four areas in which each of our chapters should participate within their respective communities in our efforts to better those communities and further the cause of our young men," said Craig J. Holt, president of 100 Black Men. "We feel that it is important to highlight people in our community whose goals and ideals are in line with our own."

Awards will be given to four individuals: Curtis Carroll, principal of Harding University High School (education); First Tee organizer Walter Morgan (mentoring); the Rev. Claude Alexander (economic development); and Dr. David Jacobs (health and wellness).

While the soiree has grown every year since it began, Washington hopes to further bridge relationships with various outlets to let people know that the 100 Black Men are here and what they are accomplishing. Signs that

interest in the organization and this event, in particular, is on the rise are reflected in the numbers, according to Springs.

"Obviously, with the Charlotte Chapter growing in membership and growing in the number of kids we mentor, certainly the Black Tie has grown from a standpoint of attendance... [and] from a standpoint of corporations that participate and sponsor the event," he said.

Springs recognizes the unique challenges facing young black men today, pointing out the inequality in education, an uneven playing field socially, and the prevalence of single mother households. It is because of issues such as these that he developed his specific vision for the future of 100 Black Men.

"In the future, two or three things need to happen," he said. "One, we must continue on that path of mentoring and providing an opportunity

for education. In addition to that, I think that in today's environment we must also prepare our young men, not

only educationally, but we have to start talking to our young men about business ownership."

The Charlotte Post

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Study urges boost in health insurance

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sured fall into one of two groups: a family with an income less than 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (\$38,700 for a family of four) or links to a small employer with fewer than 25 employees.

The task force issued 13 recommendations, including expanding coverage to three groups most likely to lack coverage: workers in small businesses, low-income individuals and individuals with pre-existing health problems. The top recommendations include:

- Supporting the state's healthcare safety net
- Promotion of healthy lifestyles and disease prevention and wellness initiatives.
- Development of a Healthy North Carolina insurance program for small employers

and uninsured workers.

• A limited benefit expansion of Medicaid with cost-sharing for low-income, working adults.

• Creation of a high-risk pool for people with pre-existing conditions.

"We know that it will be hard to afford expanded coverage unless we can reduce the rising costs of healthcare," said Carmen H o o k e r Odom, N.C.

Department of Health and Human Services secretary and co-chair of the task force

"One of the best strategies to reduce the growth in healthcare costs is to encourage people to live healthier lifestyles. Ultimately, people

have a personal responsibility to be better stewards of their own health, but we can assist."

Studies show workers who are unhealthy are less productive, which affects the state's economy. Uninsured children are more likely to be sick, and this affects their ability to perform well in school.

Lack of adequate health insurance coverage also contributes to personal bankruptcies, affecting both families and businesses.

"Sustained economic development in North Carolina depends on our ability to ensure that our workforce has access to quality healthcare," said Mark Holmes, vice president of NCIOM. "Without health insurance, workers are less able to receive the health care they

need, and when workers are sick, they are less productive."

As the number of uninsured rises, so does the economic strain on healthcare institutions. North Carolinians with coverage pay more in health insurance premiums to help cover the costs of care provided to the uninsured.

"Everyone stands to gain if more North Carolinians have health insurance coverage," said Tom Lambeth, co-chair of the task force and senior fellow at the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. "Just as everyone stands to gain, all of us can help ensure that more North Carolinians have health insurance coverage. Expanding coverage will take the concerted effort of many groups-families, businesses, providers, government, and the insurance industry."

Smoking gap between blacks, whites persists

By Hazel Trice Edney
 NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON - Cigarette smoking and lung cancer mortality rates overall are declining in the U. S., but lung cancer death disparities between the races - blacks and whites - remain alarming, leading health care and anti-smoking experts say.

"We haven't closed the gap. While everybody's improving, the gap is not closing. The five-year survival difference is still in the range of 10 to 15 percent for blacks and whites. So while it's an improvement for all groups, the difference or the disparity remains," says Dr. Harold Freeman, a respected surgical oncologist and director and founder of Harlem's Ralph Lauren Cancer Center for Cancer Care and Prevention. He explains, "It's like you have the front wheels and back wheels of a car; but no matter how fast you go, the back wheels are never going to catch up."

The association of state attorneys general reported in March that data derived from federal government tax collections shows a 4.2 percent decline in cigarette sales last year and a drop of 20 percent since the attorneys general reached a legal settlement with tobacco companies in 1998.

Anti-tobacco activist Sherry Watson-Hyde, executive director of the National African American Tobacco Prevention Network, is happy that the rates have declined for African-American smoking, though not deeply enough.

"Black male lung cancer rates have been over the top," Watson-Hyde says. Even with the state tobacco settlements, she said the tobacco industry still finds new ways to ensnare smokers with flavored cigarettes special pro-

portions. The NAATPRN and other anti-tobacco organizations, such as the American Legacy Foundation, which has awarded a three-year grant of \$4.5 million to a coalition of six national black organizations, including the National Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation, for tobacco prevention and cessation programs, focus largely on reverse marketing by educating African-Americans on the dangers of tobacco smoke.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that while the annual White lung cancer death rate is approximately 58 percent per 100,000 diagnoses, the rate for blacks is 64 percent per 100,000. Cancer experts say the rates have remained consistently disparate - within the 15 percentile over the past two decades - even when fluctuating. Black and white women are about the same at 40 percent for black women and 42 for white.

Tobacco use is the major cause of lung cancer in the United States.

About 90 percent of lung cancer deaths in men and nearly 80 percent of lung cancer deaths in women in the U.S. are due to smoking. Why are black men dying of lung cancer at such higher rates? And what is being done about it?

Freeman believes race play a role.

"Race is a determinant in how people get treated for cancer even when they're at the same economic status; not just lung cancer, but in general," he says. "The biggest challenge in America for disparities is to get standard treatment for everybody, to make it available somehow."

He says that unless a system is created that targets people's ability to get early medical intervention regard-

less of their ability to pay, the disparities will remain. A publicly funded "patient navigation" program that he started 16 years ago for breast cancer patients should be a model for the nation for all types of cancer, he says. The public program pays for breast cancer screening for women regardless of their socio-economic status.

"I improved the five-year survival rate at Harlem Hospital from 39 percent to 70 percent for breast cancer in poor black women," he

says. "They remained poor. They remained black. We didn't change that. But I changed what we did for them."

Some say that the belief by some African-Americans that surgery contributes to the death of cancer patients may be contributing to high cancer death rates. Doctors say surgery for lung cancer is the most effective curative procedure.

But a report by the American Lung Association Please see SMOKING/6A

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