

Posted on Wed, May. 23, 2007

## Teaching about cancer is her goal

Patricia Turner takes education, resources to minority community.

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Turner: Is president of FWAACA

For Patricia Turner, it's all about helping people learn how to live longer and healthier lives.

She knows that, when it comes down to it, if you don't have good health, you can't do the things you want to in life.

"It's always at the forefront of my thinking that I need to be vigilant about my health care and the health care of disparities and of women," Turner said.

As board president of Fort Wayne African American Cancer Alliance (FWAACA) for the past three years, Turner has embraced the opportunity to take her vigilance into the community to the people who need it.

FWAACA, 2135 S. Hanna St., is a nonprofit affiliate organization of the National Black Leadership Initiative on Cancer. FWAACA's mission is "to educate, advocate and collaborate to work towards the elimination of cancer in the African-American/Black community in our lifetime."

FWAACA is working with other local organizations, such as Cancer Services of Allen County, Women's Cancer Center, Francine's Friends and a number of area churches and hospitals, to bring education and resources directly to the Fort Wayne area, Turner said.

Knowing a very large number of people are uninsured or underinsured, Turner said it is important to educate people about truth and options.

"Cancer is not a death sentence," Turner explained. "In communities of color, there's this myth that if you have cancer, you are going to die. Well, we want people to know that's not the case."

Most recently with FWAACA, Turner received training to teach classes on how to quit smoking, which she plans to offer in a six-week course at the Lafayette Medical Center, 2700 S. Lafayette St. Since there is a particularly high incidence of tobacco-related cancers in communities of color, Turner hopes the class will draw a lot of interest in Fort Wayne.

Turner's work with the alliance began when it was founded 11 years ago. Her commitments to the organization have since included volunteer work, membership on the advisory board and serving as program coordinator.

Currently, her work includes facilitating presentations for the organization's Down Home Healthy Living program, which promotes concepts for healthy eating and nutrition. She meets regularly with small groups, where she provides information on cancer screenings and how they can reduce the risks involved with a cancer diagnosis.

Long before her work with the alliance, Turner served several roles with the Fort Wayne Women's Bureau because of her passion for people and her concerns for women — particularly for women of color. Those roles included director of education and training and director of rape awareness.

For the past seven years, Turner also worked as program director for Covering Kids and Families, an out-reach and advocacy program, where her goal was to increase access for women and children to children's health insurance programs. Her full-time work for the program ended in December when the grant for programming ended, but she continues to work independently on a part-time basis as a community volunteer and advocate.

She also serves on the board of United Way of Allen County and was elected to the Wayne Township Advisory Board in November.

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***More on FWAACA***

*The Fort Wayne African- American Cancer Alliance is always looking for new members. For more information, call 745-1600 or visit [www.fwaaca.com](http://www.fwaaca.com) on the Web.*

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