



# AFRICAN COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVES

## *SPRING NEWSLETTER*

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### **ACHI'S WORK IS RECOGNIZED!**

ACHI has been working hard at enrolling clients at Earned Income Tax Centers and helping clients navigate the tax laws. Following a training for staff members, ACHI has been working at the Roxbury Resources Center, Codman Square Tech Center and Roxbury Goodwill Center. Mayor Menino's Office recognized this work in a press release on January 29, 2010.

*"On the ground, many organizations have come together to provide one-on-one services to taxpayers in need of affordable health insurance access. Trusted and dedicated organizations like the African Community Health Initiatives (ACHI) program give their time and expertise to be a resource in promoting the health of the City."* -The Office of Mayor Menino

"The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation is proud to have been one of the first organizations to support African Community Health Initiatives. In just a few short years, their efforts have had a large impact on how African immigrants in Massachusetts access health care. They have also helped many local hospitals and health centers better respond to the needs of this important community."

—Phillip O. González, Director of Grantmaking for the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation

#### **Inside this issue:**

Health Neighbor, Healthy Community Brunch	2
ACHI Summer Roast 'N' Fun Fest Cooklout	3
Intern's Corner	3
Partnership Activities	4
Ongoing Activities	5
Board of Directors and Contact Information	5



## HEALTHY NEIGHBOR, HEALTHY COMMUNITY BRUNCH

The first ACHI fundraising brunch was held at Hyatt Regency Hotel in Boston on October 3rd, 2009. Prominent members of the community from far and near graced the occasion.

The morning started out with a song led by ACHI's Sister Elizabeth and continued for the presentation of an award to Federica Williams, the CEO and President of Whittier Street Health Center. She was honored with certificate of appreciation from ACHI for her untiring and unflinching support for the organization since inception.



Award Recipient Federica Williams

The keynote speaker of the event was Amadou Diagne, the

Associate Director of Medical Sciences at Gilead Sciences Inc. Diagne is a groundbreaking HIV/AIDS researcher and ACHI was honored to have him speak at the brunch about the disease. He discussed the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS and the danger of ignoring its prevalence.



Keynote speaker Amadou Diagne

He said: **“This is the message that we want you to understand: that HIV does not just get people who are gay, intravenous drug users or who are street people. Anybody can get HIV. Anybody.”**

The brunch also featured a silent auction where items such as wine, African fabrics, and art work were purchased. The money raised by this event goes towards supporting all of the work that ACHI does.

Brunch concluded with a video of testimonials by

ACHI clientele. The clients discussed how ACHI helped enroll them in MassHealth, connect them to emergency, primary and specialized medical care, and how ACHI helped them get the medications they needed. Some clients discussed the help they got with social issues, such as finding housing in Boston, SNAP (food stamp) assistance and language interpretation at their appointments. Lidwine Mapaga of Gabon said: **“I called ACHI when I needed them to assist me. I was pregnant. When I had my baby, I called them and they sent one of them to assist me ....They were with me in the hospital. They came to my house, they helped me with MassHealth. Every time I had a letter from MassHealth or the hospital they were always there to help me how to fill out the forms..... I can recommend ACHI to anyone.”**



Auction winners



## ACHI SUMMER ROAST 'N' FUN FEST COOKOUT

On August 1<sup>st</sup> ACHI had its first Summer Roast and Fun Cookout at the Franklin Park in Boston Massachusetts. The cookout was organized to raise funds for the organization's programming. The event was well attended by ACHI's community members, friends and other organizations who used the occasion to inform participants of the work they do.



The event included a raffle of gift items. The day was full of fun, music, dance and great food! ACHI also used the occasion to share information about its program and activities which led to new clientele being enrolled in health insurance following the event. The cookout was first of its kind and a

## ACHI INTERNS' COLUMN

My name is Temitope Ojo I am a senior at Mount Holyoke College, with a major in Biochemistry and a minor in Anthropology. I am planning a career in the health field as a medical practitioner and community health provider. I was born and raised in Nigeria and in 2006; I started my college education in Massachusetts, U.S.A. The rest of my family resides in Nigeria.



