

Wade S. Norwood, recipient of the 2011 Edward Mott Moore Award, learned very early on that the most effective health education takes place when people are in relationships to each other and there are trusted avenues of support. Since joining the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency in 2006, he has helped redefine community health planning, putting the focus squarely on community. As Director of Community Engagement, he links health planning initiatives to the needs of medically underserved populations, promoting practices and policies that create strong partnerships between families, communities and providers.

"This is an opportunity for me to do meaningful community level work and take advantage of the skills I developed in the state and local government," he said. "For someone with an interest in public policy, no issue is more pressing than health improvement."

Mr. Norwood has worked tirelessly to increase access to health services and to eliminate race and ethnicity related disparities in care. He provides critical leadership to FLHSA's African American and Latino Health Coalitions, as well as staff support to more than two dozen committees, commissions, ad hoc groups and coalitions focused on a broad range of health issues, ranging from the uninsured to preventing lead poisoning.

Mr. Norwood frequently seeks out community leaders, engaging them in robust dialogues to identify community health needs and design effective, and sometimes unique, solutions. As a leader of the community High Blood Pressure Collaborative project, Mr. Norwood has focused on educating people of color about the prevalence of and risks associated with high blood pressure. Considerable success was achieved with the initiation of a blood pressure screening contest among Rochester churches with predominantly African American parishioners. The contest resulted in more than 700 people at 19 churches being screened.

Through Mr. Norwood's leadership, the Healthi Kids Coalition, a grassroots effort aimed at combating the childhood obesity, has achieved vital policy changes to deliver better school food and safer play areas in the City of Rochester. He is now working with the Rochester City School District to incorporate changes that will further improve children's health.

In addition, Mr. Norwood revamped the agency's Reweaving the Safety Net Program into its present breadth of Community Engagement activities aimed at addressing the social, economic and environmental factors also prevent people from reaching their full health potential

"We tend to deemphasize the importance of taking care



**Wade S. Norwood**

of ourselves. Without a doubt, healthful practices can get lost in the daily competition on our time for all the things that need to be done. This is exasperated when you are poor, when you are homeless, when you are jobless. The solutions to all health problems are not medical," said Mr. Norwood. "As a community, we must remove the barriers that prevent people from getting the care they need. Our work is really about affirming the need to make sure that everyone has equal access to care that is high quality and patient centered."

With more than two decades of elected and appointed governmental service, Mr. Norwood brings to the FLHSA the benefit of his vast legislative experience.

He has served as senior aide and chief of staff to New York State Assemblyman David Gantt. In 1989, he was one of the youngest individuals ever to be elected to the Rochester City Council, where he went on to focus on community revitalization and environmental health initiatives for four consecutive terms. In 2009, he was elected to a five-year term as Regent at Large to the New York State Board of Regents. Noting the correlation between education and health, Mr. Norwood is enthusiastic about this new opportunity.

"There is a powerful interplay between health and education. Health and education together speak to the well being of communities," he said.

A native Rochesterian, Mr. Norwood holds a bachelor's of science degree in political science from the University of Rochester. He has served on the boards of the Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection; the University of Rochester's Rush Rhees Library, The Children's Institute and the Fair Housing Enforcement Project. He is an active volunteer at the Mary Cariola Center and the Al Sigl Center and serves as Pastor at the Holy Jerusalem Spiritual Church. He was a recipient of the first Governor's Award for African Americans of Distinction and received the James McCuller Award from Action for a Better Community as well as the organization's "Signature Citizen of the Year Award."

Mr. Norwood says he is energized by working with business, community, professional and faith-based groups and looks forward building upon current initiatives to take further action on the social, environmental and health issues that burden our neighborhoods, counties and state.

"By building collaboration in community health planning, Rochester is retaining its leadership. I look forward to working with the state leadership to lead learning collaborative that moves this work from the project level to a comprehensive community approach. We have many lessons learned to share with our colleagues across the state," he said.