

Body & Soul Initiative Helps Black Churches Reduce Health Disparities

Written by
Friday, 02 April 2010 14:58



RICHMOND, VA-- In conjunction with National Minority Health Month, The Balm In Gilead announced last week that it has added a major program to its repertoire of national faith-based initiatives that address health disparities among African Americans. Body & Soul is an evidence-based wellness program that was originally developed for African American congregations and piloted by the National Cancer Institute, The American Cancer Society, and researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Emory University in Atlanta, GA. The program promotes a healthy diet along with an active lifestyle as a means for decreasing the risk of high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, heart disease, and some types of cancer among African Americans.

According to Dr. Pernessa Seele, Founder and CEO of The Balm In Gilead, Body & Soul connects perfectly with The Balm In Gilead's mission to prevent diseases and improve the health status of people of the African Diaspora by providing support to faith institutions to strengthen their capacity to deliver programs and services that contribute to the elimination of health disparities. "We are delighted that the National Cancer Institute has entrusted us with the dissemination and technical support of this vital program that has been proven to be effective," said Seele.

Body & Soul helps congregation members learn to take care of their bodies as well as their spirits by combining pastoral leadership and educational activities in a faith-based environment that supports healthy eating, and peer counseling. The Balm In Gilead will begin its Body & Soul training program this summer.

"Health disparities are a major problem in African American communities," said Daphne Walker-Thoth, program director at The Balm In Gilead. The most recent statistics from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Minority Health reveal that in 2005, the death rate for African Americans was higher than Whites for heart diseases, stroke, cancer, asthma, influenza and pneumonia, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and homicide. "Often, our faith institutions are ready and willing to assist, but sometimes don't know how or where to start. Body & Soul represents a good starting place for their Health Ministries," said Walker-Thoth.

The Balm In Gilead is a not-for-profit, non-governmental 501(c) (3) that was established in 1989. It provides education, training, technical and capacity-building assistance to faith

Body & Soul Initiative Helps Black Churches Reduce Health Disparities

Written by

Friday, 02 April 2010 14:58

institutions throughout the United States and Tanzania in Africa. In addition, it serves as a capacity-building assistance provider in the area of HIV/AIDS for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For information about participating in the Body & Soul training for faith institutions, contact Daphne Walker-Thoth, director of programs, at The Balm In Gilead at (804) 644-2256 or dwalker-thoth@balmingilead.org.