

## DAVETTE ROUNDTREE

With her kind eyes and friendly smile, it's easy to talk with Davette Roundtree (pictured left). Good thing, because starting conversations is probably the most important part of her job.

"You need to make sure you refill your prescription today. Do you need me to make a call?" says Roundtree, addressing a client who has stopped by The Family Van, a mobile health clinic program of Harvard Medical School. The van travels to seven different sites four days a week to provide cardiovascular disease and diabetes screenings, pregnancy testing, and access to sexually transmitted disease education and testing.

"He has very, very high blood pressure," explains Roundtree of the client, one of dozens who has stepped inside the van today. Like much of the low-income population that utilizes its services, this patient was unaware of his condition until Roundtree first hustled him inside for a screening several months ago.

To do that, she starts conversations. "He was very uncomfortable," she recalls of the first time the man stepped inside the van. "He didn't want us to take his blood pressure, so I said, 'Let me just talk to you.' So we talked. Well, after about an hour he said, 'Okay, you can take my blood pressure now.'"

Now the man has become so accustomed to The Family Van's regularly scheduled stops, that he makes a point to visit and monitor his health on an ongoing basis.

"Young lady, the only thing raising my blood pressure is every time you flash me those eyes," he laughs as Roundtree checks his blood pressure.

While she may seem like a natural conversationalist with patients, Roundtree says it was only recently that she became equally adept at talking to her colleagues in the health care industry. "Before [CoPaLS], I would get nervous and talk fast so that I could sit down again ... The program taught me to slow down and really think about what I wanted to say and how to choose my words."

The success of CoPaLS can be found in the skills that help their graduates strengthen their communities, and in conversations large and small.

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*Davette Roundtree, 2008 CoPaLS participant*

WHERE  
THE FAMILY VAN, DRIVER/HEALTH EDUCATOR

### BUILDING A FOUNDATION

