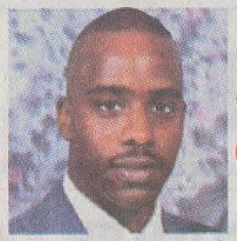
New Leadership Center At Morehouse
page 3



Furquan Stafford

Entrepreneur Struggling To Open Plasma Facility For Blacks
page 7

Will Tyson-Lewis Bout Be Held In D.C.?
page 11

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2002 Black History Month

Young Entrepreneur Plans To Open African American Plasma Center

By MASHAUN D. SIMON
www.atlantadailyworld.com

At the young age of 29, Furquan R. Stafford has a clear vision of his true purpose.

For eight years, he has worked to get financial backing and a contract to open the first African American owned plasma center in the West End community.

"The majority of plasma donors are African American," said Stafford. "However, they get (only) $15, $20 for their donation, though the companies who sell the plasma receive hundreds and millions of dollars.

"There are no African Americans, or people of color for that matter, benefiting from the industry" Stafford continued.

As senior founder and chairman of C.P Plasma Center Inc., Stafford hopes to follow in the footsteps of Dr. Charles Drew, who created the model blood and plasma storage still used by the American Red Cross today.

Ironically, Drew himself died because he wasn't admitted to a white-owned hospital for a blood transfusion after being injured in a car accident in 1945.

"Dr. Drew mentored and trained many African Americans to compete in the field of medicine," said Stafford. "That is only a small part of what I want to do. In addition, I want to create more opportunities for African Americans to 'have a piece of the pie.'"

The donation of Blacks make up close to 80 percent of the plasma supply in this country, according to Stafford, who has committed himself to learning all aspects of the plasma industry.

For several years, he worked for a plasma center and conducted internal research.

U.S. companies supply 90 percent of plasma and its products nationwide, but the majority of donors do not reap the benefits said Stafford.

"I want to give back to the community, make jobs, and make competition for the other leaders in the industry. The only obstacle I have in my way is getting started," said Stafford who claims he's been denied entrance into the 'blood plasma fraternity.'

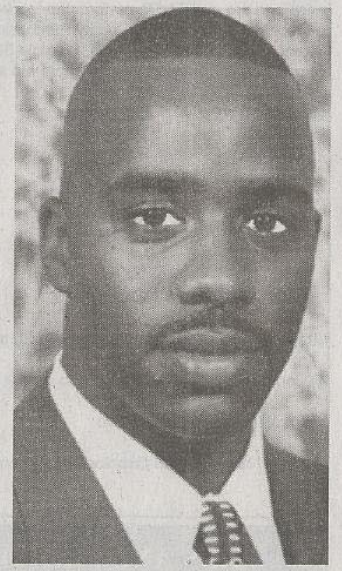
Plasma contracts are issued to European and Asian operations to begin and extend their centers, "but C.P. Plasma Center, Inc. has been denied the opportunity to receive a contract," he said.

To combat the rejections, Stafford has partnered with civil rights organizations like the Atlanta branch of Rainbow/PUSH and spiritual leaders Creflo Dollar and Bishop Eddie Long. "With all the work that I have placed into this dream of mine, I cannot go on without expressing some gratitude and thanks to those who have supported me while I was receiving nothing but heartache and rejection," he said. "These people are working with me to see through the situations, the work. They are working with me to succeed, stay dedicated, faithful and spiritually based.

"Having the support from these key people has truly helped me," Stafford continued. "I have not always received the most support for what it is I am trying to do. mainly because many of those people did not understand what it is I am trying to do."

The entrepreneur remains committed to one day opening a center and said he's put in faith in God to make his dream a reality.

"A friend of mine told me something recently, that made all of this make sense," said Stafford. "He said, 'God had to have the right person to lead in this endeavor, and he chose the right one.'"



Photos Courtesy of Furquan Stafford

Dr. Charles Drew (right) a scientific pioneer and creator of blood plasma transfusion, is the inspiration of Furquan Stafford (left) who hopes to build the first Black owned Plasma Center in the West End community.

