

Get Screened Oakland calls June HIV Awareness Month: The Highlights

Community celebrates National HIV Testing Day with Eastmont Town Center Care Fair and Family Day (June 27, 2008) To commemorate National HIV Testing Day, held annually on June 27, and to celebrate the anniversary of the launch of Get Screened Oakland, more than forty small businesses, community groups, and social service organizations joined forces for the Eastmont Town Center Care Fair and Family Day, an event to provide family fun, health education, and HIV testing and outreach services to the residents of East Oakland. The event also marked the launch of Business Responds to AIDS: an Alameda County/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) collaboration whose message is “Stopping AIDS is Everybody’s Business.”

The Eastmont Town Center complex is home to family-owned retail businesses, county and city services, and the district offices of several local elected officials. The complex, which is in an area of Oakland that is currently undergoing a renaissance, also houses several box stores and family-oriented service agencies. Because of its location in and service provision to the “deep East Oakland” community, Eastmont Town Center was chosen as an ideal location to host activities for National HIV Testing Day. East Oakland is an area that many residents feel has long been forgotten by those in Oakland City Center and City Hall.

The Eastmont Town Center Care Fair and Family Day began at 12:00 noon and concluded shortly after 5:00 p.m. In that time, an estimated 130 people were tested for HIV. Cal-PEP, Volunteers of America, and the Eastmont Wellness Center (located inside the town center) provided the testing services.

Michael Bellenger of the Native American AIDS Project and the All Nations Singers and Dancers opened the event with a ceremonial invocation through song and dance. Grammy award-winning and Billboard Latin Music Awards-nominated Ricardo Scales entertained fairgoers with a party-starting performance of funk-music. Dr. Rhoss of Top Hat Productions provided background music to the afternoon’s activities. Clowns from Prescott Clown Circus were also on hand, walking the fairgrounds, sometimes on stilts, juggling, and performing tricks.

At 2:30 p.m., a short program recognized HIV testing day and launched Business Responds to AIDS. Marsha Martin, DSW, Director, Get Screened Oakland—the first citywide HIV screening campaign in the state of California—thanked Eastmont Town Center management for their support and expressed her appreciation and gratitude to the agencies and community service providers gathered for their help in making Get Screened Oakland a success in its first year. She said that Mayor Dellums, who is one hundred percent in support of the program, had planned to attend the Care Fair event until events at City Hall necessitated a change in his plans. Nonetheless, Mayor Dellums asked Dr. Martin to convey his apologies as well as his best wishes for a successful Care Fair. Dr. Martin then repeated the Mayor’s frequent call for all residents to take the 20-minute HIV test because the time it takes could save not only their life, but the life of someone they love.

When she had completed her remarks, Dr. Martin introduced Ms. Tiffany McClendon, Property Manager for Eastmont Town Center, who thanked her staff for supporting the Care Fair activities and officially welcomed the Care Fair to the Town Center. Ms.

McClendon said she fully supported the event. In fact, she hopes to make it an annual event and bring it back next year.

Next, Kabir Hypolite, Director of the Alameda County Office of AIDS, encouraged those gathered to pick up information, learn about HIV, and take the screening test. Noting the Care Fair's tremendous success and turnout this year, he expressed his hope that even more people will participate next year.

Following his remarks, Mr. Hypolite introduced Ms. Tazima Jenkins, Alameda County's Program Coordinator for Business Responds to AIDS. Ms. Jenkins described the program and its goals, which are to encourage business owners to distribute information about HIV prevention and post and distribute other HIV awareness and educational materials.

Joining Ms. Jenkins at the podium were Michael Jardine, CDC Program Coordinator for Business Responds to AIDS; Michael Carter, CEO of Black Wall Street District Merchant Association; and Dorothy King of Oakland's famous, family-owned Everett & Jones BBQ. These individuals all agreed to join the business coalition to support efforts to reduce the county's HIV epidemic. Oakland's own Dwayne P. Wiggins, who is a local business owner and former lead vocalist and guitarist for the soulful R & B trio Tony, Toni, Tone, performed a compilation of old and new tunes. Mr. Wiggins stressed the importance of HIV testing with a story about how HIV has impacted his own life.

