



Special Points
of Interest:

- “Get on board...there’s room for many more” – President’s Corner
- Seniors... Men’s Health “Straight from the heart”
- Canadian Blood Services and African Canadians

Our Message...

“Get on board ...there’s room for many a more”

President’s Corner

Looking back to its beginning in 2002, we recognize that HAAC has played a vital role in many projects related to the health of African Canadians. The successful “Diabetes and Youth” project and “Health Fair” are two recent examples. However, we also recognize that to continue fulfilling its mission, HAAC must strive to grow. We must engage in a wider range of health-related activities and invite a broader segment of the African Canadians community to join us in these activities.

To date HAAC has relied on a small executive group to manage its affairs. While this group has served in a meaningful way, looking to the future, we know that change is inevitable. As we grow and reach out to other partners and the broader community we will need increased administrative capacity. As we seek to engage the broader community we also need increased interaction with and involvement from African Canadians of all origins and of all ages.

Our “look back” at the past now leads us forward to the future. In order to meet the challenges of the future we are presently in the midst of a strategic planning process. This has led to a renewed “Mission” and “Vision” along with plans for a new governance structure. These will in turn provide the foundation for our growth and future activities.

We are confident that our **Vision of “Thriving healthy African Canadian Communities in Nova Scotia”** and our **Mission “To promote and improve the health of African Canadians in Nova Scotia through community engagement, education, policy recommendation, partnerships, and research participation”** are becoming a reality.

Our next steps include:

- forming a Board
- increasing membership
- formalizing relationships with our many partners

- continued community interactive events such as “Living in Health” celebration in June 2009
- Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the Fall

This is a very exciting time for us as HAAC looks “back to the future”. If you care and feel passionate about the health of African Canadians then we invite you to join us now. You will have the opportunity to be heard and to contribute to our Mission and Vision. Membership is free of cost until our AGM in the Fall.



**David Haase
Co-President**



*“Get on board ...
there’s room for
many a more”*

– David Haase,
Co-President

I’m telling this story on behalf of my dad. It is an encouraging story about how one can make a decision to change their life and health when they are ready and if they really want to.

My dad had a transient-ischemic attack (TIA, or mini-stroke), some years ago. Doctors advised him to change his lifestyle - he also had a visit from a Dietitian while in the hospital. Dad has also been diagnosed with high cholesterol off and on throughout a number of years. He loves sweets, especially homemade baked goods. Dad is from Belize, Central America, where traditional sweets, and some of his favorites, include Belizean white cake, potato pudding, coconut tarts, and coconut crust. Dad enjoys baking and has also made jam tarts in the past. Dad changed for a little while, eating lower fat items for desserts such as canned fruit packed in juice. After a while though, he went back to his old habits and ways of eating. His high cholesterol was still a concern. A number of months ago, his Doctor advised him to take Lipitor and dad agreed to fill the prescription and take Lipitor, although somewhat reluctantly. I heard dad say more than once, that he did not want to continue taking Lipitor and be on it for the rest of his life.

Around this time, we heard about a program called Simply for Life (SFL). This company was offering a free nutrition seminar in Saint John, NB. Simply for Life is not a diet,

Seniors...Men’s health “Straight from the heart”

but a program designed to teach and educate people about healthy eating. The program costs money, but dad’s medication also cost money as he has no coverage for prescription drugs. So, he decided to put the money into SFL, hoping that he would be able to get his cholesterol down and stop taking Lipitor. We read and/or heard about how people in SFL can see improvements in medical conditions like hypertension, weight loss, high cholesterol and diabetes. SFL is not claiming to cure, but to help people realize that if they follow a healthy lifestyle, it can greatly improve their conditions and help them learn to live healthier despite their past and/or current health issues. In the case of my dad, after being in the program for about 2 months, his cholesterol decreased and his Doctor told him he could stop taking Lipitor! He will be going for another blood test in August to continue to monitor. It has been wonderful to see these changes in my dad! He has also decided to walk up and down the steps in our house as a form of exercise - no gym membership or payments required and this is something he can do in the winter without even having to go outdoors in the cold weather. My dad did not have a serious weight issue but he is now at a healthier weight and he has lost inches!

