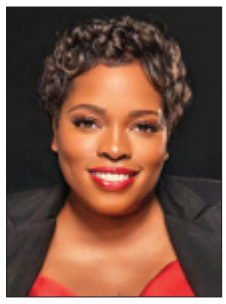
ABIPA – ASHEVILLE BUNCOMBE INSTITUTE OF PARITY ACHIEVEMENT

Caring Hearts: Hidden Treasures

By JéWana Grier-McEachin, Executive Director

Honoring the Love, Sacrifice, and Resilience of Caregivers



JéWana Grier-McEachin. Photo: Red Angle Photography

November is National Family Caregivers Month, a time to recognize the extraordinary individuals who quietly dedicate their lives to caring for loved ones. Behind every act of caregiving is a story of love, sacrifice, resilience, and sometimes exhaustion. These individuals are truly hidden treasures within our families and communities.

On November 11, 2026, AARP of the Mountain Region and ABIPA hosted "Caring Hearts: Hidden Treasures" at the Friendship Center in the historic Shiloh community. Nearly 100 people gathered for an afternoon of appreciation, fellowship, education, and encouragement.

As a caregiver myself, I understand the delicate balance between love and duty. While caregiving is an expression of our commitment to family, even the strongest hearts can grow weary.

That reality was reinforced recently during a conversation with a community member whose husband had undergone an amputation due to complications from diabetes. While helping him through recovery, she was also raising her granddaughter. Beneath her determination was a level of exhaustion familiar to many caregivers.

Her story served as a reminder that countless people are carrying burdens we cannot see. They may be standing beside us in a grocery store, sitting near us at church, or greeting us with a smile while quietly managing overwhelming responsibilities.

Who is caring for those who care for everyone else?

Caregiving can affect physical, emotional, and financial well-being. Chronic stress, disrupted sleep, anxiety, depression, and social isolation are common challenges. Many caregivers postpone their own medical appointments or neglect healthy habits because someone else's needs take priority.

Another concern is compassion fatigue, the emotional and physical exhaustion that can result from prolonged caregiving. Warning signs may include irritability, hopelessness, difficulty concentrating, and low energy. Recognizing these symptoms is an opportunity to seek support before exhaustion becomes a health crisis.

The Caring Hearts event was designed to celebrate caregivers while connecting them with resources that support their own health and well-being. Community partners, including the Charles George VA Medical Center, MemoryCare, Mountain Aging Partners, and the Land of Sky Regional Council Area Agency on Aging, shared information about services available to caregivers and their families.



Caregivers deserve respite, preventive healthcare, meaningful connections, and permission to rest without guilt.

Attendees also enjoyed small moments of relaxation and connection. A coffee and tea station prepared by Erin Schmidt and Drew McDermott of Starview Coffee offered a welcoming space to recharge. Guests gathered over lunch, with support from Atlanta Bread, while the Asheville Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, donated a meal prepared by Sisters on Montford.

The event held additional significance because November 11 was also Veterans Day. Organizers honored veterans in attendance, recognizing that many have served as caregivers or relied on the support of family caregivers. A world map provided by AARP invited veterans to place pins marking where they had served, creating a visual tribute to their service and sacrifice.

The afternoon reminded us that appreciation should extend beyond a single event or awareness month. We can support caregivers by checking in regularly, offering practical help, sharing resources, and simply listening.

Most importantly, to every caregiver who continues showing up with love despite fatigue and uncertainty: We see you. We value you. We celebrate you. You are preserving dignity, strengthening families, and demonstrating love through action. Never forget that your own health, happiness, and peace are treasures worth protecting, too.

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ABIPA promotes economic, social, and healthy parity achievement for African Americans and other underserved populations in Buncombe County through advocacy, education, research, and community partnerships.



Celebrating 22 Years of Being the Community Health Connection for Asheville and Beyond

Help Us Celebrate Our Birthday by Gifting ABIPA a Donation of $22

Tax-deductible donations can be made by sending a check to ABIPA, PO Box 448, Asheville, NC 28802, or donate online at www.abipa.org. Thank you for your support!

Know Your Health History

by JaiEssence McEachin, MPH

Family Stories Could Save Our Lives



JaiEssence McEachin, MPH. Photo: Red Angle Photography

November is Stomach Cancer Awareness month, a time to reflect on the importance of prevention, early detection, and the family stories that shape our health.

For me, this awareness is personal. My great-grandmother, Ruth Grier, passed away from stomach cancer. Her story is part of my family's legacy and a reminder that knowing where we come from means understanding more than your family tree. It means knowing your family health history.

Stomach cancer disproportionately affects African Americans. According to the National Cancer Institute, annual diagnosis rates are approximately 13.2 per 100,000 Black men and 8.9 per 100,000 Black women. Mortality rates are equally concerning: 6.1 deaths per 100,000 Black men and 3.1 per 100,000 Black women, more than twice the rates for white Americans. These numbers remind us that awareness matters.

As families gather for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and other holiday celebrations, we have a wonderful opportunity to turn ordinary conversations into meaningful exchanges.

Between the sweet potato pie, family laughter, and debates about who makes the best macaroni and cheese, why not ask Grandma, Auntie, or Uncle about your family's health history?

Who had cancer? Who struggled with diabetes? What conditions affected previous generations?

These conversations don't have to be frightening or uncomfortable. They can be lighthearted, loving, and intentional.

Knowing our family history helps us ask better questions, recognize potential risks, and have informed conversations with healthcare providers.

This holiday season, let's pass down more than recipes, photographs, and family traditions. Let's pass down knowledge that could save lives.

I honor my great-grandmother Ruth Grier by encouraging families to talk, listen, document, and share.



JaiEssence McEachin, Ruth Grier, and JyAire McEachin.

Because knowing our history isn't just about remembering yesterday. It's about protecting tomorrow.

Upcoming Events

Sunday Shop

Sunday, November 22

3-6 p.m. at the Friendship Center, 142 Shiloh Rd. in Asheville.

Scarlet Sankofa Holiday Party



Thursday, December 17

Featuring DSG, the "Three Kings of Sax," this special event combines live music, fellowship, and community giving to support ABIPA's year-round programs and Community Christmas initiatives. Tickets: $50. Concert begins at 7 p.m. at the YMI Cultural Center, 39 S. Market Street in Asheville.

An ABIPA Community Christmas

Sunday, December 20

This special event begins at 6 p.m. at the YMI Cultural Center. Featuring music, refreshments, free holiday food, and a gift shop for families. If you are interested in volunteering or donating gifts for families, please email jewana@abipa.org or text 828-778-7122.