

NAACP

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking and inhumane.” Martin Luther King jr.

Faith Tabernacle Hosts “Fall Into Health”

The “Fall Into Health Expo” was held September 28th from 10-2. Vendors that attended included the Human Resources Departments from both Cox and Mercy, the Fire Department (who brought a truck to show the kids), the Springfield Greene County Park Board with options for many type of healthy activities. A panel discussion was held on issues common to the African American community including mental health.

“Unity on Division”

This year marks the sixth year for “Unity on Division”. Turning Point Church, Fresh Water Church, the Greater Metropolitan Church and two United Methodist Churches brought hundreds of people out for food, games, gospel music and worship. Pastor Steve Williams of Crosstown Barbeque has been working to cross racial barriers for years.

Meet Latasha Harris, RN

Tell us about your background. I grew up in California, mostly around the Hanford

area. My mom and dad were married and became parents at an early age. After their separation, my mom moved my older brother and I to San Diego. We visited our dad in Hanford during the summertime. Neither of my parents had attended college. Because of their experience, college was not an option for me, it was an



expectation. Despite my family’s expectations and training, I became teenage mom and by the time I was 21 years old I had had three children and lost one. My son Eric, was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia on November 18th of 1996 when he was one and a half years old. After 8 months of harsh chemotherapy he passed away on July 30th 1997. I was in college at the time pursuing a degree in criminal justice. During this very dark time in our lives, my mom and my older brother moved from the East Coast to help us . Without their support it would have been an

even harder road. My mom is my rock. I went back and finished my Associates of Science, Criminal Justice, in 2002.

After earning my degree, I moved to Las Vegas and worked for the Nevada Department of Corrections. I really didn't like that atmosphere, being an authority figure in a very dangerous and rough environment both physically and emotionally. After the experience with my son, I decided taking care of people was my passion. I went back to school and got the training to be a licensed psych tech (equivalent to an LPN in Missouri) and worked in the Coalinga California State Hospital where violent sex offenders are held. That place wasn't much better than the prison. While there I was working on my prerequisites for nursing school. When I got accepted to nursing school, I worked full time and went to school full time in Visalia CA at the College of the Sequoias. It required much sacrifice and dedication to reach the goals I had set for myself. I graduated in May 2012. I applied for nursing jobs all over the country but Cox Hospital offered me a job, even helping with moving expenses.

What have been the biggest barriers to your success? I would have to say relationships that I have brought into my life as much as anything. I was once married and now am divorced. Being in a toxic relationship definitely held me back. Not loving myself enough has been a barrier.

What kinds of nursing have you done? I worked on the psych-med-surg floor at Cox for three years and then was a traveling nurse for four years and have been an internal traveler for the Mercy team for the last year and a half. I work on the cardiac, step down, mother and baby floor as well as medical-surgical floors.

Tell us about your family. I have two daughters, Erica age 25, and Erianna age 21. Erica earned a Liberal Arts degree with a minor in Psychology from Lincoln University. Her goal is a PhD in psychology. Erianna went to school on a volleyball scholarship and now works for Delta Airlines. She has my only grandbaby, Elijah, two years old. Six years ago, on November 18th 2013 I got the keys to my own house in Battlefield. My father passed away on November 18th 2018. That day seems to be very significant in my life and to my family.

What are your goals? I am working on my Bachelors of Science in Nursing (BSN) through the University of Texas, Arlington. My most important goal right now is launching a nurse staffing agency named "Nurse Hustle Recruitment". I have office space at the E-Factory and am the founder and CEO. In six months I hope to have a fully functioning registered nurse staffing agency. *What do you do for fun?* I love to travel. This month I am going to Africa! I will be in the Seychelles for two weeks. One of my favorite places so far has been Aruba.

What advice do you have for young people? Dig deep and find out who you are and push to make yourself arrive. Love yourself enough to know what is possible. What other people think doesn't matter. Social media may indicate your life isn't where it needs to be, but social media isn't reality. We all need support. Seek out mentors, seek wisdom and immerse yourself with other people.

Have you ever faced racism? Just the other day I was working on the mother and baby floor in room full of happy family members when a small child came up to me. He was a cute little boy not doing anything wrong. His grandmother apologized multiple times saying, "he's never seen an...um, um, um ...African American person before." My thought was that this person usually uses a different word to refer to us. On the other hand I also recently had a patient that went out of his way to introduce me to his family because he had never met a black person and he had had such a good experience with his black nurse he wanted his family to meet me.