

# SCHA and St. Mark United Methodist Church: A Series of Hope



The South Carolina Hospital Association Foundation and the St. Mark United Methodist Church of Taylors, SC have partnered to introduce video series that aims to improve health by increasing health awareness in communities of color. It's well documented that heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and stroke are the leading causes of death for Black Americans and other communities of color. Black communities often have more limited access to healthcare resources and education. A Series of Hope stories can be used in discussions with local churches, schools, health clinics, and other community organizations.

## Part 2: Diabetes

- Diabetes affects more than 34 million children, teens and adults living in the United States and this number continues to rise every year.

- While diabetes affects people of all races and ethnicities, African Americans are 60% more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes than non-Hispanic white Americans.

- There are 3 types of diabetes –

Type 1: The body's natural inability to make insulin. Approximately 5 to 10% of the 34 million Americans who have diabetes have Type 1. Most are diagnosed as children, teens or young adults and must take a daily insulin shot.

Type 2: It becomes harder for the body to recognize insulin, a condition called insulin resistance. Without an appropriate insulin response blood sugar levels rise.

Gestational diabetes develops in pregnant women and usually goes away after the baby is born. Women who have had gestational diabetes are at a high risk of developing Type 2 diabetes later in life. Their babies are more likely to struggle with obesity through their teens and they are also more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes as adults.

## Real Stories of Hope

**Margaret "Mickey Talley" Grayson** – In 1994, Mickey was diagnosed as pre-diabetic which meant her blood sugar levels were higher than normal but not high enough yet to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetic. She was at high risk for not only developing type 2 diabetes but heart disease and stroke too. She needed to pay attention to her health and take immediate action. She did nothing. She didn't try to control her weight, exercise or change her diet. In 1997 she was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes.

**Vardrey Williams** – Vardrey is Mickey's daughter. In 1997, when Vardrey was 21 and pregnant, she was diagnosed with gestational diabetes. She had idea of the danger and the potential risks to her health and the health of her unborn baby. Her baby was born healthy and her A1C levels went back to normal. So, since her numbers had returned to normal, everything was ok or so she thought. It took another 16 years but in 2014, she found out her A1C levels were high as well as her blood pressure readings. Vardrey worked hard to change her diet and exercise more, but ultimately elected for gastric sleeve surgery in 2017.

## Discussion

The primary purpose of a Series of Hope is to increase the awareness of the greatest health challenges in communities of color and encourage early detection and prevention efforts. For this exercise we are encouraging others to use the video series as a guide and consider the questions below as you host an open discussion about the burden of cancer on Black Americans:

- Did you identify with either of the stories shared in the video?
- Do you have any family members that have been diagnosed with diabetes?
- Did you know that diabetes can be passed through generations of a family?
- Do you know your blood sugar level?
- Did you know that diet and physical activity affect your risk of diabetes? Do you exercise?
- Do you have a doctor you see regularly?

**Myth** – If you're overweight you will always develop diabetes.

Fact – Being overweight is a contributing factor but it's not the only risk factor and it doesn't automatically mean you'll develop diabetes. Being overweight, however, does make you more likely to develop diabetes, as well as to significant joint problems, heart disease and other serious life altering conditions.

**Myth** – Eating a lot sugar causes diabetes.

Fact – Sugary treats and beverages do raise glucose levels but diabetes is caused by genetics and lifestyle choices.

**Myth** – Diabetes is not that serious.

Fact – Diabetes is a very serious. Left untreated it can lead to heart disease; stroke; eye disease called retinopathy; nerve damage called neuropathy; kidney disease; or amputation of limbs

*If you need help with accessing cancer screening resources or finding a primary care doctor, AccessHealth SC may be able to help. Contact us at AccessHealth SC - South Carolina Hospital Association ([scha.org](http://scha.org)) or 803-744-3556.*