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PASTORS' WIVES ENCOURAGE HEALTH, WELLNESS IN COMMUNITIES OF COLOR ACROSS ORANGE COUNTY

First Ladies Health Initiative, sponsored by Walgreens, continues May 22

(Orange County) – The statistics are beyond alarming. Cases of sexually-transmitted diseases in the United States have reached all-time highs, with California leading the nation. African Americans account for an estimated 44% of all new HIV infections among adults and adolescents. African-American and Latino communities also suffer from a higher prevalence of preventable, systemic illnesses – such as hepatitis, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and certain forms of cancer.

The First Ladies Health Initiative is a consortium of more than 100 pastors' wives (First Ladies) from across the U. S. assembled to confront these troubling health disparities. During its First Ladies Health Days, houses of worship representing all denominations in four major metropolitan areas will open their doors to the community to provide free medical testing for a variety of illnesses and conditions. Since the program began in 2008, nearly 200,000 medical and health tests have been performed and many lives have been saved.

The 2016 United for Healthier Communities campaign continues in Orange County with First Ladies Health Day on Sunday, May 22. (The campaign kicked off in Los Angeles on April 10.) First Ladies Health Day in Orange County will be hosted by six First Ladies who represent congregations of approximately 5,000 people. Together, they are utilizing their collective influence to stage a citywide health takeover, directing their communities to get tested, know their health status and actively participate in wellness programs.

"In many communities, the church serves a multitude of purposes, including 'hospital' for the spiritually downtrodden; so, it is a natural fit to open the doors of the church to offer these health services, empowering attendees of all ages to declare war on these systemic, chronic and often deadly medical issues," said First Lady Reverend Mia Whitlock, Christ Our Redeemer Church, Orange County's largest African Methodist Episcopal church; and First Ladies Health Day chair in Orange County.

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First Ladies Health Day-OC/2

Other participating Orange County churches include: Brown Temple CME, Friendship Baptist Church, Johnson Chapel AME, Reach Community Church, and Second Baptist Church.

“We are excited to bring healthcare access to Orange County for the second consecutive year,” said Tiffany Huynh, Pharm.D, Area Healthcare Supervisor, Walgreens. “Our pharmacists are looking forward to bringing awareness to the most prevalent health conditions found in these communities, such as diabetes, hypertension and breast cancer.”

“Our stores are proudly located at the corner of happy and healthy, and what better place to connect with our customers than through the First Ladies Health Day which promotes happy families and healthy options,” said John Gremer, director of Community Relations, Walgreens.

Tracey Alston, executive director of the First Ladies Health Initiative, expressed the main goal of the program: “The First Ladies Health Initiative is a one-of-its-kind effort that positions the church as the nucleus for large- scale health and wellness outreach. Ultimately, we want to empower minority and low-income communities with the essential healthcare resources so they can take control of their health. It is crucial that these communities have access to health information and medical experts, as well as free health tests which can sometimes cost hundreds of dollars.”

Additional participating health partners and volunteers for First Ladies Health Day include: Walgreens pharmacists, AltaMed, the Alzheimer’s Association, the American Diabetes Association, CareMore, Cedars-Sinai, City of Hope, and Susan G. Komen®. For more information on the First Ladies Health Days or a full list of participating churches and their First Ladies, please visit: FirstLadiesHealth.com; or call 213-394-0844.

About the First Ladies Health Initiative

The First Ladies Health Initiative is held annually in metropolitan areas across the U.S., including Chicago, Gary, Ind., Los Angeles, and Orange County, Calif. It is designed to bring awareness to illnesses that disproportionately affect African Americans, Latinos and low-income communities. The program kicks off with a luncheon attended by nearly 200 pastors’ wives who receive information from medical professionals on how to educate their communities about various illnesses. The program culminates with First Ladies Health Day, the largest health day of its kind in the nation. Chicago’s Danielle Ashley Group manages the program on behalf of Walgreens, a member of the Walgreens Boots Alliance. More information is available at www.firstladieshealth.com.

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First Ladies Health Initiative
