

News

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LinCS 2 Durham provides opportunities for members of Black communities in Durham, North Carolina and scientists in the region to learn and work together to find new ways to prevent HIV. Read on to find out what's happening.

Upcoming Events

You're invited!

Please join the LinCS 2 Durham Collaborative Council (community members and LinCS 2 Durham staff) for our annual retreat in February and monthly meeting in March.

If interested, please contact Randy Rogers, a public health education specialist for the Durham County Health Department and coordinator of the LinCS 2 Durham Collaborative Council: rrogers@durhamcountync.gov (919) 560-7675. The details are below.

What: Collaborative Council annual retreat

When: Saturday, February 19, 2011
10:30 AM – 2:00 PM

Where: Stanford L. Warren Branch, Room 1
Durham County Public Library
1201 Fayetteville Street
Durham, NC 27707

[Get directions here.](#)

What: Collaborative Council meeting

When: Monday, March 14, 2011
6:00 – 8:00 PM

Where: Main Branch, 3rd Floor Conference Room
Durham County Public Library
300 North Roxboro Street

Durham, NC 27701
[Get directions here.](#)

Staff Profile: Kimberly Gibson-Hooks



Kimberly Gibson-Hooks (Photo: Amanda Lynn Elleby)

Growing up in Wilson, North Carolina, Kimberly Gibson-Hooks says she was aware of public health before she had a name for it. She describes her grandmother as being like a lay health worker for their community. “She was always asking the neighbors if they’d had proper screenings,” Kimberly says. “She’d remind them to go to the doctor, and if they needed a ride, she’d take them. She’s been a major inspiration to me.”

Kimberly says she loved watching medical dramas—especially *ER*. Gradually, she saw a connection between what the doctors on the show did to make people well and what her grandmother does to keep people healthy. “When I understood that there are things you can do to prevent hospital experiences like the ones you see on TV, that’s when I realized that public health is for me,” she says.

Kimberly is a senior majoring in public health education at North Carolina Central University. She’s been a member of the LinCS 2 Durham field staff since the summer of 2009.

Her first assignment for the project was ethnographic research, conducting observations with other field staff members in Durham night clubs, bars, restaurants—“any place we knew we would find Black people from 18 to 30, because that’s the project’s demographic.” Later she helped to lead focus groups, listening to young Black people discuss relationships and sexual activity.

This work, plus hours of training, was preliminary to a pilot survey that Kimberly and other field staff members began conducting this past November. After interviewing young Black Durham residents regarding their concerns about HIV, views about medical research, and their own

sexual attitudes and behavior, Kimberly collected their feedback on the experience of taking part in a pilot of the upcoming LinCS 2 Durham community survey—“finding out everything we can so that when the actual survey is done, it can be carried out properly.”

The survey is in the final stages of piloting, and Kimberly plans to check in with the team to find out how it’s going, although she’s stepping away from the LinCS 2 Durham project for the rest of this academic year to serve an internship for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She’s been assigned to work with the Centers for AIDS Research (CFAR) in the office of Community Outreach Dissemination and Education, on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Like LinCS 2 Durham, the internship will keep Kimberly in the sphere of community service, where her grandmother taught her to feel at home.

Point of View: Rhonda Royal Hatton

LinCS 2 Durham welcomes the chance to share the views of participants in the initiative. The opinions expressed here are those of the writer.

The Invisibility of Invincibility

Superheroes and demigods have fascinated societies for centuries. In Greek myth we’ve seen this in characters such as Hercules and Perseus. In history, as well, many great warriors and heroes of history deified themselves: think of Hannibal, Napoleon, and the pharaohs.

Humankind finds it intriguing and even mesmerizing to be godlike. To be able to leap over a building in a single bound or walk on water and through fire unharmed is a power idealized in the movies we see, the music we hear, and the video games we play. In the cartoons our children are watching, anvils and pianos may fall on the characters’ heads, but in the next instant, the cartoon figures are alive and scheming to get back at



Rhonda Royal Hatton, LinCS 2 Durham Collaborative Council member

their nemeses. Marvel and DC Comics have made fortunes on the creation of godlike creatures. From Superman to Natongo, Storm to Queen Divine Justice (Ce'Athauna Asira Davin), Wolverine to Spiderman, Wonder Woman to Queen Mother of Wakanda: the list goes on and on.

Given fantasies like these, no wonder my cousin Benjamin, when he was seven, put a towel around his neck and attempted to fly off my grandmother's stoop. He landed on a large bag of garbage that happened to have broken glass in it—a feat that won him a hospital visit and 30 stitches in his abdomen. Now as in the past, a false sense of invincibility permeates our communities, especially among the young. Risky behavior seems to be the norm rather than the exception.

Working with college students on a daily basis as a campus minister lets me be privy to their conversations about how they view life and—most importantly—how they view themselves in connection to others. At a time when you would think individuality would be promoted and celebrated, the young adults I listen to are still very much group-oriented and pressured to look and act like their peers. They are inundated with misogynistic videos, sexually explicit music, and fantastic super-heroism. I am sorry but not surprised that their rhetoric reveals these influences, reeking of sexual irresponsibility peppered with invincibility. What has been an eye-opener for me is that this attitude of insuperability plagues not only the youth in our society but also our communities at large. Many people who are well over 30 share it.

