



Reverend Buster Soaries Unveils "Language of Respect" Coalition in Wake of Imus Controversy

Affinity Health Plan honors faith leaders of New York.

Bronx, NY (Vocus) May 17, 2007 -- Affinity Health Plan's 2007 Faith Leaders Breakfast, which honored six local faith leaders at the Sheraton of New York, featured a timely and riveting keynote address from [Rev. Dr. DeForest Buster Soaries](#), the NJ-based pastor who recently served as moderator of the meeting between Don Imus and the Rutgers women's basketball team. Reverend Soaries unveiled his "Language of Respect" Coalition

Reverend Soaries, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens, spoke out about Imus and the accountability of the network news while unveiling his [Language of Respect Coalition](#) promoting language focused on decency and civility. "It's deeper than just one isolated incident," said Reverend Soaries, who stated that he founded his Language of Respect Coalition to counter the tide of irreverence. "We must have a moral consensus for a civil society. There must be an ethic of responsibility."

Yet nationally, said Reverend Soaries, access to health care was still one of our "blemishes to fix," especially among seniors. "It's a challenge to the core of who we are. What kind of society treats aging as a disease... [or allows the elderly to be fragmented and isolated? He described Affinity as "a model for the nation" in offering quality health coverage for underserved populations, stating regrettably that more than 40 million Americans are still without health coverage. "Affinity is a beacon of light in a tsunami of darkness," continued Soaries, who urged other organizations to follow Affinity's lead in helping New Yorkers receive quality care.

Following Reverend Soaries' address, a lifetime achievement award was presented to Ruben Diaz Sr., a New York State senator in the 32nd district, and a former pastor and New York City councilman. Other honorees were: Daisy Khan, executive director of the American Society for Muslim Advancement; Reverend John Hiemstra, executive director, Council of Churches of the City of New York; Rabbi Diana S. Manber, coordinator, New York Board of Rabbis and Jewish Women International's Sh'Ma Kolenu Project; Reverend Raymond Rivera, founder, Latino Pastoral Action Center; and Margaret Denson, director of planning, event and community relations for City Council member Leroy Comrie.

"This year's event theme comes at a critical time as issues affecting seniors, such as elder abuse and diabetes, continue to make headlines," said Maura Bluestone, President and CEO of Affinity.

"We are all people who care about people. We have to reach out and form partnerships. The faith-based community is a very important element of this, because congregations connect and are the glue of the community."

Reg Chapman from Channel 4 emceed the event while Rev. Soaries and Rev. Dr. Willard W.C Ashley, Sr., project director, The Care for the Caregivers, gave keynote addresses. Exhibitors included Pfizer, American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association, HUD, and Westchester County Department of Health.

About Affinity

Affinity Health Plan is an independent, not-for-profit organization offering quality health care coverage to underserved New Yorkers. Its programs are sponsored by New York State and include Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus, Medicaid managed care, and UniCare. Affinity is also a Medicare Advantage contract organization offering Affinity Medicare Ultimate and Affinity Medicare Solutions in New York City. Founded in 1986, Affinity serves more than 208,000 members in an area that includes New York City, Long Island, and the surrounding counties of Westchester, Rockland and Orange. For more information visit www.affinityplan.org or call (866) 247-5678.

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