In the past, I believe my dad was not really ready to make a change, but now he is learning more and developing a way to monitor and control his cholesterol.

If dad continues his changed lifestyle, I believe he will be well

on his way to controlling his cholesterol through diet and lifestyle, instead of medication for the rest of his life which is what he wanted to avoid.

Recently, dad made coconut tarts, but they were a much healthier version. He used spelt flour instead of white flour, a little non-hydrogenated margarine for the pastry, and not a lot of sweetened condensed milk. He made a smaller recipe of 12 tarts, which did not require an entire can of sweetened condensed milk. Dad still has a sweet tooth, but this goes to show that because of the education he has received, he chose and knew how to make a healthier recipe of a traditional Belizean homemade dessert.

On a recent road trip, I was amazed that dad chose healthy snacks such as almonds, bananas and certain granola bars instead of a chocolate bar, which would be his usual choice. My sister asked him recently what he normally has for dessert these days. Dad said ‘berries’, and my sister made a comment such as ‘Dad, I’ve never heard you say something like that...’- my dad is not the type to consider fruit as a dessert! He is even drinking water because of its health benefits; he hardly used to drink water and he even took water with him while traveling on the road!

It has been wonderful to see these changes in my dad!. I am so happy and I thank God for these changes. I realize now that God has been at work, giving dad a desire to look after his health, and his cholesterol has gone down to healthier levels – and this is what I've prayed for!

Making a change is not always easy - sure we still like our treats and sweets and we still eat them. However, we now have the ability to choose what we will put in our bodies based on knowledge of healthy food, and we have a greater desire to take care of our bodies. However, I believe we cannot be forced to change by someone else - we have to be ready to change and it has to be our desire to change. In the past, I believe my dad was not really ready to make a change, but now he is learning more and developing that desire more, especially

when he sees the positive results. It takes time to change from our old ways and there are ups and downs along the way, but if we are really ready, I believe it will be worth it!

*Personal testimony by,
Debbie Bruhier*

Message of Hope and Awareness Colorectal Cancer



Cancer Care Nova Scotia will begin its Colorectal Cancer Prevention Program in the district health authorities of the South Shore, Cape Breton and Guys borough / Antigonish Strait. Beginning in March screening kits and educational information will be mailed to men and women, aged 50 -74 who reside in the pilot health districts.

Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in Nova Scotia. Ninety – four per cent of people

If detected early, colon cancer is curable. There are often no warning signs of colon cancer in the early stages, when the disease is most treatable. Screening can find colon cancer early. Most people who get colon cancer are over the age of 50, have no family history of the disease, and do not notice any signs until the cancer is well developed.

For more information about the Colorectal Cancer Prevention Program, telephone 1-866-599-2267 or visit www.cancercare.ns.ca

Canadian Blood Services and African Canadians

The Health Association partnered with Canadian Blood Services during African Heritage month to promote the importance of donating blood and registering with the One Match Stem Cell Network. Why, is this important? There is a strong need to increase ethnic diversity in the Canadian Blood Services Blood Donor and One Match Stem Cell and Marrow donor registries. Patients with diseases such as Sickle Cell disease or Aplastic Anemia and certain cancers such as Leukemia, require donors that match them as closely as possible, with the best donor being found in the same ethnic group as the patient.

Hundreds of Canadians require a donor for a stem cell transplant every year, and more than 70% of them will rely on someone they don't know to help save their lives. That is why there is One Match: you could be the one match to save a life. Currently, 0.5% of registrants on the One Match Stem Cell and Marrow Network have identified themselves as Black. Please book an appointment or find out more information on the blood donation process.

*Donna Smith
Co-President*



HAAC Talks and Partners with Communities Across the Province

Phyllis Marsh-Jarvis
(Past-President)
 Provincial Community Liaison
 HAAC (Health Association of African
 Canadians)

Drop in: Mon., Tues. or Wed.
 Between: 10am – 3pm

731 Victoria Road
 Sydney, Nova Scotia B1N 1J3
 Telephone: (902) 562-6656

Greetings to all:

HAAC’s mandate continues to be ‘promoting and improving the health of African Canadians in Nova Scotia through community engagement, education, policy recommendation, partnerships, and research participation’.

