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For Immediate Release

Hightower, Hardin Join WNCAP as Educators

Asheville (July 23, 2008) – Keisha Hightower has joined the Western North Carolina AIDS Project (WNCAP) as the Women and Youth Education Coordinator, and Aminah Hardin has joined WNCAP as SISTA Project Coordinator.

Both women have extensive backgrounds in public health education and bring a wealth of experience to WNCAP. WNCAP provides client support, prevention education and outreach activities for people living in 17 western counties in North Carolina.

Hightower has a Master's in Public Health from the University of South Carolina and a B.S. degree in Health from Clemson University. She has worked with the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy where she developed a manual for teens on reproductive health and created a training program called "Teen Health: Making It Effective and Friendly." Hightower also worked for Sexual Trauma Services where she developed and implemented a six-week sexual assault education curriculum used for more than 1,000 middle and high school students. She also has developed a "Sex Can Wait" curriculum for elementary and middle school students and a teen outreach program curriculum for high school students in Anderson, SC.

Hardin most recently was a health educator with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. She also has served as a health educator, focusing on parenting education, with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension in Hendersonville. In that role, she held training sessions in child abuse prevention and esteem building and acted as a liaison for families with local agencies. Hardin also has served as director of Senior Citizen Services in Polk County where she recruited and trained volunteers and organized outreach to local agencies. Hardin received a B.S. degree in Science from Savannah State University and a Master's in Public Health from Emory University.

The SISTA project (Sisters Informing Sisters on Topics about AIDS) that Hardin directs was developed by African-American women for African-American women and is promoted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as one of the best available evidence-based behavioral interventions for preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Approximately 100 women in Western North Carolina have completed the program since it was introduced here in 2005. The SISTA Project Coordinator position is funded by a recent grant from the Women for Women initiative of the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina.

The mission of WNCAP, founded in 1986, is to provide HIV-related services to the people of Western North Carolina through client services, prevention education and outreach in a collaborative and financially responsible manner.

WNCAP is conducting a capital campaign, On Solid Ground, to raise funds for its new facilities that will open later this summer on Fairview Road in Asheville. More information about the campaign can be found on the agency's web site, www.wncap.org, or by calling Laura Kirby, Development Director, at 828.252.7489, or writing her at lkirby@wncap.org.

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