

More Than 2,220 Attend First Summit Packs the House

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Closing the Gap, First Summit Packs the House • January/February 2003

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, I thank each and every one who participated in the first *National Leadership Summit on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health!* More than 2,200 of you attended and thousands more viewed selected sessions on the Web.

This convocation of Federal, Tribal, state, local, and community leaders in minority health was too long in coming.

We packed a lot into three days—five major plenary sessions, more than 70 workshops, 57 poster sessions, three public hearings, and a play dramatizing cancer issues. We distributed more than 2,200 copies of a Community Resource Toolkit that is available on the web, and which we will be updating in January. More than 100 exhibitors shared their information and services with our participants. Kaisernetwork.org produced video webcasts of three major plenaries.

I am pleased that the evaluation forms show high levels of satisfaction with the breadth and content of the workshops, with most agreeing that the topics covered were relevant and appropriate, and that they learned things they could use in their work. For us in HHS, the bringing together of leaders from across the Nation who demonstrate their commitment and devotion to the elimination of racial and ethnic disparities in health was an equally satisfying endeavor.

Closing the Gap will devote two expanded issues to highlights of the Summit. In this first issue, we have featured workshops from each of the Summit tracks. We hope to capture the information presented, stimulate interest in areas that may be new to some readers, showcase programs that work, and highlight the efforts of individuals who are committed to those populations most in need. In an upcoming issue, we will complete our coverage of the Summit by highlighting more workshops of interest. We will continue to add to our Summit website as well.

I offer special thanks to the founding members of “Out of Many, One.” These individuals took my deep,

personal belief—that we must work together as *one*, to move the health agenda forward—and developed a united action plan that focuses on common health issues while respecting the differences among communities of color. I trust this message was heard throughout our Summit, and that each of you recognizes the power of partnerships. If our Nation is to reach its potential, all groups must come to the point where shared interests outweigh our differences. We lose too much—in resources, economies of scale, and people power—when we don’t work together. And our people suffer for it.

I extend heartfelt gratitude to my staff at the Office of Minority Health for their effort and dedication to making the Summit a success. I thank the members of the non-Federal and Federal planning committees, because an event such as this could not have been done without their hard work and strong advocacy. I offer thanks to our public and private sector sponsors for their generous contributions.

In planning the National Leadership Summit, we envisioned a series of three conferences. The July event was the first. The second should take place sometime around the middle of the decade, in approximately 2005. At that time, we hope to perform a reality check, to see if what we’ve been doing is working, what has not been working, and what we need to do differently. Finally, we want to come together again at the end of the decade, to evaluate our progress in reaching Healthy People 2010 goals.

For those readers unable to attend the first Summit, I hope that *Closing the Gap* provides you with a new look at some of the innovative programs being implemented today and the wealth of information exchanged at the conference. We hope it inspires you to join us and become a part of the discourse between now and 2005. Good health to all!

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