



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **FAMILY HEALTH & SUPPORT NETWORK, INC.'s BRAAF Host Unity Day**

*Supporting, encouraging and inspiring resilience in African American Families.*

PALM DESERT, CA – March 29, 2017: ***Building Resilience in African American Families (BRAAF) is a Prevention & Early Intervention program funded by the Riverside County Universal Health Systems – Behavioral Health.*** The primary goals of the project are to reduce the risk factors associated to the development of mental health problems and to increase resiliency and skill development for the underserved African American population of Riverside County. This set of evidence informed programs are offered in the Desert, Mid-Riverside and Perris regions of Riverside County.

Emphasizing young boys interacting with other young boys to develop positive life styles, and positive solutions to life problems by recognizing their strengths, their talents and abilities is the fundamental concept of the Africentric Youth & Family Rites of Passage which is at the core of the program. This highly therapeutic, culture specific, after-school intervention seeks to build character in young middle school African-American boys. The concept of building character we believe, ultimately translates into better school performance, more respectful behaviors and stronger family and community ties. Under the guidance of well trained and committed staff, experts from the community and a council of Community Elders who have a genuine commitment to their passage into manhood, young boys internalize the Afro-centric principles by which youth and their families can become constructive contributors to their families and community, through a positive appreciation of themselves and their culture.

On Saturday, April 29, 2017 the program staff, parents, elders, volunteers and youth from all three regions (Desert, Mid-Riverside, and Perris) will convene at the James O. Jessie Desert Highland Unity Center, located at 480 Tramview Road, Palm Springs, CA for Unity Day! Where the goal of supporting, empowering and inspiring resilience in African American Families will be emphasized.

The day begins with breakfast, hosted by the Perris region. The opening ceremony will include an Africentric Unity Circle, with drumming and libations performed by all three region ROP youth participants. The purpose of the Unity Circle is to pay homage to African and African American ancestors for paving a way.

This family centered, community engagement includes Afro-centric traditions and rituals, community outreach projects, traditional African American food, family centered games and activities, speakers, live entertainment and presentations.

As a demonstration of respect, honor and responsibility the youth participants of all three regions have collectively commissioned a painting of Mr. James O. Jessie from Artist Salle of Desert Hot Springs to be dedicated in an afternoon ceremony. The portrait will be adorned on a wall in the center and will symbolize "Unity", the very thing Mr. Jessie fostered in his community. The Soul Brother's Band from Los Angeles will perform family style R&B music in the park and the local community will be presented a scroll of the Nguzo Saba Principles as a gift from the program and encouraged to incorporate the principles into their lives.

Unity Day is a day of honor, inspiration, and encouragement. Individuals, dignitaries, community leaders, officials and others interested in celebrating the resilience of African American people are invited to attend. Must register to attend at:

[www.braaf.org/braafunityday2017](http://www.braaf.org/braafunityday2017)

If you would like more information about the event please contact Sandra Austin (Desert Region) at: 760/340.2442 or [saustin@fhsnet.org](mailto:saustin@fhsnet.org), Corey Jackson (Riverside Region) at: 951/247-0200 or James Wood (Perris Region) at: 951/823.0175.

**If you want to go quickly, go alone, if you want to go far, go together – African proverb.**