

**CEO Memo – December**

Whittier Street Health Center wishes you and yours the very best during this holiday season!

We are happy to be closing the year with wonderful health education events and wellness promotion activities.



**Frederica Williams with Pastor Ellis Washington (Honoree)**

On November 23, we held our 11th annual Saving the Health of Our Community International Gospel Concert at the Berklee Performance Center. Dr. Bobby Jones, host and executive producer of BET's Bobby Jones Gospel, once again served as our esteemed Special Guest Master of Ceremonies. This year, we honored Pastor Ellis Washington of the Grant A.M.E. Church, and Latoiya Edwards of NECN. The evening's performances linked the audience with the health center's focus on utilizing the arts as therapy. Whittier's Arts Therapy Department offers individual and group art therapy, music therapy, drama therapy, and expressive arts therapy. Our arts therapists are Licensed Mental Health Counselors (LMCHs) who work with children, adolescents, and adults at Whittier, in schools, at domestic violence shelters, and in nursing homes.



**Deborah Kelly, Sonja Kelly (Honoree), and Frederica Williams**

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December 2 was the Women for Whittier (W4W) Holiday Tea, which focused on heart disease in women. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the US and kills more women than men annually. Women in the communities we serve have higher rates of heart disease than men. Among Whittier's patients diagnosed with heart disease, 56.4% are women. At W4W, Sonja Kelly was also honored for her leadership in women and children's issues as the Managing Director of the Kelly Family Foundation and as a Whittier Board member. Afterwards, renowned stress relief speaker and comedian Loretta LaRoche gave an amusing yet profound presentation about the ways for women to avoid stress, which can raise the risk of heart disease. The evening's laughter was a start!



### Attendees and Whittier staff release balloons for World AIDS Day

On December 4, we held World AIDS Day at the health center to celebrate our unity in the fight against HIV/AIDS, and to commemorate those who have lost their lives to the deadly virus. Dr. Anita Barry, Director of the Infections Disease Bureau at the Boston Public Health Commission, came to talk about Boston's evolving response to HIV/AIDS since the first outbreak up to the present. Afterwards, Whittier staff, patients, and other community members who have been touched by HIV went outside to release red balloons in honor of those living with HIV. Whittier is proud of the passionate and compassionate team in its HIV Services Department, who implement Whittier's unified model of care that integrates primary care with public health prevention to lessen the burden of HIV in Boston's underserved and minority communities. Our HIV department works with our primary care clinics to optimize prevention and care continuum (early detection, treatment adherence, retention in care, viral load suppression and decreased hospitalizations).



### Whittier's patients at the senior luncheon

On December 5, Whittier held a Community Wellness Holiday Celebration luncheon for our senior patients to engage them at a time when they may experience social isolation—according to the Administration on Aging, about 29% of the elderly lived alone in 2010. For Whittier's holiday event, Whittier leaders and staff were on hand to increase socialization and interaction for our geriatric patients, and to encourage them to protect themselves against the flu and falls, which are common issues for their age group. They also received educational materials about HIV, which is on the rise among the elderly. The seniors warmed up with Ken Nwosu of Bay State Physical Therapy, enjoyed catered food, and participated in raffle drawings. Each patient received a pill box and a gift card as presents from Whittier. We had an impressive turnout and senior patients had a lot of warm and positive feedback about the event!

Our Building Vibrant Communities Program has now reached over 1,000 participants! The program engages public housing residents in wellness activities such as Zumba classes and nutrition lessons. Participants are also assessed for psychosocial issues and referred to the Behavioral Health Department for programs such as DecisionArts for young women affected by violence and Defending Childhood for children who are survivors of trauma. The youth and adults who are participating have seen impressive improvements in their overall health and stress levels. "I have told everyone I know about how to have fun and stay health by participating in Building Vibrant Communities," said one participant.

With the Affordable Care Act effecting change in many Massachusetts health care programs in 2014, Whittier's front-line providers and community outreach staff are working hard and targeting hard-to-reach populations so they can be connected to the health care system. We are also emphasizing health education by discussing the benefits of building a healthy lifestyle at any age and by promoting wellness and disease prevention.

As always, it is a pleasure keeping you updated about our work here at Whittier. I look forward to sharing more great news about community health in the new year. Please visit our website, [www.wshc.org](http://www.wshc.org), as well as our Facebook and Twitter pages, for more details about our programs and services. Thank you again for supporting Whittier Street Health Center.