

Campaign's aim: Reduce HIV

By Cheris F. Hodges
cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com

Mecklenburg County has the highest rate of HIV cases in North Carolina.

Many of those new cases are African Americans under the age of 40.

The question is why. With the information available about HIV/AIDS and safe sex, are young people paying attention?

The numbers say no.

In 2000, African Americans between the ages of 13 and 19 made up 63 percent of adolescent HIV cases, but were only 15 percent of the population, according to the Centers for Disease and Control.

AIDS is also the number one killer of African Americans ages 25-44 and Mecklenburg County had the highest reported in North Carolina in 2004.

But the Rev. Carl Arrington, director of minority programs at Regional AIDS Interfaith Network, said young people aren't getting the message because unlike the white gay community, the message of HIV prevention hasn't been given to them in ways they can understand.

And then there's Magic Johnson.

"A lot of times when I go

places, people say 'what about Magic Johnson?' Arrington said. "There is a rumor out there that he's cured. And he's not. I have quotes from him that I keep above my desk that says 'For me, staying healthy with HIV means listening to my doctor and taking my medicine every day.'"

According to a 2005 report from the Black AIDS Institute, people under age 25 account for half of all new HIV infections and 56 percent of those people are black.

"While the threat of HIV must be understood as a danger to the lives of all African American young people, the numbers are especially troubling for certain groups in black communities—young black men who have sex with men and young African American women," the report states.

A series of recent studies show that young black men are behind a surge in new HIV infections among gay and bisexual men in recent years. The CDC reported last year that 46 percent of black men who have sex with men in five major cities tested positive for HIV.

In the same study, the number of HIV cases among young women dropped by 20 percent; however, black women

still represent the bulk of new infections.

Young people, Arrington said, also think that contracting HIV will never happen to them. "And if it does, they think there's medicine out there," he said.

And some young people who exhibit reckless behavior just don't care, Arrington said. "They think that with 'all that's going on in my life, I'm not going to live long anyway.'"

But HIV isn't the death sentence it was 20 years ago. According to the CDC, young people diagnosed with AIDS from 1995-2002 lived longer than persons with AIDS in any other age group except those younger than age 13.

Nine years after a diagnosis of AIDS, 72 percent of those aged 13-24 were alive, compared with 76 percent of those younger than age 13, 70 percent of those aged 25-34, 66 percent of those aged 35-44, 60 percent of those aged 45-54, and 50 percent of those aged 55 and older.

The Black AIDS Institute report said that it is important to realize that there is no magic bullet that will end the AIDS epidemic.

"We must abandon the hunt for easy targets—men on the down low, hip-hop music,

internet dating—and face all of the uncomfortable truths and intertwined pressures that put young black Americans at greater risk for everything from homelessness to HIV," the report states.

RAIN is reaching out to young people. On Saturday, the group is sponsoring a health and safety workshop before prom at the McCrory YMCA, located at 3801 Beatties Ford Road from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Former Carolina Panther Brenton Buckner will be the keynote speaker for the event.

"Education is the key," said Buckner. "It's never too early to talk to kids about the consequences of being sexually active - consequences that can affect the rest of your life." During the program, issues impacting youth will be discussed, such as HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and driving while intoxicated - topics that are particularly important during high school prom season.

This pre-prom health and safety workshop is free and open to all high-school aged youth. For more information, call Arrington at (704) 372-RAIN, extension 115.

Buy an extra copy of "The Post" to share with a friend!



WOGR-AM
1540
CHARLOTTE, NC

WGAS-AM
1420
GASTONIA, NC

WOGR-FM
93.3
SALISBURY, NC

88.3-FM
CHARLOTTE, NC

WADE-AM
1340
WADESBORO, NC

...with Dr. Tony Evans, Larry Burkett, Pastor Robyn Cool, Pastor Phillip Davis, Pastor Charles Jacobs, Dr. Jennifer Johnson, Dr. James Dobson, Youth Radio, Devotional Music, Focus on the Family, and much more!

Tune in and get blessed!

1501 N. I-85 SERVICE ROAD • CHARLOTTE, NC 28216
704-393-1540

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK—Isaac Hayes has quit "South Park" where he voices the character of Chef, saying he can no longer stomach its take on religion.

Hayes, who has played the ladies' man/school cook in the animated Comedy Central cable TV satire since 1997, said in a statement Monday that he feels a line has been crossed.

"There is a place in this world for satire, but there is a time when satire ends and intolerance and bigotry towards religious beliefs of others begins," the 63-year-old soul singer and outspoken



Hayes

Scientologist said.

