

## **Building Momentum and Sustainability for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention**

### ***Issue***

“Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” *John 3:2*. Hearing this verse coming from the pulpit on any given Sunday would not seem unusual, but momentum is building in churches across Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester counties to live the message through their participation in *Search Your Heart*. This faith-based educational program, developed by the American Heart Association, is designed to reduce risk for heart disease and stroke among African Americans.

Our state’s heart disease and stroke statistics are staggering:

- One out of every three African Americans has hypertension and high cholesterol;
- More than 70 percent are overweight or obese;
- The diabetes rate is 80 percent higher in African Americans than Caucasian adults; and
- Almost two out of every three African Americans are either inactive or are not regularly active.

### ***Intervention***

The Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention (HDSP) Division of the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) provides funding to the Community Health and Chronic Disease Prevention programs of the agency’s Public Health Regions to address HDSP priority areas. DHEC Region 7 provided training, consultation, technical assistance and funding to African-American churches who agreed to:

- Attend the *Search Your Heart* training;
- Implement at least two activities in support of one of the three *Search Your Heart* modules, heart disease and stroke prevention, healthy eating, and physical activity;
- Complete a congregation *Search Your Heart* survey;
- Host a *Go Red Sunday* in February and/or *Power to End Stroke – Power Sunday* in May, to encourage awareness of heart disease and stroke; and
- Work toward the implementation of at least one policy and/or environmental change in support of heart disease and stroke prevention.

### ***Impact***

June of 2009 brings to a close the second year of *Search Your Heart* funding and Region 7’s successful partnership with African-American churches. Accomplishments include:

- During the 2007–2008 funding cycle, DHEC Region 7 trained and received pastoral commitment from 17 African-American churches;
- In January 2009, year one and two churches came together for the first *Search Your Heart* Roundtable Meeting. At this time, the group consensus recommended to meet twice a year for training and more importantly sharing successes;
- Fourteen of the original 17 churches have recommitted and qualified as *Search Your Heart* churches, an 82 percent success rate;
- Nine new churches were trained with eight committing and qualifying as *Search Your Heart* churches, an 89 percent success rate;
- With DHEC HDSP’s goal of 40 qualified *Search Your Heart* churches and Region 7’s goal of five new and five returning churches, the Region has greatly surpassed its goal and has contributed greatly to the overall state goal.

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