After the speakers had all completed their remarks, they gathered for a group HIV test onstage, where onlookers could see how easy it is to take.

Councilwoman Desley Brooks also participated in the event, greeting several representatives from participating organizations and thanking them and the management of the Eastmont Town Center for bringing the fair to the residents of East Oakland.

The following organizations participated in the Care Fair and Family Day: Volunteers of America, Bay Area; Gilead Sciences; Allen Temple AIDS Ministry; Asian Pacific Islander (API) Family Pride; Flowers Heritage Foundation; Department of Health Services; Downtown Youth Clinic; Planned Parenthood; Project Open Hand; Alameda County Office of AIDS; AIDS Healthcare Foundation; Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Diseases (WORLD); API Wellness Center; Orasure Technologies; HIV Access Family Care Network; Alameda County Medical Center; California STD/HIV Prevention Training Center; Sexual Minority Alliance of Alameda County (SMAAC); AIDS Project East Bay (APEB); West Oakland Health Center; the Office of Congresswoman Barbara Lee; Cal-Pep; HIV Education Prevention Project of Alameda County (HEPPAC); Asian Health Services; Vital Life Services; Pacific Center; La Clinica de la Raza; Tri-City Health Center; California Telephone Access Program (CTAP); Lifelong Medical Care; Pacific Gas and Electric Company; Alta Bates Summit Medical Center; American Cancer Society; East Bay Community Law Center; Oakland Fire Department; American Diabetes Association; American Heart Association; Oakland Police Department; American Red Cross; Alameda County Food Bank; Alameda County Health Consortium - HIV Dental Care Program; Ark of Refuge, Inc.; Bay Area Legal Aid; Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS); Catholic Charities of the East Bay - HIV/AIDS Services; Center for Independent Living (CIL); Children's Hospital of Oakland - Pediatric HIV/AIDS Program (Department of Infectious Diseases); East Bay Community Recovery Project (EBCRP); East Oakland Community Project (EOCP); Fred Finch Youth Center; Latino Commission on Alcohol & Drug Abuse; Mandana Community Recovery Center; and Native American Health Center.

Mayor Dellums convenes first-ever Faith Leaders Summit

(June 11, 2008) On this Tuesday, more than 85 leaders from diverse faith traditions met at the Downtown Oakland Marriot Hotel for a summit and update on HIV, Cancer, Health, and Wellness. The Summit, a first of its kind, was organized by Get Screened Oakland and co-hosted by Alta Bates Summit Medical Center and the American Cancer Society, Northern California Division. The summit's objective was to provide Oakland's diverse faith community with the latest information on HIV and cancer—two health conditions impacting Oakland and disproportionately affecting African American women and gay and bisexual men, Latino/as, and recent immigrants. In addition to the formal remarks and educational workshops offered at the summit, the following community organizations provided educational materials and outreach at the summit: Asian Health Services; API Wellness Center; East Bay AIDS Center; AIDS Project East Bay; American Cancer Society, Northern California Division; Kaiser Permanente Medical Center; Black Expo; Alameda County Office of AIDS Business Responds to AIDS; WORLD; and the Volunteers of America Mobile Testing Services and Outreach Van.

Get Screened Oakland Director Marsha Martin, DSW, welcomed the faith leaders, gave a brief overview of the day, provided some general information about cancer and HIV disease, and reviewed the purpose of the summit. Dr. Martin also discussed the importance of screening for both HIV and cancer. Recounting a comment she once heard from a faith community member in Washington, D.C., Dr. Martin said, “Don’t assume we know what you are talking about. We are faith leaders, not experts in health. If you want us to do something about HIV, you need to provide us with the necessary information. You need to provide us with the tools. We can do more, but first we need to have the skills, tools, and knowledge.”

Following Dr. Martin’s remarks, Adriann McCall, Get Screened Oakland Program Manager, welcomed the leaders, thanked them for coming to the Summit, and encouraged them to take full advantage of the opportunities to exchange information and network with one another. Ms. McCall then introduced Rev. Dr. Charley Hames, Jr., Senior Pastor of Beebe Memorial Church.