HAAC is pleased to join the Community Care Team in Whitney Pier to further meet this mandate. We at HAAC thank you for the warm welcome and openness with which we have been received.

Together as a team we promote the development and recruitment of health professionals and we stress the importance of making collective decisions about our health concerns. Community, academic, professional and government partnerships are crucial to



Religious leaders, advocates and political officials nationwide (U.S.) on Sunday launched the 19th annual Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS among black communities, the [Charlotte Observer](#) reports (Batten, *Charlotte Observer*, 3/2). The weeklong event is a national program

the fulfillment of our teams mandate and the goals of the community.

One of the most important aspects of HAAC’s work is to advocate for the collection of data about Black health status as well as research on Black health issues. We are working to make this a reality through the promoting of partnerships across the province and engagement in several health research and community projects.

If you are not yet a member of HAAC, why not join us and help make difference in building a healthy African Canadian Community?

Together we can grow in knowledge and awareness to promote health and wellness.



Something to think about...HIV/AIDS-Sexual health...let’s talk

‘Advocates Launch 19th Annual Black Church Week of Prayer To Raise Awareness About HIV/AIDS Among Communities Nationwide’

sponsored by the [Balm in Gilead](#), a not-for-profit organization that works to improve the health of blacks by focusing on life-threatening illnesses, the [Omaha World-Herald](#) reports (Bradley, *Omaha World-Herald*, 3/1). According to a [release](#), the event aims to mobilize thousands of churches and millions of church attendees to support HIV/AIDS

education, testing and care in the black community.

Pernessa Seele, founder and CEO of the Balm in Gilead, said, "By uniting leaders at the national level and providing local churches with theologically appropriate methods and materials for addressing AIDS at the grassroots level, the Balm in Gilead and its programs empower black faith communities to respond effectively to this devastating pandemic."

“If dad continues his changed lifestyle, I believe he will be well on his way to controlling his cholesterol through diet and lifestyle, instead of medication for the rest of his life which is what he wanted to avoid.”

- **Debbie Bruhier**

Something to think about...HIV/AIDS-Sexual health...let's talk – Cont'd

CDC figures show the number of blacks in the U.S. living with AIDS increased by 33% between 2001 and 2005. They also show that although blacks represent about 12% of the U.S. population, they account for about 50% of new AIDS cases. Black women account for the majority of new AIDS cases among women, and black teenagers ages 13 to 19 account for more than 70% of new AIDS cases reported among the population, according to CDC figures (Balm in Gilead release, 2/25).

The prayer week is an "opportunity for all Christians to examine our thoughts and behaviors,"

Bari Tiggett, a volunteer at the [AIDS Leadership Foothills-area Alliance](#), said, adding, "The black church has the power and the responsibility to change the course of this epidemic. The goal is to provide prayer, leadership, compassion and information to help families in our congregation and community who are facing this disease" (*Charlotte Observer*, 3/2).

Article provided by, Larry Baxter Director Nova Scotia AIDS Commission HAAC, The Nova Scotia AIDS Commission, and ADAM are organizations partnering to move forward together to create awareness and safe open dialogue in

our communities across the province. Let's talk...HAAC is ready; are you?

Youth Say -- Type II Diabetes Can Be Prevented!

The past year has been an active one for many black youth participating in the Taking Hold of Our Health: African Nova Scotian Youth Diabetes Prevention Project. This was a unique project partnership between the Health Association of African Canadians (HAAC), Canadian Diabetes Association, Black Cultural Centre, Community Health and Wellness Centre and the Southeastern Community Health Board. The partnership was formed because of the growing concern of increasing rates of diabetes in our communities as well as across Canada.

