

Mary Bentley LaMar, is the Founder and Executive Director of the Sickle Cell Association of New Jersey, Inc., (SCANJ). Recognized as an award winning servant leader with a reputation for successfully "making it happen," Mary has travelled extensively throughout the country implementing a national campaign on sickle cell disease. She brings that same commitment to New Jersey through SCANJ.

Recognizing the need, Mary founded the Sickle Cell Association of New Jersey, a 501c3 non-profit community based agency on September 1, 2009 to assist the sickle cell community, especially adults, with non - medical needs such as, support groups, transition, education, access to research, resource sharing, family follow up and other programs that improve their quality of life.

Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disorder affecting the red blood cells. Sickle cells cause anemia, devastating pain and many other serious health problems. SCANJ works in partnership with the many dedicated health care professionals who provide much needed care to combat this disease.

Under Mary's leadership SCANJ has been able to:

- Implement the New Jersey Sickle Cell Poster Child and Teen Spokesperson Program
- Advocate with the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America on Capitol Hill to support efforts to increase resources for people with sickle cell disease
- Offer Chronic Disease Self Management Workshops to the community for free.
- Conduct and support *Dr. Charles Drew* sickle cell blood drives to increase blood donations from the minority community.
- Present at national SCDA Conventions on the SCANJ programs
- Educate the community affected by sickle cell disease through special events such as *A Sickle Cellabration, The Thanks For Giving Concert, The 24 Seven Line Dance Marathon* and the *December Holiday Party*.
- Raise awareness through newsletters, brochures, calling posts, email list serves, teleconferences, health fairs and our website www.sicklecellnewjersey.org.
- Honor individuals and organizations with the *Dr. Charles F. Whitten Awards* for outstanding service
- Host Road Trips for families to attend regional and national conferences.

Mary has worked in the health care industry for over 10 years and is trained in respiratory, diabetic and infectious disease pharmaceuticals. She is experienced in promoting awareness on reproductive endocrinology and she has worked with community-based sickle cell agencies nationwide to educate about sickle cell disease and related conditions. This graduate of Indiana University in Bloomington Indiana, with a degree in Broadcast Journalism, is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in the community. She is described by sickle cell advocacy groups as a "skilled and effective communicator who greatly advanced our visibility in the community."

Mary's unique constellation of skills and experiences makes her an especially successful advocate. She honed her communication skills for over 20 years in the highly competitive entertainment industry where she received critical acclaim as a musical theatre artist.

Mary seizes every opportunity to enlist and leverage support from key influencers nationwide including health care professionals, political leaders, advocacy groups, churches, local media, community leaders, and civic organizations. As a member of Shiloh Baptist Church of Newark, she serves as the Superintendent of the Sunday School. She is also active in the Gospel Chorus, Senior Ministry and Dance Ministries. Together with her husband, Dr. Ansley W. LaMar, she conducts research, implements strategies, coordinates related programs, arranges public relations events, and develops initiatives that make a positive impact in the community. They are the proud parents of Hunter LaMar, a musically talented and civic minded teenager.

Mary received a commendation from the Newark Municipal Council for improving the quality of life for students of The Newark Boys Chorus School. Mary has been recognized as President of the Year in the North Atlantic Region of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (AKA) and has served as Vice Chair of Programs for the 2006 North Atlantic Regional Conference and as the region's Cluster IV (New Jersey Coordinator). Under Mary's leadership, her chapter was recognized as the 2006 AKA North Atlantic Region Chapter of The Year. She also won 2003, 2005 & 2006 AKA North Atlantic Region Leadership Awards. Most recently she won the 2011 Cluster IV Educational Advancement Foundation Award for Excellence in Education.

Her affiliations include: the New Jersey Governor's Conference on Women, Steering Committee, Newark Boys Chorus School Board of Trustees and Past President Parent Advisory Council, National Association of Black Storytellers, Indiana University Alumni Association, Actors Equity Association, American Federation of Television & Radio Artists, Screen Actors Guild, USO World Shows, The League of Women Voters, Newark Unit, The Masters School Parents Association, The Central and Northern New Jersey Sickle Cell Network and the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America.

Mary is grateful for the involvement of others in the fight against sickle cell disease.