

AFRICAN COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVES

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Learn about ACHI's Success at the Ethiopian Community Health Fair



ELIZABETH METEBAGHAFOH AT THE ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR

Originating in the minds of La-beza Alemu and Elizabeth Metebaghafoh (both members of ACHI), the Ethiopian Community Health Fair began as a shared vision

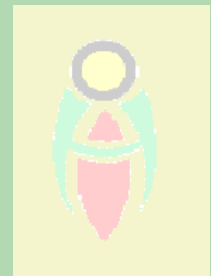
inspired by the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Holistic Ministry to improve health awareness in the Ethiopian community.

Sr. Elizabeth quickly partnered with Lisa Montuori of the Cambridge Health Alliance “to make [this] vision bigger.” With time, many more partners such as the Neighborhood Health Plan joined the endeavor.

Through much advertising such as: distributing fliers in churches and restaurants and making announcements on the Ethiopian radio, over a hundred clients arrived at the Peabody Elementary School on Saturday May 3rd, 2008 to attend the fair.

There were cholesterol screenings, blood pressure screenings, and several ACHI clients enrolled into MassHealth. Members of the Ethiopian community in Cambridge, Malden, Revere, Roxbury, Brookline, Boston, Brockton, Arlington, and Lynn were present. There was also plenty of Ethiopian dishes, dessert, and fresh fruits for all of the clients.

Those in attendance all agreed that the health fair enhanced the health awareness of Massachusetts's Ethiopian community.



Words from a Sponsor

“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 huge 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

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Meet ACHI's New Navigator

On Thursday, June 12th 2008
Joseph Adetowubo was interviewed
by Okezie Nwoka.

Nwoka: Can you speak a little
about your background?

Adetowubo: I am from Nigeria. I
graduated from the University of
Lagos with a degree in Mathematics
and Statistics. I live in Hyde Park
and I am employed by ACHI as a
health system navigator.

Nwoka: When did you become a
navigator?

Adetowubo: I joined ACHI in
March 2008. It has been a very good
experience. The majority of the people
I work with don't really know that
they can get health insurance because
of their immigration status. If you
ask them what they need to get en-
rolled, for example a passport or green
card, some of them will be reluctant to
give it to you until you explain to
them that it is not for the government

to punish them. They need for us to move
out... encouraging them and telling them
the reason why they have to get health in-
surance because it is not easy to pay the
bills in the hospital.

Nwoka: What is the most memorable
experience you have had with ACHI?

Adetowubo: Somebody walking up to us,
they don't have insurance, but after meeting
us they call back to tell you that they have
their health insurance card now...It gives
you joy; these are the people you go out
to...their happy to enroll in a health plan.
What could be better than that? People
know what ACHI is all about. They are
getting to know us and their enjoying the
benefits. They know that they have an
organization that they can come to if they
have any kind of problem concerning their
health.



JOSEPH ADETOWUBO IS ONE OF
ACHI'S HEALTH SYSTEM NAVI-
GATORS

“PEOPLE KNOW
WHAT ACHI IS ALL
ABOUT ... AND
THEY'RE ENJOYING
THE BENEFITS.”



MOSES FOFANAH, AN ACHI
HEALTH SYSTEMS NAVIGA-
TOR, AT THE 2008 MEN'S
HEALTH SUMMIT,

Cameroon Cultural Day

ACHI co-sponsored the
Cameroon Cultural Day on
June 7th 2008. The event
hosted over 200 people of
Cameroonian descent and took
place at the Jin restaurant in
Saugus, Massachusetts.

Two ACHI staff member
spoke to the large crowd gath-
ered about ACHI's mission
and explained how ACHI
connects immigrants from the
African continent to health

resources and social services.

There were live perform-
ances, cultural dancing, and
plenty of African dishes for
those present.

ACHI disseminated many
brochures and several health
education information to the
clients. Overall, the event was
a major success for both
ACHI and the Cameroonian
community.



MARIE KONG, AN ACHI INTERN,
SPEAKING WITH A PARTICIPANT OF
THE CAMEROON CULTURAL DAY.





