

Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

Written by Matthea Little Smith
Friday, 10 July 2009 16:06

In May 2008 the US House of Representatives proclaimed July as Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. The resolution, sponsored by Rep. Albert Wynn [D-MD] and cosponsored by a large bipartisan group, was passed in recognition that:

- Improved access to mental health treatment and services and public awareness of mental illness are of paramount importance;
- There is an important need for improved access to care, treatment, and services for those diagnosed with severe and persistent mental health disorders and improved public awareness of mental illness; and
- An appropriate month should be recognized as Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month to enhance public awareness of mental illness and mental illness among minorities.

This proclamation has been a critical first step in legitimizing the need to raise the awareness of mental health issues in communities of color. As the African American Outreach Director and the staff person responsible for NAMI Minnesota's African American Faith Initiative, I have worked to begin to end the external and internal myths and stigmas attached to mental illness in our community. It is critical that we have an awareness of our own personal mental health and the resources we need to address the mental illnesses that affect our lives and the lives of our families and friends.

In celebration of National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, NAMI Minnesota's Twin Cities African American Outreach programming will host three educational workshops at our offices, 800 Transfer Road in, St. Paul. Minnesota. We will also partner with Project Voice to host an African American Mental Health and Information Night at Hallie Q. Brown Community Center in St. Paul.

NAMI Minnesota's African American Outreach programming offers information and support on current research and works to provide information for to people living with a mental illness, their families, and professionals. Our programming is designed to meet the specific needs of the African American community. unique in that these education workshops are designed to reflect the informational needs of each individual organization we work with. We also will help organizations initiate peer support groups for parents and families members of a person living with a mental illness and people living with a mental illness.

This column is the first of Insight News monthly columns on mental health issues in the African American community. This column will strives to provide our community with the much needed information on mental health and to also answer any questions you may have on resources available in your area. Next month, our discussion will be on depression in the African American community. To obtain get more information on any of the Minority Mental Health Awareness Month activities or to schedule an education workshop at your organization please call me, Matthea Little Smith, at 651-645-2948 x 108 or e-mail me at msmith1@nami.org.

Resource Fair:

Wednesday, July 29th, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Hallie Q Brown Community Center, 270 Kent St., Saint Paul. The fair will provide information on culturally specific mental health resources

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and will feature a panel of mental health providers to answer some of your questions related to mental illness.

Children's Challenging Behaviors

Saturday, July 18th – 8:45 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. 800 Transfer Road, St. Paul, MN
Learn the five essential tasks to build confidence in your parenting skills, improve the relationship with your child and help create balance in your life. This six-6 hour workshop is for parents and caregivers of school- age children. Classes limited to 20 participants.

Hope for Recovery

Saturday, July 25th – 8:45 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. 800 Transfer Road, St. Paul, MN
Spend a Saturday with a trained family member who will offer information, hope and practical strategies for dealing with the complexities of mental illness. Participants learn information about: mental illnesses, treatments and recovery, coping strategies, about the mental health system, and local resources. Classes limited to 20 participants.

Myths and Stigmas

Monday, July 13th – 6:3 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. 800 Transfer Road, St. Paul, MN
This workshop addresses the mental health myths, stigmas and disparities and provides opportunities for family members and professionals to learn more about the programs and additional resources offered by NAMI Minnesota. Classes limited to 20 participants.

When Crisis Occurs (Family)

Monday, July 20th - 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. 800 Transfer Road, St. Paul, MN
Preparing for an emergency or a crisis is an individualized process and differs for every family. There are, however, some elements that are common. This workshop will focus on those commonalities and help families plan and prepare for a mental health crisis. Classes limited to 20 participants.

Preparing for an emergency or mental health crisis is important to ensure a good outcome. While each crisis plan is different, there are common elements. This workshop will explain the options, common elements and help families plan and prepare for a crisis.