

## Health Literacy Month



### In the Hospital

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— Ella Williamson

#### It is hard to think about health care when your basic life needs are not being met.

“Health is not a main concern for many people,” says Ella Williamson. “Their main concern is getting jobs or feeding their families.”

Williamson is the director of the African-American Health Information and Resource Center at St. Joseph's/Candler Hospital in Savannah, Georgia. The center helps people meet their basic needs first. Then it helps them with their health care needs.

“Our programs get people in the door. Here, they can learn computer skills to help get better jobs. That can help them afford health insurance later on,” Williamson explains. “If they need help feeding their families,

we can refer them to our case manager and give them a resource guide that shows where to go. But the guide also tells them how to prepare food in a healthful way.”

The center targets African Americans. But its doors are open to anyone who needs help getting health care.

People of all ages can take part in programs such as women's fitness clubs and children's puppet shows that teach health lessons. There is a resource library with videos and reading materials that are written at a fifth-grade level, which use pleasing photos and colors to highlight culturally relevant health information. The center publishes and distributes local health guides on topics such as where to go in the neighborhoods for exercise, food, clothing, hot meals, shelter and medical help.

The center also has free health screenings (such as blood pressure readings) and “wisdom-gathering” sessions. At these sessions, people can talk in a friendly and relaxing environment about the health issues that affect them and their family members. This helps Williamson ensure that people are improving their health literacy and are learning about their health issues.

“Health care can be tough to understand. And low health literacy does not mean low intelligence,” says Williamson. “A lot of people are embarrassed. That's why they don't ask questions. We need to keep the facts simple so people feel comfortable.”

The center hopes all of these efforts will help everyone in the community. The goal is to get people to make timely health decisions.

“If you can read and understand health information, you can sit down and figure out what you need to do to take care of yourself,” Williamson says.

Overall, Williamson would like the center's activities to create community health activists.

“I believe that all humans can reflect, learn, grow and teach others,” she says. “I hope to see our program's participants out in our community putting a voice to these health issues. I want them to use it, share it and make a difference.”

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			<b>1</b> 1996: Lt. Gen. Joe Ballard becomes first black to head the Army Corps of Engineers.	<b>2</b> 2000: James Perkins Jr. sworn in as Selma, Alabama's, first African American mayor. 2005: August Wilson, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, dies.	<b>3</b> 1956: Nat "King" Cole becomes first black performer to host his own TV show.	<b>4</b> 1864: First black daily newspaper, <i>The New Orleans Tribune</i> , founded.
<b>5</b> 1872: Booker T. Washington enters Hampton Institute, Virginia.	<b>6</b> 1917: Political activist Fannie Lou Hamer born.	<b>7</b> 1934: Playwright-poet Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) born. 1993: Toni Morrison becomes the first African American to win the Nobel Prize in literature.	<b>8</b> <b>Yom Kippur Begins (sundown)</b> 1941: Rev. Jesse Jackson, political activist and civil rights leader, born.	<b>9</b> 1888: O.B. Clare patents trestle. 2001: Dr. Ruth Simmons, first African American leader of an Ivy League institution, elected 18th president of Brown University.	<b>10</b> 1899: Isaac R. Johnson patents bicycle frame.	<b>11</b> 1887: Granville T. Woods patents telephone system and apparatus. 1887: Alexander Miles patents elevator.
<b>12</b> 1904: Physician and scholar W. Montague Cobb born. 2005: C. Delores Tucker, civil rights activist and founder of the National Black Congress, dies.	<b>13</b> <b>Columbus Day Observed</b> 1579: Martin de Porres, first black saint in the Roman Catholic church, born. 1876: Meharry Medical College founded, established as the Meharry Medical Department of Central Tennessee College.	<b>14</b> 1964: At age 35, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. becomes youngest man to win Nobel Peace Prize.	<b>15</b> 1991: Clarence Thomas confirmed as an associate justice of U.S. Supreme Court.	<b>16</b> 1984: Bishop Desmond Tutu wins Nobel Peace Prize. 1995: The Million Man March for "A Day of Atonement" takes place in Washington, D.C.	<b>17</b> 1888: Capital Savings Bank of Washington, D.C., first bank for blacks, organized.	<b>18</b> 1948: Playwright Ntozake Shange, author of <i>For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Is Enuf</i> , born.
<b>19</b> 1943: Paul Robeson opens in <i>Othello</i> at the Shubert Theater in New York City.	<b>20</b> 1898: The first black-owned insurance company, North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Co., founded.	<b>21</b> 1917: Trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, pioneer of bebop, born.	<b>22</b> 1953: Clarence S. Green becomes first black certified in neurological surgery.	<b>23</b> 1947: NAACP petitions United Nations on racial conditions in the U.S.	<b>24</b> <b>United Nations Day</b> 1980: Judge Patrick Higginbotham finds Republic National guilty in discrimination case. 2005: Rosa Parks, civil rights pioneer who sparked 1955 Montgomery bus boycott, dies.	<b>25</b> 1992: Toronto Blue Jays manager Cito Gaston becomes first African American to manage a team to a World Series title.
<b>26</b> 1911: Mahalia Jackson, gospel singer, born.	<b>27</b> 1891: D.B. Downing, inventor, is awarded a patent for the street letter box. 1954: Benjamin O. Davis Jr. becomes first black general in U.S. Air Force.	<b>28</b> 1981: Edward M. McIntyre elected first African American mayor of Augusta, Georgia. 1998: President Bill Clinton declares HIV/AIDS a health crisis in racial minority communities.	<b>29</b> 1949: Alonzo G. Moron becomes first black president of Hampton Institute, Virginia.	<b>30</b> 1979: Richard Arrington elected first African American mayor of Birmingham, Alabama.	<b>31</b> <b>Halloween</b> 1896: Actress, singer Ethel Waters born. 1899: William F. Burr patents switching device for railways.	