ACHI's Impact on a Client's Life

Mary Nimely is a 76 year old Liberian woman and a beloved client of the ACHI community. She left her restaurant in her home country over 20 years ago to live in the United States as a child care taker. However, after falling very ill she was unable to continue her job. Mary suffered from high blood pressure, dental issues, diabetes, a stroke, and is now awaiting a knee operation. To add to her health complications, Mary does not have a phone line or any means of transportation, making it extremely difficult for her to maintain contact with her health care providers.

This is where ACHI intervened. Sr. Elizabeth Metebaghafoh, ACHI's Program Director, immediately arranged for taxis to drive both her and Mary to Mary's scheduled appointments and later contacted the Boston Medical Center Health Net Plan to provide Mary with free transportation. To this day ACHI provides Mary with free dental services, food via the Boston Medical Center pantry, immigration assistance, and other social services

Sr. Elizabeth also became the liaison to Mary's health care providers. Mary energetically recalls Sister Elizabeth "helping me stay in contact with [the] hospital. [She] helped to get my medication at the pharmacy...Last week she carried me to the hospital to get my surgery. She stands by me, anything I want she gets it for me. Anywhere I want to go she carries me."

ACHI plays a vital role in sustaining Mary's faith. Sister Elizabeth prays with her



MARY NIMELY HAS BEEN AN ACHI CLIENT FOR OVER TWO YEARS.

The African Community Health Initiative (ACHI) is a 501 c 3 organization (non-profit) that was founded in 2000 to improve the health of the African community in Massachusetts. ACHI's mission is to support and improve the health of Africans living in Massachusetts by promoting access to quality, culturally competent health and social services through education, research and community partnerships.

and drives her to church when Mary feels she is able to attend. Sr. Elizabeth asserts, "I decided as part of my work to pray with Mary so that she can continue to maintain her own personal relationship with God."

Mary deeply appreciates the presence of ACHI in her life. She believes that ACHI provides these services because of their genuine devotion to helping others. As her face lit up with a smile, Mary described her appreciation for Sr. Elizabeth saying, "I am very very very grateful. I am happy with Sr. Elizabeth. I am free to Sr. Elizabeth. Anything she does for me I am very very happy. Right now I consider her as my *first* daughter. I take my heart and I give it to her."



Member's Corner

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OF MASSACHUSETTS'
OFFICE OF MEDICAID



African Community
Health Initiatives



Looking back from 2006, ACHI has

achieved a lot. It has been astonishing that we have been able to help Africans in accessing health and other social service like immigration, food stamps, and housing. Our approach is a holistic approach meaning that we do not only focus on health issues but on the whole person. I physically have to take some clients to the medical/immigration centers to facilitate their ability to access quality health care/social services, and sometimes that means taking a cab since some of them are

financially unable pay their way to these centers.

ACHI is involved in the health care reform through outreach and enrollment. Africans who would normally not be enrolled are now enrolled because we have similar cultures and they have come to trust ACHI. We have enrolled and encouraged a numerous amount people into Mass-Health program.

Our work has changed a lot of people's lives for the better. We want people to be healthy. It puts a smile on people's faces to know that there is an organization like ours that genuinely reaches out to others for their benefit. We at ACHI are grateful to all our clients,

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ACHI in the Community

On April 11, 2008, ACHI participated in the Breast cancer Awareness Day at the Massachusetts state house. ACHI staff presented its programs to many participants of this event, emphasizing the importance of health care for immigrants and disseminating health educational and enrollment information.

ACHI was among organizations honored during the Veterans Clearinghouse's 10th Annual Appreciation Brunch on May 21st at the Dudley Library, which celebrated individuals and organizations that are combating health disparities, HIV/AIDS, homelessness, domestic violence, and other public health issues.

ACHI also attended the 2008 Men's Health Summit and disseminated ACHI/ health enrollment brochures and other health information. The ACHI staff members present, spoke with several dozen participants about the objectives of ACHI.