

A local nonprofit group gets national recognition

The Inflammatory Skin Disease Institute in Newport News has won two awards.

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One in three people suffer from some form of skin disorder. It's the mission of LaDonna Williams, executive director of the Inflammatory Skin Disease Institute, a Newport News-based nonprofit organization, to promote public awareness and a better understanding of diseases such as eczema and psoriasis through education, research and patient advocacy ..

Her efforts have been rewarded with two 2009 Gold Triangle Awards from the American Academy of Dermatology, which will be awarded at the annual meeting in San Francisco in March. The awards were made in the community health organizations category for two of the ISDI's programs.

News to Use

The Inflammatory Skin Disease Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of people with inflammatory skin disorders through education. It can provide practical information on treatment options, research trends, and lifestyle issues. To contact: *LaDonna Williams, P.O. Box 7074, Newport News, VA 23607; 223-0795; www.isdionline.org*

Its newest program, Schoolhouse Project - Eczema, started as a pilot program in the Newport News school system and is being introduced to school staffs across the country. "It can't make the problem go away, but understanding and awareness help," says Williams. Eczema, she notes, is a very itchy skin disease that can cause distraction to students and their peers. The program discusses the responsibilities of students, parents and school staff in minimizing

possible problems. For example, it suggests that children prone to the noncontagious disease not be seated near heating vents or radiators that can cause flare-ups. It also emphasizes the importance of keeping the lines of communication open. "It's not terminal or fatal or anything, but it can be socially terminal. It can actually be devastating to quality of life," says Williams, a former pediatric nurse who has two grown children who suffer from eczema.

The second program recognized by the AAD is the institute's scholarship program for college-bound students who have skin diseases. This year the group awarded two \$500 scholarships.

The 9-year-old organization does not diagnose skin diseases or prescribe medications. It is strictly educational, raising awareness and offering support through a newsletter and brochures in English and Spanish. It also joins with other skin disease organizations to lobby for more research dollars in Washington.