



HEART HEALTH

Community Groups Aid Fight Against Heart Disease

(NAPSA)—An initiative against heart disease has called upon a higher power. An education program designed to improve heart health in the African-American community is involving a variety of faith-based and other community groups.

The American Heart Association is helping African Americans fight heart disease and stroke through a community-based health program called Search Your Heart.

The program, which is sponsored nationally by AstraZeneca, is a prevention initiative that helps communities reach at-risk populations with knowledge and tools to live a healthy life.

Studies show that compared to whites, African Americans as a whole are more likely to have high blood pressure, diabetes and be overweight, and are less likely to be physically active, raising their risk of cardiovascular diseases. This year, cardiovascular disease will account for about 37 percent of the approximately 290,000 African-American deaths.

American Heart Association staff can instruct people on how to implement the program in their community. Participants learn about cardiovascular health, nutrition and physical activity. More specifically, they:

- learn to fit physical activities into their daily lives,
- receive flavorful recipes low in cholesterol and saturated fat and
- reduce and control their risk for high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.

Nurse and American Heart Association volunteer Mary Green has used the Search Your Heart program at churches and community centers in the New Orleans area. "I have traveled all over,



Studies indicate that due to a number of factors—such as high rates of diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol—African Americans can be at great risk of heart disease and stroke.

‘training the trainer’ from company boardrooms to housing projects. I have encouraged pastors, administrators—anyone who would listen—to bring this program to their communities.”

Reverend Brenda Cash reports that several things in her life have improved because of Search Your Heart. “These sessions have awakened the congregation to the urgency to become healthy. And, I found that I have a cholesterol problem. I had no idea and never thought to have it checked. Now I am aware of the need to exercise and read food labels to maintain a healthy diet. I have lost seven pounds and this is only the beginning.”

“Seeing people access resources that they have not known about for years is very rewarding,” Green says. “The most notable milestone is getting Southern churches to move from serving fried chicken and fish dinners to baked dinners. If you know anything about the South, you know that’s a monumental accomplishment.”

To find out how to bring Search Your Heart to your community, call (800) AHA-USA1 or visit www.americanheart.org/searchyourheart.