Together the project partners hired a coordinator, Jay Williams, trained four educators – Mandy Conyers, Crystal Watson, Pauline Byard and Michelle Poirier – and developed an education program for youth. Fourteen education sessions were held reaching 190 youth and 83 adults across the province. We then invited these groups to enter a contest, performing in whatever way they could, information on how we can prevent diabetes. Our first place winners were youth from the African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes; second place went to the Girl Guides of East Preston; and third prize went to four youth from the North Preston Recreation Centre. All groups talked about the difference between type I and type II diabetes, the need to eat healthy foods and be physically active. They learned that yes, we can still eat sugar, but not in large amounts and only if we are eating other healthy foods and being physically active.

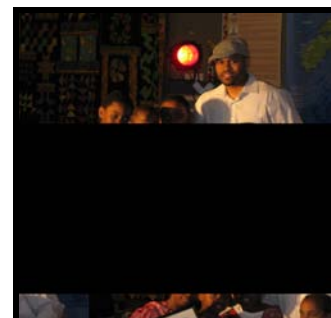
Coordinator Jay Williams says, "what I enjoyed most about the project was the opportunity to work with all the parts that came together to make this a possibility. Working with the youth was definitely enjoyable and experiencing their enthusiasm and their knowledge was refreshing.

According to feedback, evaluation forms filled out after the contest, and through word of mouth, youth participants, families and the community in general are definitely more aware of type II diabetes risks, prevention, education and awareness in the Black community. Youth, families, and community members expressed a need for promoting health within the Black community. Presently there is some promotion of health within the community, however, there needs to be a more consistent message that highlights the importance of good health practices.

From this project we've produced a project evaluation video as well as an educational video. Both videos will be on the Pink Dog Production Web site in the near future.

Photos:

- 1) First prize winners (ADAM)**
- 2) Second Prize winners (East Preston Girl Guides)**
- 3) Third Prize Winners (Youth from North Preston Recreation Centre)**
- 4) Project advisory group**



We Need the Nova Scotia Health System to Collect Information on Our Health

Under-representation of our health issues in research and government decision-making makes HAAC determined to raise awareness within our communities and with government and District Health Authorities across the province.

HAAC partners with a variety of organizations in research projects and community forums to raise awareness and talk about our health and the many things that affect it like: poverty, racism, lack of education, diet, lifestyle, fear of illness, doctors & hospitals, not enough Black health care professionals and medical treatment that may not always suit our needs.

A key issue for HAAC is the need for data & health status information about People of African descent living in Nova Scotia

Collecting this data includes keeping our names confidential. It means talking about things like the number of people who are sick in our communities so that they can get better care.

HAAC recommends that we be enabled to provide race and ethnicity information as part of the health information we are asked to provide for health cards or when we go to health clinics or hospitals. *This is because the information that is now collected hardly ever provides a place for us to write that we are African Canadian or African Nova Scotian or what community we live in or the country in which we lived before coming to Canada.* With none of this information in the health system, the health decision makers do not know about the numbers of Black people who are sick with things like diabetes, high blood pressure, sickle cell anemia, cancer, depression, etc. or which diseases or conditions that mostly affect us.

Collecting this information will:

- Provide a powerful tool for planning and improving health services as well as directing programs to where they will best meet our needs
- Respect that race and ethnicity are important parts of our identity. By identifying ourselves we help the health system to start programs or research about illnesses that affect us more than other people. We can also create community buy-in for the programs and research that could help us avoid the illnesses or manage them better.
- Be in keeping with the Canadian Human Rights Commission and provide ways to understand and reduce differences between our health status and the health status of other groups of people in Nova Scotia.

Remember - what is not counted, does not count. We count & so should our health.

Hearing from you, hearing your view...

Thank you to the many members of East Preston, North Preston and Cherry Brook/Lake Loon communities for responding to the Health Association of African Canadians (HAAC) and Capital Health survey in 2006. Your input is now being used to change the services of the Community Health and Wellness Centre located in North Preston and serving all of your communities. If you have not yet seen the results of the survey, you can find them on our web site www.cdha.nshealth.ca/communityhealth/southeastern.



The Southeastern Community Health Board (SECHB) would like to let you know about another opportunity to share your view on health issues in your community as well as across the Halifax region. In the month of May, Capital Health will be doing a telephone survey to learn from residents their health conditions as well as their concerns about health services in the city. If you get a call asking to answer this survey, please consider participating. You will not be asked for personal information such as name, address and where you work so no one will be able to identify you. Your voice needs to be heard not only locally but in this city wide survey as well. If you have any questions, please call Anna Jacobs, coordinator of the SECHB at 460-6888.

