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## Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: Prostate Cancer Ambassadors for Caswell County-Project Update

By CED Guest Author

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Prostate Cancer Ambassadors for Caswell County, a project supported by the CCP small grants program, is moving forward with its effort to build local community capacity for addressing prostate cancer disparities within the faith community. On November 30, 2010, the project kicked off its first steering committee meeting at the Caswell County Health Department, welcoming members including the project's new graduate assistant Shira Goldman. Members representing the health department, two local medical practices, non-profits, and affiliate churches of the Cedar Grove Baptist Association held lively discussions which included the topic of selecting individuals within the faith community to serve as Ambassadors and the charge of Ambassadors to provide prostate cancer education to others in the community. Although the Ambassadors will be primarily recruited within the African American faith community, members felt strongly about the project reaching community members beyond the church walls (via the Ambassadors) with education on prostate cancer. Members stated that doing so was important because part of the church's mission is supposed to reach to those outside of the church with information. As a part of the two-session Ambassador training, training facilitators will work with participants to help them identify various social networks that they can provide education on prostate cancer.

Regarding the group of Ambassadors, members emphasized the importance of including women, young adults, and members of the church who may not currently serve in a church leadership role but wish to increase their capacity in reaching others. The steering committee pointed out that within the church you have individuals who prefer to be led and guided by key leaders in the church. However, these individuals may have untapped skills and talents conducive to the role of an Ambassador, which is to be a change agent in increasing the community's awareness about prostate cancer. Hence, the pool of Ambassadors should include individuals with various characteristics and qualities.

Following the steering committee meeting, project staff began the recruitment process for Ambassadors by talking to church pastors and church members about promoting the project within their church. A staff member had the opportunity to talk with one pastor who expressed his appreciation of the initiative and was glad to see that something was being done to generate greater awareness about prostate cancer in the county. Many others were excited about getting information to their congregation. Churches affiliated with the Cedar Grove Baptist Association in Caswell County received an information packet to share with their congregation, which included flyers and applications. The project includes an application process for individuals interested in serving as Ambassadors.

Although still in the initial phase, this project has afforded faculty and staff the opportunity to strengthen relationships, begin building new ones, and connect with individuals in the Caswell community that have a passion for improving health, especially around issues like prostate cancer from which African American men tend to suffer disproportionately.