Rev. Dr. Hames opened the meeting with an invocation of praise and thanksgiving for the opportunity to share and grow together and to find solutions to Oakland’s needs. He then recounted his experience attending a meeting on HIV convened by The Balm in Gilead and shared how his very own church has joined in the efforts to raise awareness about the importance of getting tested for HIV. He also shared what his church was doing in support of HIV Testing Day: hosting a gospel concert and testing extravaganza. Rev. Dr. Hames then invited Stephanie Davenport of the Alta Bates Summit Medical Center’s Health Ministry Program and Marlyn Murry of the American Cancer Society’s (ACS’s) Northern California Division to bring greetings from their respective organizations. Ms. Davenport spoke of the Health Ministry program at Alta Bates and invited the faith leaders to contact her office to learn how Alta Bates could partner with them. Ms. Murry described the outreach and support services of the ACS and invited the faith leaders to contact ACS with their questions and concerns about the best ways to assist members of their various faith institutions.

Rev. Dr. Hames then introduced Nell Davis, a petite, 61-year-old African American, who is the grandmother of fourteen and the great grandmother of four. Ms. Davis presented a powerful personal narrative on becoming HIV-positive after remarrying later in life. She told the leaders that she had been a deacon at her church in Union City. After a divorce fourteen years earlier, she began dating another deacon in her church to whom she eventually became engaged.

In telling her story, Ms. Davis recounted how her then husband-to-be assured her that he had tested for HIV and everything was O.K. But as a new wife, she was devastated to discover through an HIV test that her husband had lied to her. Reflecting on her wedding day, she said it was once the happiest day of her life; now, she considers it the saddest.

After her diagnosis, when Ms. Davis turned to the leaders and members of her church for support, she was treated as though she had a scarlet letter tattooed on her forehead. Not blaming anyone for her plight, she recalled the story of Esther, stating she now knows her mission in life is to educate as many people as she can about HIV. “If I can help one person avoid HIV,” she said, “I will have done what is being asked of me now.” In addition to sharing her powerful story of faith, trust, and perseverance, she told the leaders that there were many people just like her in their institutions—who participate regularly but do not feel they can talk with anyone.

Next, Rev. Dr. Hames introduced Mayor Ronald V. Dellums, who delivered the morning plenary address. Mayor Dellums thanked Ms. Nell Davis for sharing her personal testimony. He also acknowledged the valuable contribution that Ms. Davenport and Ms. Murry had made by sharing information about HIV, cancer, the development of health outreach ministries, and the need to encourage screening. In his formal remarks, Mayor Dellums told how he had met a woman while traveling in South Africa. When he asked her what he should do about HIV, she advised him to tell people that “HIV is 100 percent preventable and to make sure everyone understands the importance of knowing their HIV status.”

According to Mayor Dellums, this meeting, along with his travels through Africa, had helped to firm his own conviction that HIV testing was important, and that conviction, in turn, had fueled his interest in starting Get Screened Oakland.

After seeing HIV’s impact on so many across the continent of Africa, he knew he had to do something about it closer to home. Additionally, Mayor Dellums acknowledged the need to move our collective gaze beyond HIV and towards the overall health of the community. The Mayor then challenged the faith leaders to consider an initiative to promote healthy eating and exercise—

exercise—calling for a “Get Fit Oakland” initiative modeled after Get Screened Oakland. Also, he asked them to join him in efforts to expand programs that promote healthy living and access to health care services and health information. Mayor Dellums thanked the leaders for stepping out on faith, their willingness to attend the summit to learn more about cancer and HIV, and considering a greater degree of personal involvement in Get Screened Oakland.

