National Minority Quality Forum Hosts Live Conversation Featuring Barber and Stylist COVID-19 Vaccine Activists

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 30, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- National Minority Quality Forum's Center for Sustainable Health Care and Equity (NMQF/SHC) -- through its partnership with the Centers for Disease Control to increase COVID-19 vaccine understanding and acceptance among African American and Hispanic communities -- has joined forces with barber and hair stylist activists through the Health Advocates In-Reach and Research (HAIR) initiative.
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Dr. Stephen Thomas with a group of certified health advocates from the Health Advocates in Reach and Research (HAIR) program at the "What Barbers and Stylists Say to Scientists: No Research on Us Without Us" workshop held on December 9, 2019.

Dr. Stephen B. Thomas -- professor of Health Policy and Management, director of the Center for Health Equity at the University of Maryland, founder of HAIR, and an NMQF/SHC Health Champion -- was working on a variety of health initiatives via barber shops pre-pandemic. Now, he has turned his focus to COVID-19 and flu vaccine promotion efforts, which has been recognized by The White House.

The lead speaker at SHC's "COVID-19 Vaccination: Lessons Learned from Barbers and Stylists" discussion featured insights on barbers and hair stylists who have been instrumental in reducing COVID-19 cases in vulnerable Black and Hispanic communities. At the event, Dr. Thomas shared why "meeting people where they are" is so important.

"We now know more than we ever have about how to prevent and manage chronic disease. Now is the time to implement what we know works, and that includes building partnerships across multiple academic disciplines as well as the public and private business sectors," he said. "This big push to recognize the barbershops and beauty salons in Black and brown communities as assets to be mobilized is just a blessing."

Dr. Laura Lee Hall, Ph.D., President of SHC, said she is thrilled to work with Dr. Thomas and the CDC to assist African Americans, and the barbers and stylists who serve them, to achieve better health.

"We are working to empower the African American community to understand and promote their own health through vaccination," she said. "African Americans have suffered vaccine disparities, COVID-19 infection and death, and other vaccine-preventable diseases–through less knowledge, access, social and economic barriers, and discrimination and bias in the health system."

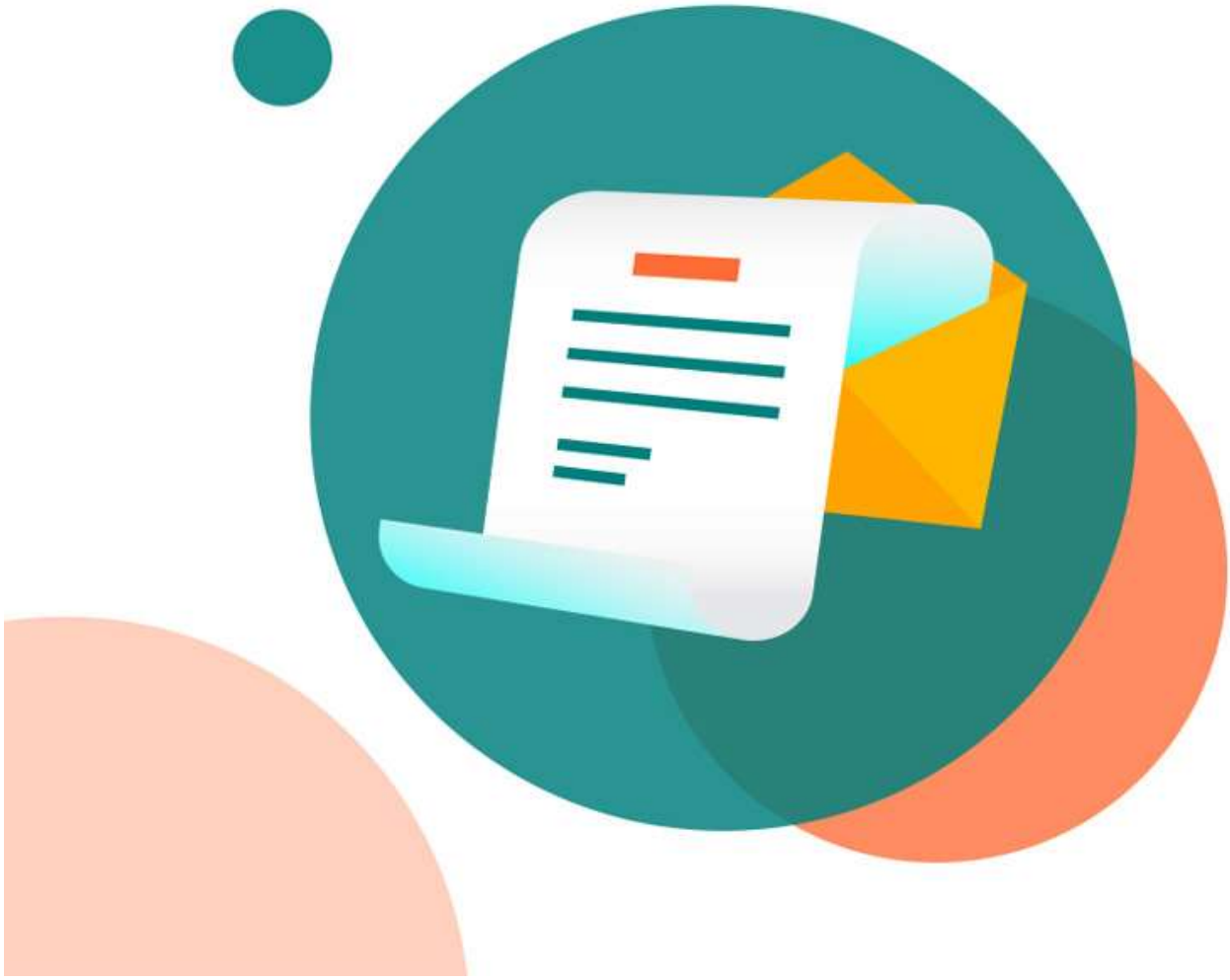
Learn more, watch the full conversation, moderated by Kristen Hobbs, MPH, CPH, Senior Project Manager of Quality Improvement and Equity at SHC: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBd5RGtCVfc

Want to be a Health Champion and receive free training and communications materials for your community? Learn more and sign up at http://www.healthequitychampions.org.

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