Africentric Philosophy



An Africentric philosophy places people of African descent at the centre of a world view. The philosophy is based on a “black racial identity”. This theory focuses on a belief that people of African descent have made numerous contributions to civilization. Also, that the first civilizations were created by people of African descent and that their history has been stolen and distorted over many centuries. This will create a major challenge since many of the participants in the research do not have a positive perspective of Africa or Africentric philosophy.

Research can only be successful when African Nova Scotian youth, seniors and community are able to participate fully in becoming aware of their history and their heritage within the context of this research work. People of African descent must have the opportunity to dialogue with other African Nova Scotians who are cantered in Africentric knowledge and who understands the information, principles, and practices. Having had the opportunity to talk with other people of African descent can help community residents develop Africentric awareness, and the skills to perform an analysis of their situation. Africentric awareness provides community with the skills to become community researchers and data collectors. By providing information sessions and talking to individuals in the community about their history and about major contributions that people of African descent have made to civilization, it is only then that African Nova Scotians will be able to make a connection to their past, make real sense of the present and the future of their community with regard to health information, research findings and sustainable health services.

An Africentric philosophy promotes an alternative understanding of our world as is known from an African perspective. It is an inclusive philosophy that celebrates a collective identity for mankind. The philosophy brings all people to the center of historical, economic, political and social understanding of each through self-development and community development for unity.

An Africentric philosophy will challenge African Nova Scotians in their desire to have structures that can assist them with addressing the social challenges they live with, in their families and within their communities.

Yvonne Atwell

HAAC, Member and Community Researcher

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.haac.ca

My personal experience with the HAAC Organization



In the fall of 2008, I began my volunteer time with HAAC. As a Health Promotion student at Dalhousie and having a keen interest in health I was looking for an organization that met my ideals and open to volunteers! I had heard about HAAC from past Health Promotion students and decided that HAAC would be a good organization to start with. Little did I know that this was the right place to be! I reviewed the website and read up on the current and past projects; I then contacted Phyllis and we set up a meeting. After that meeting with Phyllis, I felt like I was welcome as not only a volunteer but also a member of the HAAC family.

My first assignment was to help with the organization of a Health Fair to be held in February 2009 – African Heritage Month. The first task was to pick a name based on the principles of Kwanzaa – having grown up in outport Newfoundland, I had some research to do which helped me to understand a little more of my past as well. Planning the Ujima Community Health Fair was a great experience! Throughout the planning process, I had the opportunity to meet many members of the communities as well as make positive connections with health partners in the area.

The Ujima Community Health Fair was held February 28th, 2009 at the Black Cultural Centre. The main goal was to provide a wide variety of health related information, to create awareness of the resources available, allowing the community to feel control over their own health. Nearly 30 exhibitors from around the HRM participated in the event from various aspects of health – environmental, physical, social, and general well-being. Interactive workshops were also held in the areas of youth addictions, cultural competence, and even a pilates demonstration. The health fair was a huge success and I look forward to planning one for 2010!

Through volunteering with HAAC, I have had the opportunity to participate in health forums as well as part of a program to educate youth about diabetes in African Canadians. Participating in these projects has not only allowed me to develop as a health promoter but to help reach out to the communities and strive to improve their health. I have learned so much from the HAAC executive members and I enjoy working with each of them. I cannot wait to get started on the next project!!

Michelle Poirer

Come Join Us...

As an organization we continue to work in the best interest of our African Canadian communities, form valuable partnerships, engage valuable volunteers and are currently improving the internal operation of the organization to serve you better. We need and welcome your involvement, won't you join us at HAAC as a member, member and volunteer and partner.

Come on board as a member now, dues are not due until the AGM in the Fall, time and venue to be announced.

Contact Main Office in Dartmouth, NS at:
 (902)405-4222 or (902)564-5255 in Sydney, NS
 Published and edited by
 Phyllis Marsh-Jarvis
 Assisted by Kari Jones

