

## **Heart Program Promotes Healthy Behaviors and Saves a Life**

### ***Issue***

Ernestine Smith saw a need in her church, Mount Pleasant Baptist. Many of her fellow members' health were at risk due to family history, lack of physical activity and poor diet. She took charge and with the support of her pastor and other church members, started the Health Ministry Team. She is now amazed at the many positive healthy outcomes she is seeing in the congregation.

Heart disease and stroke claim the lives of nearly 800,000 Americans each year and cost the United States billions of dollars. African Americans are at an increased risk for both diseases. Heart disease and stroke are the first and third leading cause of death among this population, respectively.

### ***Intervention***

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) recognized the increased risk among African Americans for heart disease and stroke. Thanks to grant money from DHEC's Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Division, Public Health Region 1 has been able to partner with two African-American churches, Pine Grove AME in Greenwood county, and Mount Pleasant Baptist in Anderson county, to help reduce these risks. Both of these churches adopted *Search Your Heart*, a faith-based educational program developed by the American Heart Association and designed for African Americans. Both congregations are learning the risk factors, signs and symptoms of heart disease, diabetes and stroke, as well as ways to increase physical activity and add more nutritional foods to their diets.

Accomplishments this year include:

- Health Talks were provided for Pine Grove members throughout the year on a regular basis;
- The Health Ministry team at Mount Pleasant has designated a plot of land to plant a church garden. The fruits and vegetables will be used for church meals and available for members; and
- Both churches participated in *Go Red Sunday* and *Power Sunday* this year to increase awareness of heart disease and stroke.

### ***Impact***

Pine Grove AME and Mount Pleasant Baptist have had much success and impacted the lives of their congregation members through the *Search Your Heart* program. The following results have been achieved:

- Nearly 200 members at Pine Grove learned the risk factors, signs and symptoms of heart disease, stroke and diabetes, as well as information on nutrition and physical activity through *Go Red Sunday*, *Power Sunday* and regular Health Talks held at the church;
- More than 100 church members at Mount Pleasant learned the risk factors and signs and symptoms of heart disease and stroke through *Go Red Sunday*, *Power Sunday*, and *Heart Truth for Women* and *Power to End Stroke* presentations; and
- One church member at Mount Pleasant prevented a heart attack because of the life-saving information he learned on *Go Red Sunday*.

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