"Religious beliefs are sacred to people, and at all times should be respected and honored," he continued.

"As a civil rights activist of the past 40 years, I cannot support a show that disrespects those beliefs and practices."

"South Park" co-creator Matt Stone responded sharply in an interview with The Associated Press on Monday, saying, "This is 100 percent having to do with his

faith of Scientology... He has no problem—and he's cashed plenty of checks—with our show making fun of Christians."

Last November, "South Park" targeted the Church of Scientology and its celebrity followers, including actors Tom Cruise and John Travolta, in a top-rated episode called "Trapped in the Closet." In the episode, Stan, one of the show's four mis-

chievous fourth graders, is hailed as a reluctant savior by Scientology leaders, while a cartoon Cruise looks himself in a closet and won't come out.

Stone told The AP that he and co-creator Trey Parker "never heard a peep out of Isaac in any way until we did Scientology. He wants a different standard for religions other than his own, and to me, that is where intolerance and bigotry begin."

Drug reduces pressure

Continued from page 1B

AstraZeneca PLC. The company sponsored and helped design the study.

Researchers gave 391 people the drug and 381 others phony pills for two years, then had everyone take dummy pills for two more years.

During the first two years, 154 people on fake pills developed high blood pressure versus only 53 given the drug.

However, in the next two years when those on the drug went off, 155 developed high blood pressure, matching what happened in the first two years in the placebo group.

This suggests the disease was just delayed, not truly prevented, said Dr. James Stein, a University of Wisconsin-Madison cardiologist who had no role in the research.

"Once people stop therapy, blood pressure goes up inexorably, so I'm not sure we can prevent hypertension," he said.

Results were presented Tuesday at an American College of Cardiology meeting and published online by the New England Journal of Medicine.

THERE'S HOPE IN THE TOTE

When you have nothing, the smallest things can mean a lot. That's why Charlotte Rescue Mission collects toiletries each year and distributes them on Easter. Toothpaste, deodorant, shampoo and soap may not mean a lot to you, but to those in need it's a wonderful gift. This year, we're mailing out 2000 purple Hope Totes to churches and nonprofit groups to be filled and returned to the Mission. If you'd like to help, you can bring your men's and women's health and beauty items to any Showmar's Restaurant location by April 7.

For more information, please call Doug Macomb at 704-334-4635 ext. 214. Remember—hope can be a powerful weapon to help fix broken lives.



Showmar's
Casual Dining...Fast!



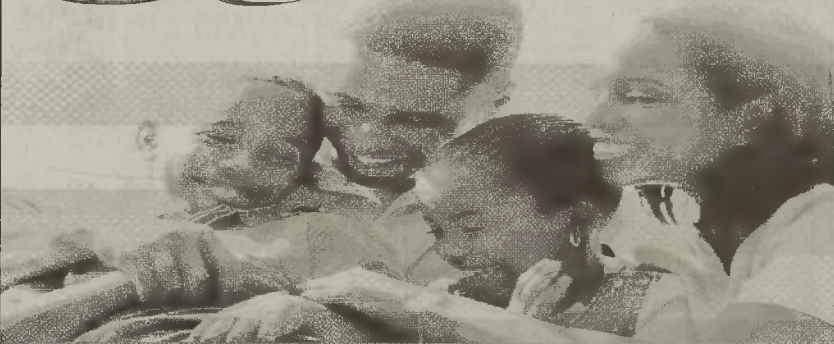
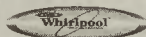
CHARLOTTE RESCUE MISSION
Offering hope to broken lives by God's Grace



The State Farm

Black Family Expo

Presented by Whirlpool & Radio One



Saturday
March 25, 2006
Charlotte Merchandise Mart
11am - 6pm

ENJOY Lots of Music, Food, Entertainment, Guest Speakers and more!

Don't Miss Your Chance to Perform in the 2006 GOSPEL GET DOWN
Enter Your Choir Now!

The Deadline is Friday, March 3, 2006.
Call toll free for details.

SPONSORED BY:
State Farm • Whirlpool • Radio One • Walgreens • Lowe's Food
Wells Fargo • Carolina Harley-Davidson • Brinks Home Security
Adecco • Talley's Green Grocery • Cornerstone Medical
Peach Auto Painting & Collision • DR Horton • Vision Realty Group
Interim Healthcare • First Citizens Bank • Charlotte Post • M.A.D.D.

Produced by
really
EVENTS
com

For Exhibitor and Sponsorship Information
Call TOLL FREE 1-866-771-6664