Working with ACHI was a humbling and rewarding period for me. As an intern, I got a taste of performing a daily routine of administrative tasks. I was entrusted with important projects and responsibilities; this boosted my confidence in my professional abilities. During my time at ACHI, I got an interesting glimpse into the area of health advocacy, especially over the state health reform. It was unsettling to know how easily some of our clients could lose basic health services.

From ACHI, I learned about the structure of the Massachusetts health system. I got to know about the different health insurance programs that ACHI assist clients to enroll in, the services and assistance they offered the clients and what makes a client eligible for the program or not. During my internship with the organization, I prepared for and participated in a number of health fairs and state health meetings. This experience taught me the practicality of outreach as a vital tool for the Early Intervention and Referral Program of ACHI.

Also, I prepared some reports and updates for community meetings, thereby improving on presentation skills and effective communication of ideas.

Working with ACHI was phenomenal! The staff was welcoming and they created a comfortable and close-knit atmosphere for working. I appreciated that they trusted me to manage certain responsibilities and were helpful at all times. They were pretty good teachers too! I also enjoyed my encounters with the board and community members who were supportive during the recent fundraising series ACHI held in August and October. For me, the vision of ACHI to create a healthier African community in Massachusetts is attainable. The organization's efforts are noble and before completing my internship, I already recommended the organization to several Africans I met in Boston and Cambridge, including the church I attended with a huge Nigerian population.





## Partnership Activities

### CAMBRIDGE YMCA HEALTH FAIR

On January 25th, 2010, ACHI participated in the Cambridge YMCA Health Fair. ACHI answered the questions of participants on health insurance, housing and food stamp/SNAP in addition to distributing health materials.

### NEW BOSTONIANS COMMUNITY DAY

As part of its effort at identifying with the community, five ACHI members were present at this year's New Bostonians community day celebration which was marked with pomp and pageantry on September 23rd, 2009. The event was celebrated at city hall in Boston. The occasion offered a wide variety of health-care educational information, health screening, massage and much more. The event also featured cultural dances and performance presented by immigrants from different part of the world.



CROSS SECTION OF PARTICIPANTS AT THIS YEAR'S NEW BOSTONIANS COMMUNITY DAY

### COOKOUT AT THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

The Apostolic Church organized a cookout and health education to its members on September 19th 2009. ACHI was invited to this event to educate the participants on health related issues and ways of securing access to the state health insurance program.

Five ACHI members, members of the church, their friends, neighbors and well-wishers all participated actively in the event. ACHI gave a talk on hypertension and hyperlipidemia. The event was interactive as members discussed health related matters freely.



HEALTH VENDORS AT MARTHA ELIOT HEALTH FAIR

### MARTHA ELIOT HEALTH CENTER HEALTH FAIR

On a bright Saturday morning of September 19th 2009, ACHI participated at an health fair organized by Martha Eliot Health Center in Jamaica Plain, Boston. The health fair was well-attended featuring different health screenings, including diabetes, breast cancer, vision, and blood pressure. The event also featured music, dance, food, drink and lots of freebies.

ACHI staff members in attendance used the occasion to reach out to many people through one-on-one conversations and by distributing health promotional information as well as sharing with them the organization's objectives.



## On-Going Activities

### SHAREWOOD PROJECT-MALDEN

Every Tuesday ACHI participates in health fairs organized by the Tufts University Medical School for the community of Malden and environs. There ACHI enrolls the uninsured in the Mass-Health program, assist clients with any problems related to their immigration status, and discusses health issues with participants.

### LAZARUS HOUSE

In ongoing visits to the Lazarus House in Lawrence, ACHI does health outreach work with clients. This includes providing clients with a variety of informative brochures including asthma care, HIV information, and child poisoning prevention information, among many others. Clients were assisted with MassHealth enrollment and encouraged to follow-up with the ACHI office.

### Board of Directors

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