

## **Pastor's Wife Provides Healing Remedies**

### ***Issue***

In churches throughout Horry County, many pastors deliver powerful, poignant sermons. On special events like "Friends and Family Day," Thanksgiving, and funerals, community members come together for feasts. The food flows, rich with seasonings that make the mouth water. All gather to get their fill and lift their spirits, but are ultimately deceived with unhealthy food choices that damage their hearts. Stroke and high blood pressure are currently attacking faith members. Numbers of these disease victims are increasing, due to lack of exercise and poor eating habits.

The statistics are staggering:

- South Carolina is first in the nation for mortality rates due to stroke;
- African Americans are twice as likely to die of stroke than Caucasians; and
- According to 2004 South Carolina statistics, there were 25 deaths per day from heart disease, and seven deaths per day from stroke.

### ***Intervention***

Thanks to grant dollars from the agency's Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Division, the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC)'s Region 6 partnered with local AME Churches in Horry County. Region 6 staff conducted several presentations advocating healthy eating and the importance of physical activity. Also, stroke awareness and prevention measures were implemented within the AME faith community.

At one church in Little River, the Pastor's wife, Mrs. Evans, attended *Power to End Stroke* and nutrition sessions. The presentations focused on the importance of preparing meals without using salt and how to prepare southern dishes in a healthier manner. Out of concern for her husband's and faith members' health, the pastor's wife set out to acquire the tools for change. As a result of training, the church now serves more fruits and vegetables, serves water instead of highly concentrated sugar beverages, and is implementing a church policy in order to serve healthy food choices at all events.

### ***Impact***

The knowledge the Pastor's wife gained has not only influenced her family's personal lifestyle, but the congregations' as a whole. The following accomplishments have taken place:

- A total of 500 congregation members are being taught healthy lifestyle interventions;
- Healthier snacks and beverages are now served at all church events; and
- Lifestyle modifications are occurring not only at church, but also at home, where healthy meals are now being prepared.

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