

# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## Healthbeat

### Child Abuse Prevention Month events start today

Beginning today (April 1), Exchange/SCAN (Stop Child Abuse Now), in conjunction with the Forsyth County District Attorney's office, will hold the first of several events in recognition of April as National Child Abuse Prevention Month.



O'Neill

At 1 p.m. in the Forsyth County Hall of Justice Old Commissioner's Meeting Room (7th floor), District Attorney Jim O'Neill, Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Martin and Exchange/SCAN Board Chairman Bud Clark invite community members to join them to help remember the 33 children who have died over

the past year due to child maltreatment and to help raise community awareness so that it doesn't happen in Forsyth County.

On April 9, at 11:45 a.m., Exchange/SCAN will also hold a "Ring-Out" Child Abuse event with the children at Family Services, Inc. - Head Start located at 2050 Big House Gaines Blvd.. The children will sing songs and ring bells to help "ring out" child abuse, while WXII meteorologist Austin Caviness will serve as master of ceremonies.

Exchange/SCAN (Stop Child Abuse Now) Center is a non-profit organization that works to prevent and treat families involved in or at risk of child maltreatment in Forsyth, Alamance, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin counties. For more information or to make a referral, call 336-748-9028.

### Several lawmakers honored

North Carolina lawmakers were honored by the American Heart Association at the 25th Anniversary Triangle Heart Ball for their efforts to protect the health of North Carolinians.

U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan was honored with a special letter of recognition from the American Heart Association for her support of the HEART for Women Act, while Gov. Beverly Perdue, State Sen. William Purcell and State Rep. Hugh Holliman received the first-ever "Heart of a Champion" awards for their leadership and a commitment to protecting the health and well-being of the citizens of North Carolina, especially their support of the state's smoking ban.

David Goff, professor and chairman of the Department of Epidemiology and Prevention at Wake Forest University School of Medicine and a member of the American Heart Association Board of Directors, helped to present the honors.

"On January 2, 2010 North Carolina took a big step forward toward building healthier lives with the implementation of House Bill 2, our new smoke-free law," said Goff. "The passage of HB 2 made North Carolina the first major tobacco - growing state to make all restaurants and bars smoke-free. We are proud to recognize the tremendous efforts of our leaders at the General Assembly in supporting legislation that will save lives."

### Most breast cancer avoidable

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) - Up to a third of breast cancer cases in Western countries could be avoided if women ate less and exercised more, researchers at a conference said Thursday, renewing a sensitive debate about how lifestyle factors affect the disease.

Better treatments, early diagnosis and mammogram screenings have dramatically slowed breast cancer, but experts said the focus should now shift to changing behaviors like diet and physical activity.

"What can be achieved with screening has been achieved. We can't do much more," Carlo La Vecchia, head of epidemiology at the University of Milan, said in an interview. "It's time to move on to other things."

La Vecchia spoke last Thursday at a European breast cancer conference in Barcelona.

Dr. Michelle Holmes of Harvard University, who has studied cancer and lifestyle factors, said people might wrongly think their chances of getting cancer depend more on their genes than their lifestyle.

"The genes have been there for thousands of years, but if cancer rates are changing in a lifetime, that doesn't have much to do with genes," she told The Associated Press in a phone interview from Cambridge, Massachusetts.

### Nearly 900 cited for drunk driving during St. Patty's Day

State and local law enforcement officers cited 868 motorists for driving while impaired during a St. Patrick's Day "Booze It & Lose It" campaign, which ran March 13-17. A total of 38,303 traffic and criminal citations were issued statewide.

During the Governor's Highway Safety Program campaign, officers statewide conducted 2,876 sobriety checkpoints and dedicated patrols. Counties with the highest number of DWI citations were Mecklenburg (67), Guilford (46), Harnett (38) and Wake (38).

Officers also issued 2,281 safety belt and 379 child passenger safety violations, 8,343 speeding violations and 558 drug charges. In addition, they apprehended 278 fugitives from justice and recovered 27 stolen vehicles.

## Black doctors pick Mfume as their leader

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Kweisi Mfume, a former member of the U.S. Congress who headed the National NAACP for nine years, is the new executive leader of the National Medical Association (NMA).

The nation's oldest and largest medical association for black physicians and patients, the NMA has more than 30,000 members.



MCT Photo

Kweisi Mfume has had a long and distinguished career.

"I have dedicated my life to ending the economic and social barriers that continue to confront people of color all across our nation," Mfume said.

"The National Medical Association has been the conscience of the medical profession by making sure that African Americans and the underserved have a voice in their health and health care." He continued, "We have a long way to go to truly eliminate health disparities, but now is the time to work with political, medical, and community leaders to make that vision real."

While serving as president and CEO of the NAACP, Mfume gained an in-depth understanding of health disparities in the nation's health care delivery system and the devastating effects such disparities have on the lives of American families. He established the organization's first National Office of Health Advocacy to educate and advocate on behalf of access and affordability in health care.

Before heading the NAACP, Mfume served as the five-term Congressman of Maryland's 7th Congressional District. In Congress, he chaired the Joint Economic Committee and the Congressional Black Caucus and co-founded the Congressional Task Force on Sarcoidosis Disease Awareness. He also served on the Baltimore City Council for seven years, where he chaired the Committee on Health.

