



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JPEG photo available upon request

### Leaven Center welcomes constituency development coordinator

LYONS, MI – The Leaven Center recently welcomed its first-ever coordinator of constituency development to its staff to increase community awareness and build new relationships in southeast Michigan.



Kimya Afi Ayodele comes to the Leaven Center with more than 10 years of experience as a community activist and organizer for LGBT people of color in greater southeastern Michigan. A long-time resident of Detroit, Kimya lives in Ann Arbor.

She will assist in increasing the diversity of Leaven’s base within southeast Michigan through coordinating community outreach efforts, locating and writing grant proposals and increasing Leaven’s visibility at summer festivals and events. Her position is funded by the E. Rhodes & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.

“I believe in the mission of the Leaven Center, not just as an employee, but as a community supporter,” Kimya said. “It is wonderful to work with an organization that I believe in.”

The Leaven Center, about two hours from the metropolitan Detroit area, holds retreats, workshops, and seminars year-round that nurture the connection between social justice and spirituality.

Kimya is not new to the Leaven Center. She has a four-year relationship with the Leaven Center as a workshop attendee and facilitator. As a *Seeds of Hope* supporter, The Leaven Center’s two-year development campaign, Kimya organized four rejuvenation retreats for women.

“We are very excited to have Kimya join the Leaven staff,” said Melanie Morrison, Leaven’s executive director. “Core to Leaven’s mission is our desire to be a place of refuge and revitalization for communities under siege from the forces of racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism and classism. Kimya brings a depth of skill, experience and passion to her work of helping Leaven realize this mission more fully.”

Kimya recently worked with other Leaven staff to write and submit a grant proposal for an innovative project that will begin to address the historical divide within the African American community between Christian churches and LGBT people. She also is organizing, and will co-facilitate, the second annual *Shining Threads of Hope: A Service and Learning Experience for*

*African American High School Girls* in August at The Leaven Center. Future projects include developing an annual Center Partner financial contribution program.

To learn more about these programs or to discuss how you or your organization can get involved with the Leaven Center, contact Kimya at [kimyaayodele@leaven.org](mailto:kimyaayodele@leaven.org) or at 989-855-2606.

The Leaven Center is midway between Lansing and Grand Rapids. The main floor of the Lodge and Guest House are barrier-free. The 25 beautiful acres of land include a lodge and a guest house which accommodate 23 guests, an accessible nature trail on the grounds, a trail along the Grand River, a labyrinth and a spring-fed stream. For more information about the Leaven Center, go to [www.leaven.org](http://www.leaven.org).