

**Organization:** Western North Carolina AIDS Project

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**County:** Buncombe**Address:** P.O. Box 2411  
Asheville, N.C. 28802**Phone:** 828-252-7489**Website:** <http://www.wncap.org/>**Project:** Educational Sessions for SISTA Program***\*\*Below are excerpts from their final report\*\****

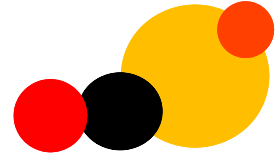
**About the Project:** N.C. Healthy Start Foundation grant funds were used to plan and implement a convening of church members, clergy and lay leaders in Buncombe County. The primary goals of “Straight Talk to the Churches about HIV/AIDS: A faith-based program for ministers and their congregations” were to inspire participants to embrace HIV/AIDS prevention as a topic to be addressed within the context of the faith community, and to inform participants on ways that WNCAP can assist them in bringing HIV/AIDS prevention programming into their churches/houses of worship.

Three major organizations of African American ministers in the area helped plan this community project. They were: Mud Creek Ministerial Alliance, Asheville Buncombe County Christian Ministry, and Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance Association.

WRES (107.4) Gospel radio station in Asheville and surrounding areas made public service announcements to reach an estimated 6,500 listeners in the Asheville area. Umoja, Talk Show, WRES (107.4) held two 30 minute programs featuring SISTA facilitators as an additional outreach strategy related to this project.

As a result of communication with leaders of the Asheville-Buncombe Community Christian Ministry (ABCCM) related to planning this convening, a group of eight women living in an ABCCM homeless shelter enrolled and completed the SISTA small group program during the grant period. SISTA is an evidence-based behavioral intervention for African American women that consists of five two-hour sessions covering topics such as assertiveness, negotiation skills and cultural pride, as well as information about HIV/AIDS and prevention methods.

**Successes:** We recognize the importance of mobilizing faith-based organizations around HIV/AIDS prevention if real gains are to be made in reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS in the region, particularly on members of the African American community. This project had value because of the convening and the excellent speakers who inspired and encouraged participants to be active on this issue, but it also had value in terms of helping to build relationships between WNCAP Education staff and influential members of the African American faith community. The affects of those relationships will extend well beyond this reporting period as personal relationships build the foundation for future collaborative programming. We expect to enroll at least three groups of women and girls in SISTA programs held in



churches and other places of worship this year, with informal peer education as one significant byproduct of that process.