Famous rappers appeal to mature adults as well as the young with messages boasting of the times when they have seemingly cheated death and touting their invincibility. They promote sexual promiscuity and irresponsibility, urging women to have children by them without any commitments and luring the women with the possibility of becoming wealthy in the process. These messages help to explain some grim statistics:

- Nationally as of 2006, 1.1 million adults and adolescents were living with HIV, including those not yet diagnosed and those who had already progressed to AIDS*
- In North Carolina, 22,896 persons are living with HIV and 9,425 are living with AIDS**

Many people are wearing invisible cloaks of invincibility. I believe that we, as leaders in our communities, must educate as many as we can that the truth of the matter is that we are not invincible. We can and will die if we do not exercise sexual responsibility and protect ourselves and others. We all have a responsibility to ourselves, our families, our communities, our nation, and humankind. We are losing too many of our family members and friends to this preventable disease.

Rhonda Royal Hatton is the outreach and campus minister for North Carolina Central University and pastor of the Church of the Abiding Savior

(Lutheran). She is a member of the LinCS 2 Durham Collaborative Council. She is directing a production of The Vagina Monologues, which will be performed at NCCU on February 25 and 26, beginning at 7:30 PM. (For tickets call 919-530-5170.)

*[HIV prevalence estimates--United States, 2006](#). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. 2008 Oct 3;57(39):1073-6.

**AVERT. United States Statistics by State and City.
<http://www.avert.org/usa-states-cities.htm>. Accessed Feb 4, 2011.

HIV and Black America in the News

Prevention technology and social justice to be discussed

Recent positive results of clinical trials of a gel to prevent HIV in women and a pill to prevent HIV in men who have sex with men raise questions of access, ethics, and justice. The HIV Prevention Justice Alliance will convene an online discussion on Wednesday, February 16, from 3:30 to 5:30 PM with trial investigators, community advocates, and human rights activists. Click [here](#) to join the forum.

Interim guidelines issued for preventive use of HIV drugs

Related to the clinical trial results noted above, on January 28, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offered interim guidance for health care providers on the daily use of oral antiretroviral drugs for HIV prevention. The drugs are normally used to treat HIV. The CDC recommends the regimen only for men who have sex with men "whose behaviors place them at high risk for HIV infection and who do not use other prevention methods consistently." The guidance was reported in the CDC's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#).

Study looks at HIV knowledge, attitudes and beliefs among rural African-American men in Mississippi

Surveys of African-American men in Mississippi found that those in rural areas had significantly higher levels of knowledge about HIV and AIDS across all levels of education than did those in urban areas. Their beliefs and attitudes, however, were much the same. Researchers conducted the study to begin to build a body of measurable knowledge about the factors that put African-American men at risk of contracting and transmitting the virus. In the absence of such baseline data, they say, the "HIV/AIDS vulnerability among African American men is yet to be

calibrated and measured to specifically determine and design evidence-based AIDS intervention strategies for men of color.” For the full report, which the *Journal of the National Medical Association* published in December 2010, click [here](#).

National Black HIV Awareness Day mobilizes HIV testing

February 7, 2011 marks the eleventh observance of [National Black HIV Awareness Day](#)—a national HIV testing and treatment community mobilization initiative. To find out about activities in North Carolina, click [here](#).

Commentators look at AIDS 30 years into the epidemic

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the first AIDS diagnosis in the United States. On January 14, CNN aired [“AIDS in America,”](#) a special broadcast of interviews by Anderson Cooper covering the role that stigma plays in the spread of the epidemic and the promise of education, prevention, and medical breakthroughs to stop it. Phill Wilson, the executive director of the [Black AIDS Institute](#) and co-founder of [Greater Than AIDS](#), says that the silence about HIV in the Black community and poor access to care discourages early diagnosis, which is key to prevention. He tells Cooper, “Our house is on fire.” Greater Than AIDS invites people to comment online, sharing their deciding moments “to take a stand against HIV” [here](#).

Real Talk!

Be a part of the LinCS 2 Durham project

Join the conversation about ways to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in Durham’s Black communities. Please contact Natalie Eley, the LinCS 2 Durham study coordinator, to request information about the LinCS 2 Durham project and find out how to participate.

You’re also invited to share your knowledge with the LinCS 2 Durham project team. Tell us what you think about this effort. If you come across something interesting in the news related to HIV, send it to us. And let us know about local events that would be good opportunities to spread the word about LinCS 2 Durham. We thank you for your interest and help!

To reach Natalie, e-mail her at lincs2durham@fhi.org. Or get in touch with Randy Rogers: rogers@durhamcountync.gov; (919) 560-7675.

Join us online

Become a [Facebook](#) friend of LinCS 2 Durham! You can also follow us on [Twitter](#). The LinCS 2 Durham Web site (where you can learn about the project’s background, news, and events and find links to related resources) is [here](#). The Collaborative Council’s Web site (minutes of meetings, photo gallery, and a blog) is [here](#).

Contribute to the LinCS 2 Durham newsletter

Our purpose with this newsletter is to keep you informed about the project's many activities and accomplishments. The newsletter is also a forum for information that isn't part of the project but related to it:

- Articles from the news
- Community events with an HIV message
- Stories of the impact of HIV on you and your family, friends, and neighbors
- Suggestions to improve support for people living with HIV and AIDS and their caregivers
- Your ideas about ways to stop the spread of HIV in Durham

You deserve credit for your contributions to the newsletter. However, if you prefer to contribute confidentially, just let us know. In that case, we won't identify you as the source and we'll guard your anonymity.

The LinCS 2 Durham newsletter is a work in progress. We'd like to know what you think of it, so we can make it better.

E-mail us at lincs2durham@fhi.org.