"With such an intense national focus on health policy, Kweisi Mfume brings significant expertise to our organization that will directly benefit our members as they navigate the ever-changing landscape of health care," said NMA President Dr. Willarda V. Edwards.

## Learning about Autism

April is National Autism Awareness Month, and there has been much talk lately in the news and other sources about autism and related disorders, but in order to understand the conversations, we must know the basics of what are termed "autism spectrum disorders." According to the Autism Society of America, 1 in 150 children are diagnosed with autism; this means approximately 1 - 1.5 million Americans have this disorder. There is no difference in rates of diagnosis based on racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic factors, but autism is much more common in boys than in girls.

### What is autism and what does "autism spectrum disorder" mean?

Autism spectrum disorders are a group of related conditions that begin in childhood and cause deficits in social and communication development in association with unusual/atypical behaviors. These findings range from mild to severe, based on how they affect an individual in day-to-day life. In the current way that these disorders are diagnosed, autism is the term used to describe those who are more significantly affected and often implicates some degree of intellectual deficiency.

### What is Asperger syndrome?

Asperger syndrome is the diagnostic term used for individuals on the autism spectrum who have primarily social and behavioral concerns. Typically, these individuals are higher functioning—intellect is in the normal to near-normal range—and have intact language skills, although there may be subtle deficits in social (pragmatic) language development.

### How are autism spectrum disorders diagnosed?

There is no medical test for autism spectrum disorders. Rather, they are diagnosed based on a comparison to typically developing children using specific criteria/descriptions of social, communication, and behavioral development. Information is gathered about a child from those that know him/her (parents, family members, teachers, and others). In addition, questionnaires may be completed, and psychological tests may be administered. Ideally, the child is observed in play and other developmental activities. The professional who is evaluating the child must decide whether the child meets or exceeds enough characteristic features to be definitively diagnosed.

### Who is qualified to diagnose an autism spectrum disorder?

See Autism on A10



A POSSE team member hands out sex education material.

## ITS NAME... SYPHILIS!

**Editor's Note:** April is National Public Health Month. In observance, The Chronicle will run two informative articles written by personnel from the Forsyth County Department of Public Health. This is the first in the series.

Did you know there is a silent infection attacking our communities in Forsyth County? This infection is silent, not only for the painless symptoms that often go unnoticed or untreated, but also because many people are unwilling to talk about it openly. The name of this infection is Syphilis. Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that can be passed from person to person through sexual contact.

Most consider the topic of sex and STIs taboo and choose to remain silent.

What if you knew the consequences of your silence? What if you knew that in 2009 nearly 200 people in Forsyth County were diagnosed with infectious Syphilis (an increase from less than ten people in 2004)? What if you knew that Syphilis, although curable with antibiotics, when left untreated could cause blindness, heart disease and even death? What if you knew that pregnant women with Syphilis can pass the infection to their unborn children? What if you knew that simply by talking about Syphilis, you could help prevent the spread? If you knew all those facts, would you take action? Here are some ways that you can take action:

- Know the facts about Syphilis - It has three stages with distinct symptoms for each stage.
- Practice abstinence and have only one sex partner when you do

See POSSE on A9

## PRAYING TO SAVE LIVES



In Washington, D.C., last week, Congressional leaders, including (from left) Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA), and Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY), join religious leaders like the Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts III (third from left) to pray for the passage of the National Black Clergy for the Elimination of HIV/AIDS Act of 2009. The Act, which would address HIV/AIDS in the African-American community, has been referred to a Congressional Committee but has several more hurdles to cross before it could become law.

## Not Even Students are Safe from Stroke

WSSU starts education initiative

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), Winston-Salem State is North Carolina's first historically black university to sound the alarm to its student body about the dangers of stroke.

WSSU has signed on to the Power to End Stroke Campus-Based Initiative.

In association with the AHA, the university has begun a campus-wide effort to inform students that minority young adults like themselves, are at a seemingly at higher risk for stroke. In fact, according to the AHA, cardiovascular disease, one of the leading causes of stroke, is the leading cause of death for African American males and females age 20 and older, not HIV/AIDS, which has been widely reported as the leading cause of death for young blacks. In addition, blacks have almost twice the risk of first-ever strokes compared to whites and have higher death rates for stroke.

As part of the initiative, last Friday, WSSU's A.H. Ray Student

Health Center Hypertension Support Group and Center of Excellence for the Elimination of Health Disparities held a seminar on campus that focused on the risk of stroke among college-aged minority students and how to prevent and minimize stroke risks.

Blood pressure screenings were conducted on students and Dr. Suzanne Hilton of Total Family Care was on hand to answer questions. A number of WSSU health officials were also on site, including Michael Isle, a registered nurse in WSSU's Department of Student Health Services. Isle said students need to know if they have high blood pressure (or hypertension).

"The incidence of hypertension has significantly increased among population ages 20-40 years of age," said Isle. "Over the past few years, we have seen that high blood pressure trend reflected here on campus and we need to reach these students early to help them make life changes that can reduce their risk factors now and in the future."

WINSTON SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY