



**EMPOWERING HARLEMITES  
REBUILDING COMMUNITIES**

*established  
1986*

## **HARLEM CONGREGATIONS FOR COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT, INC.**

2854 Frederick Douglass Blvd, New York, NY 10039 • (212) 281-4887 Tel • (212) 281-8102 Fax • [www.hcci.org](http://www.hcci.org)

***For Immediate Release***  
December 2, 2008

Contact: Moikgantsi Kgama  
212-694-2887, [mpk@imagination.us](mailto:mpk@imagination.us)

### **Amidst Tough Times, HCCI's Health & Wellness Division Continues to Grow!**

New York, NY -- Since its inception in 1986, Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement, Inc. (HCCI) has been at the vanguard of health education and outreach in the Harlem community. Recently, the agency received two boons to further its initiatives. One, HCCI was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Aetna Foundation to develop a pilot program to educate our community residents on the impact of heart attacks and strokes in Central Harlem. And the other, HCCI's MaNtsetse Kgama was chosen as a fellow in the prestigious Institute for HIV Prevention Leadership Program (IHLP).

HCCI Director of Health & Wellness Strategies and Scattered Site Housing, Richard Ferreira, is excited about the new opportunities and looks forward to developing his programs aimed at preventing health disparity in the Harlem community.

"We at HCCI have consistently worked to address health education and outreach needs in this community," said Ferreira. "To be awarded support at a time when resources are scarce and community needs continue to grow, is exactly the type of encouragement and support we need to continue to serve this community."

Ferreira and his staff have worked consistently to address the needs of Central Harlem. When Richard Ferreira joined HCCI as the Director of Education and Outreach. He soon assumed the responsibility of stewarding HCCI's 60-unit Scattered Housing Program for people living with HIV/AIDS. While managing these two entities, he noticed a dire need for more health education and outreach service than the agency was providing. And that's when he started to build. Ferreira launched the successful SISTA program through which HCCI partnered with local congregations to teach women about HIV/AIDS prevention strategies. In a six-month period, more than 190 interfaith and community women received the SISTA Project intervention. He's working to develop BROTHA, to teach HIV/AIDS prevention to men. And now, the Aetna grant will enable HCCI to branch out and address other health issues.

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Slated to start this month, the goal of the new Aetna funded initiative is to recruit 400 participants to attend a host of educational workshops on identifying indicators of heart attack and stroke and develop healthy strategies to increase and sustain healthy life styles. HCCI will work closely with Mother Zion AME Church and other local congregations in presenting these health education initiatives.

“MaNtsetse will be facilitating the workshops that Aetna is supporting. She’s a very adept public speaker and instructor. And, now that she’s been selected for the leadership development program, as our outreach program grows, she’ll soon be ready to assume more responsibility for those efforts,” said Ferreira who is a 2005 alumni of IHPL.

IHPL is a nine-month professional development and capacity-building program designed specifically for HIV prevention programs at community-based organizations. Participants are required to attend four, week-long training sessions in Atlanta, GA. Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, through a cooperative agreement with the Association of Schools of Public Health, the costs for participant travel, lodging, and meals during the trainings in Atlanta are arranged and paid for by the Institute.

Kgama attended Barnard College at Columbia University where she earned a degree in Political Science. Prior to joining HCCI, she served as a Prevention Case Manager and Presenter at AIDS Community Resources located in Syracuse, NY. Kgama is currently enrolled in post-baccalaureate courses at City College and plans to pursue a Masters degree in Public Health.

“This is an exciting opportunity,” said Kgama. “Health education and outreach marries my desire for social justice with my interest in community health. I’m looking forward to participating in the Institute, and acquiring new skills and contacts to help further HCCI’s progress in HIV Prevention.”

HCCI is a diverse interfaith consortium of more than 90 congregations established to revitalize the physical, economic, cultural, and spiritual conditions of the Harlem community. HCCI has made a substantial impact on the social and living conditions prevalent in Harlem by developing low to moderate income housing; creating supportive health and human service facilities and programs; providing commercial development opportunities to local businesses; and expanding cultural programs. Through its division of Health and Wellness Strategies, HCCI is committed to assisting families and individuals living with HIV/AIDS by providing housing, group support, cultural and recreational services. This division also provides advocacy and prevention programs for the general Harlem community.

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