Following Mayor Dellums’ remarks, attendees participated in one of four educational workshops: “A Cancer Update,” moderated by Alta Bates Summit Chaplain Steven Stennis and facilitated by Rod Peterson of ACS’s California Division; a showing of the documentary film *a fearful Truth*, moderated by Rev. Keith Henderson and facilitated by filmmaker Dedocio Habib; “Developing a Health Ministry and Outreach Program,” moderated by Bishop Kevin Clark and facilitated by Stephanie Davenport; and “Spiritual Care for People Living with HIV,” moderated by Rev. Eunice Shaw and facilitated by Rev. Dr. Mark Wilson. These workshops provided participants with the opportunity to learn more about the issues that led to the need for a summit: stigma and discrimination; denial, depression, and isolation; uncertainty on how to establish a faith-based health ministry; new developments in cancer; and the importance of health screenings.

A luncheon plenary followed the workshops. Rev. Dr. Elouise Oliver of East Bay Church of Religious Science gave the luncheon invocation and served as the moderator. East Bay Church of Religious Science has been offering a program for people living with HIV for more than 20 years. Rev. Dr. Oliver said that opening doors to people living with HIV is an important call. She then introduced the luncheon speakers: Cookie Johnson, wife of Earvin “Magic” Johnson, and David Glover, Executive Director of Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal (OCCUR). Both speakers stressed the important role faith leaders play in responding to people who are impacted by HIV and/or cancer.

Ms. Johnson, through her remarks, “Love, Faith, Commitment, Hope and Life with Magic,” shared her personal journey of dating Magic off and on for 12 years during and after college and finally marrying him in 1991, six months before he tested positive for HIV. Three months later, their son was born—HIV negative. She talked about Magic agreeing to go public about his HIV and his decision to leave professional basketball. Cookie said the first person she sought out for support was her minister. She told the faith leaders how important they are in the lives of those living with HIV. She explained that she started speaking out about HIV because of the need to educate African American women, in particular, about HIV and its disproportionate impact on the African American community. Ms. Johnson explained that she felt she needed to lend her voice and time to educating as many as possible about HIV and the importance of knowing your status. She also stressed the importance of healthy living regardless of HIV status. In her family, everyone “is eating better and taking better care of themselves, just like Magic.” She explained, “I do not believe in isolating the needs of the person in the family with special health concerns. We can all eat a healthier diet.”

A spokesperson for the “I Stand with Magic” program, Ms. Johnson takes the message of living with HIV and knowing your status to communities across the United States. More information about the I Stand with Magic program can be found at www.ISTANDWITHMAGIC.org.

David Glover, Executive Director of Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal (OCCUR), followed Ms. Johnson’s remarks by asking those present to raise their hand if they have been impacted by HIV and/or cancer in any way. Nearly all of those present raised their hands. He then shared that he was a two-time survivor of cancer. After reiterating the importance of regular checks and screening for cancers, he described the activities of OCCUR and the work his organization does to develop capacity building within the faith community. Mr. Glover talked about the capacity building work of OCCUR and gave highlights from previous work with faith-based organizations. Announcing that OCCUR would be holding a workshop at City Hall on proposal development and grant writing, he encouraged the faith leaders to participate in the OCCUR’s upcoming workshops. He also challenged the faith leaders to consider getting involved on a street level, returning to the community and expanding services to reach those who have been forgotten. Specifically, Mr. Glover encouraged the faith leaders to reach out to the hardest to reach: homeless youth, those using illicit drugs, and those who feel no one cares. He gave many examples of the types of programs that could help meet the needs of the residents of Oakland. More information about OCCUR can be found at www.OCCUR.org.

Following the luncheon plenary, Rev. Dr. Damon Powell, the Get Screened Oakland Outreach Coordinator, provided a brief summary of the summit and asked the attendees to consider ways they can make a difference now that they have been informed of the need. Rev. Dr. Elouise Oliver delivered a wonderful and fitting closing, offering words of hope and thanksgiving.

Flowers Heritage Foundation and Get Screened Oakland host Think Tank Experience

(June 6 - 7, 2008) Thirty individuals from across the country, including the Bay area, came together to discuss the current state of affairs in the United States response to HIV. Beginning with the notions that “things are broken,” and “the current response is not working for some populations and in some communities,” think tank participants were led in a two-day focus-group style exercise on thinking differently about HIV and ways of “doing it differently.” The goal of the think tank was to identify, examine, and discuss strategies/intervention that could, if applied, increase the effectiveness of the U.S. HIV response, especially when it comes to addressing disparities within the epidemic. The think tank ended with participants answering the question, If you could do five things differently in HIV today, what would they be and what difference would those five things make in the U.S. response to HIV?