African American Researcher Uses Human Plasma Analysis To Address Issues That Plague The Black Community

By AKILAH S. RICHARDS
INTERVIEW BY:
DANIELA GOMES
Special Reporter - Brazil

In Brazil-a country whose black population represents about 50% of all citizens - the National Health System, which guarantees free medical care to all citizens, has joined the Ministry for the Promotion of Racial Equality to create a series of programs designed to improve the health of the country's black population.

Sickle Cell Anemia, a genetically transmitted disease that affects one in every 500 black Brazilians, and HIV/AIDS, are among the diseases the program will work to weaken. Despite Brazil being recognized as having one of the best programs to combat HIV/AIDS worldwide, its black population still is the most adversely affected.

Brazil hopes to make significant strides in the improvement of black people's health, and other countries are already making progress. In the U.S., Furquan R. Stafford, Sr., owner of C.P. Plasma Center, is the

FURQUAN R. STAFFORD, SR.

first African American male to own a center where blood plasma from healthy donors is collected for manufacturing into medicine. Stafford's goal is to find treatments for diseases that are affecting the black population in particular.

GOMES: You've led an interesting life. Tell us how you transitioned from a boy who grew up with social and financial hardships to a successful businessman?

STAFFORD, SR.: Books, along with my studies at Georgia State University (GSU) gave me the opportunity to educate myself for about 10 years. I dropped out of GSU in 1997 but continued to use the campus for support. Seeing people of all nationalities studying inspired me as well. My experiences at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church where I observe and learn from Bishop Eddie L. Long, have a lot of influence in my development too. The rejections and disappointments that come with walking the pavement, sending letters and emails, making cold phone calls and going to meetings help me shape my presentation to get where it is today.

GOMES: How did you choose the health area and more specifically how did you start to work with plasma?

STAFFORD, SR.: My mother has been in the healthcare profession for over 25 years, and her life was the catalyst for my direction. In 1994, my first real job at the American Plasma Center in Houston, Texas was where I fell in love with the plasma business and the process of collecting blood plasma. I would come in early and stay late reading manuals, and worked in almost every area of the plasma collection business. As a junior nursing student, I transferred to GSU in the summer of 1996 and took another job working at a plasma collection center. Eventually, I realized that true stability would come only from owning my own business, so in the winter of 1997, I set out on my own.

GOMES: How specifically can your efforts help black people around the world?

STAFFORD, SR.: Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disorder that affects red blood cells. Intravenous Immune Globulin (IVIG) is a human plasma based product that is currently in clinical trials in the United States. This disease affects people worldwide, and I'm honored to be a part of the research that may make this disease more manageable. The supposition is that IVIG from human plasma will act quickly to reduce uncomplicated acute pain flare-ups and thus pain scores, narcotic use, and length of hospitalization for sickle cell anemia patients. From an inspirational perspective, I hope my efforts in the Plasma Collection industry will inspire people of color around the globe to focus more on Health and Science.

GOMES: Tell our readers about your 16-year mission.

STAFFORD, SR.: Dr. Charles Richard Drew (1904-1950), the pioneer of Blood Plasma, created the first American Red Cross mobile blood bank and is credited for saving lives through his plasma distribution to the injured soldiers in World War II. Today, African Americans are the number one donors for a multi-billion dollar industry and are not represented in the business sector in this industry. My struggles over the past 16 years have been undertaken with the mission in mind to level the playing field for diversity inclusion. The Plasma Protein Therapeutics Association (PPTA) is the umbrella for the U.S. Plasma Collection Industry. It provides valuable regulatory information to meet FDA requirements and beyond, but does not have involvement with its Global Members daily operations. These companies have a chain of plasma collection centers in the United States, thus eliminating entrepreneurship in this particular arena for persons of color. Today, I face a Global Boycott. Without a plasma contract from the Global Members of this industry, C.P. Plasma Center, Inc. remains stymied.

DANIELA GOMES: In your opinion, how can members of various communities help with the programs and processes that will further this particular cause?

STAFFORD, SR.: I believe it will take a) organizations in the public and private sectors to continue to work together to educate themselves on the global boycott and its effects and b) more financial assistance from the U.S. Government to address health disparities that affect people of color.

Visit http://www.cpplasmacenter.org/, Facebook/ FurquanRStaffordSr and Twitter/ FRS_Sr for more information.