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## **New Outreach Initiative Brings Message of Donation to Barbershops**

LifeSource and Southside Community Health Services utilize community gathering space to promote continued discussion of health-related issues

**ST. PAUL, MN** — LifeSource and Southside Community Health Services/Q Health Connections are embarking on a new outreach initiative to bring the message of organ and tissue donation to Twin Cities African American men by utilizing the community's natural gathering place – the barbershop. The new program has the potential to reach more than 1,500 African American men through 98 barbers in 26 barbershops in the Twin Cities and Rochester.

The goal of the Barbershop Initiative is to further increase donation rates in the African American community, specifically among African American men. Men, in general, are less likely to designate themselves as organ and tissue donors and this is especially true of African American men. Additionally, African American men are more likely to be at risk for organ-failing disease such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity.

The new initiative includes a culturally specific community-based education approach with barbers serving as trusted messengers providing education for their clients. Barbers will be trained on a variety of health topics by three community educators; liver recipient Warren Edwards, kidney recipient Kevin Jenkins and behavior consultant Sam Simmons. The primary attitudes and misconceptions that have been identified as keeping African American men from designating themselves as organ and tissue donors will be addressed.

Clarence Jones, Community Outreach Director at Southside, comments "Using a holistic approach and incorporating education on a variety of health-related topics – including diabetes, hypertension, nutrition, obesity and organ and tissue donation – will eventually allow us and our community partners to eliminate health disparities and the disproportionate number of people of color on the transplant waiting list."

The Barbershop Initiative comes on the heels of a successful two-year media-based campaign to increase organ and tissue donation rates in the Twin Cities African American community. After two years of work, and with guidance from the community, the donation rate in the African American community increased from less than 30% in 2004 to 64% as of August 2007.

*Southside Community Health Services is dedicated to providing quality health care in a welcoming, barrier-free environment and promoting the health and well-being of patients, staff and the community.*

*LifeSource is the non-profit organization dedicated to saving lives through organ and tissue donation in the Upper Midwest. The LifeSource service area consists of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and portions of western Wisconsin.*

*The mission of the Pan African Community Endowment is to strengthen the Pan African community by promoting philanthropy in a manner that reflects our history, culture and traditions. In carrying out its mission, the Pan African Community Endowment seeks to work in collaboration with the community to develop a sense of ownership and self-determination.*

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