

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Thursday, March 29, 2012

Contacts:
Rev. Derek Gatling, dvgatlingccop@verizon.net, 609-254-5100 (cell)
TK Rodgers, rodgersccop@verizon.net, 816-591-9318 (cell)

Camden Residents Celebrate the 2nd Anniversary of the ACA & Highlight Two New Local Health Initiatives

Camden, NJ – Today, March 29, 2012 community leaders from Camden Churches Organized for People (CCOP) joined together with over 200 Camden residents, faith leaders, state and federal officials, providers and community-based partners to highlight the positive benefits of the Affordable Care Act and to shine a light on two new community-driven health initiatives that are improving the health of Camden residents today.

“The Affordable Care Act set the stage for improvements to our broken health care system, declaring that quality, affordable health care is a right. Our local organizing teams have been working tirelessly to bring health reform home to Camden,” said Rev. Marilyn Dixon Hill, CCOP leader, “And today we are excited to announce the product of our organizing efforts.”

Resident-led organizing teams at Abigail House for Nursing and Rehabilitation and the Northgate I apartment building announced new partnerships and commitments to 1) improve care coordination between the hospital and after care and 2) improve asthma rates for young families. Both interventions seek to achieve the double-benefit of improving health outcomes for residents and lowering health care costs by reducing the number of emergency room visits in Camden.

The Abigail House team has developed a plan to:

- improve coordination with hospitals for recently discharged patients
- employ new training topics for nursing staff
- build relationships between isolated residents and Church-based Health Advocates

The Northgate I team has developed a plan to:

- provide bi-lingual education and resources on asthma prevention and management
- address environmental factors that have exacerbated the illness in residents
- open access to the Reliance medical center at the neighboring Northgate II building

Several partners shared their praise and commitments for the initiatives. “The strength of our community is prayer, but we need to put feet to our prayers. The church health advocate is another example of walking in our faith and bringing our faith into reality,” explained Pastor Heyward Wiggins III, Camden Bible Tabernacle. “Coordination of social services is just as important as coordination of clinical care. The two are inseparable,” added Carmen Acevedo, Social Worker of Abigail House.

“I came to Northgate I Apartment building expecting something. I just did not expect that I would contract a breathing problem, asthma, as the result,” shared Mary Parker, Northgate I resident and member of St. John Baptist Church. “I guess I should not be surprised since our building is located underneath the Ben Franklin Bridge. This new initiative gives me hope that we can improve our environment and the air that we breathe.”

“The Hispanic Family Center of Southern New Jersey has forged a partnership with CCOP and the residents of Northgate I to improve healthy lifestyles for residents. Our efforts will focus on asthma and HIV/AIDS prevention by

way of teaching individuals and families how they can prevent illness through behavior and environmental change and/or manage a chronic condition. This partnership is an excellent opportunity to reach individuals and families in the community and provide them the tools necessary to help them lead healthier lives,” said Elsa Candelario, Executive Director of Hispanic Family Center of South Jersey.

“Reliance has always believed that every U.S. citizen should have access to quality healthcare. We believe healthcare is a right not a privilege,” said Dr. Jon Regis, M.D., President of Reliance Medical Group.

“Our wonderful facility provides quality, caring skilled nursing and comprehensive therapy to enable a person to make a smooth, speedy recovery and live their life at their fullest potential. Abigail House recognizes the importance of continuation of care and the different areas we have already made a difference-our value of the involvement of the primary care physician and thus we have developed a strong relationship with Reliance and one of our attending physicians is a Reliance physician. Our social worker follows up with our discharges to make sure they do not decline, we are constantly reviewing our discharges to the hospital to see how to improve, we have put a medical reconciliation into place,” said Chaya Bleier, Owner of Abigail House.

Partners that have come together to support the initiatives so far include: Bayada, Camden Churches Organized for People, Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers, Hispanic Family Center of South Jersey, the owners and residents of Abigail House and Northgate I, and Reliance Medical Group.

“I am happy to be part of this project to help our community,” said Marc Wolfe, owner of Northgate I.

“In Camden, hospitals, primary care practices, social service and behavioral health organizations, and resident advocates work together to ensure that a patient's needs are understood and addressed as the patient moves across healthcare settings. This care coordination is an essential component of higher-quality and lower-cost care, particularly for patients who have complex medical and social needs,” said Megan Cunningham, Staff Attorney for Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers (CCHP).

"Coordination of care is all about partnership and strengthening health to improve a patient's quality of life. When it comes to healthcare, everyone deserves equal treatment; it's a right that we must preserve and protect," said Angel Fuentes, NJ Assemblyman, 5th District.

“The Affordable Care Act ends insurance abuses, provides access to care, expands coverage and puts health care into the hands of American families and businesses,” said Jaime Torres, Region II Director, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

“With the help of the Affordable Care Act and these new local health initiatives, we are working to improve the health care of Camden residents today,” concluded Chelsea Worlds, Abigail House resident and CCOP leader.

###

Camden Churches Organized for People (CCOP) represents 20 congregations and is a non-partisan faith-based community organization working to transform conditions for individuals and families in the city of Camden, NJ through the skillful development of local leaders, a disciplined organizing model rooted in the democratic process, and a profound commitment to the values our leaders and community share. CCOP is a non-partisan organization that does not endorse or oppose candidates. CCOP is a member of the PICO National Network.

PICO National Network is a faith-based organization comprised of more than 1,000 congregations and faith communities.