The retreat was facilitated by Robert Fullilove, PhD. A report from the think tank will be distributed at the XVII International AIDS Conference and the U.S. Conference on AIDS. The report will also be available on the Flower Heritage Foundation Web site later this summer.

Other Community News

Beebe Memorial Church Sponsors “Get Tested and Testify – Delivering Through Music” Gospel Concert

(June 27- 29, 2008) Get Screened Oakland partner Beebe Memorial Church sponsored a week of HIV awareness activities in support of National HIV Testing Day.

“In an effort to support National HIV Testing Day and promote awareness around prevention and treatment of HIV, we joined with Kaiser Permanente, the Flowers Heritage Foundation, Alta Alliance, Wells Fargo Banks, and Premier Source to offer free HIV screenings to members of the Bay Area community,” Rev. Dr. Charley Hames, Jr. announced. In addition to offering the Wednesday evening program, “Reaching Out through Prayer,” the Thursday evening program, “Educating through Workshops,” and the Friday evening program, “Delivering through Music,” the week of awareness provided more than 60 members of the community and congregation with HIV screenings.

Performing at the gospel concert Get Tested and Testify were Anndretta Lyle, who has performed for the Stellar Awards and BET’s Celebration of Gospel, and Desmond Pringle, one of the most talented songwriters/producers in gospel music today. Mr. Pringle starred in the hit gospel musical “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” which led to his nomination for an NAACP Image Award.

Bay Area 100 Black Women Coalition sponsors Sistahs Getting Real about HIV/AIDS Symposium

(June 21, 2008) The Oakland Bay Area Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women brought together women and men in the Bay area for a forum on women and HIV. Held at the San Francisco Public Library and funded through a grant from California Healthcare West, the forum’s purpose was to educate black women across multiple sectors about the impact HIV/AIDS is having in the African American community, to stimulate concrete and effective action to prevent the spread of HIV among black women, and to raise awareness about the intersection of HIV and AIDS in the lives of women and their relationships with health and spirituality.

Speaking at the symposium were Gloria Lockett, Executive Director of the California Prevention and Education Project (CAL-PEP); Lizabeth Williams of WORLD; Evangelist Nikki Williams Whitfield; Carla Dillard Smith, Deputy Director of Cal-PEP; Jamila Shipp of CAL-PEP; Cynara Chatman-Dillion; Melinda Pierson of the Black Coalition on AIDS; Rita Shimmin of Glide Memorial Church; Edward Machtinger, MD, Director of the Women’s HIV Program at UCSF; and Cathy Adams, Founding President Emeritus of the Oakland Bay Area Chapter, National Coalition 100 Black Women.

Some of the key themes discussed were risk factors among African American women; stigma, discrimination, and denial among HIV-positive women; betrayal and trust issues after living with a man who turns out to be homosexual; personal responsibility and HIV; teens and HIV, what you should know about HIV; and the response of the black church and HIV care services for women.

21st Annual East Bay HIV Update Held at Samuel Merritt College

(June 13, 2008) This year's HIV Update, which was presented by the East Bay AIDS Center (EBAC) of Alta Bates Summit Medical Center in cooperation with the East Bay AIDS Education and Training Center (AETC), offered eight stimulating workshops and four provocative keynote presentations to more than 200 participants. In addition to the day-long update, there was also a Thursday evening pre-conference for this year's meeting.

Focusing on the needs of men who have sex with men (MSM), the pre-conference was convened by Dr. Steve O'Brien, Medical Director of EBAC. More than seventy-five gay and bisexual men as well as some women and young adults attended this gathering of East Bay community members to discuss the unique needs of men who have sex with men in the East Bay. Some of the needs discussed were addressing isolation, the significance of the San Francisco West Bay effect (Oakland's gay invisibility in the shadow of San Francisco), missed opportunities for the development of East Bay/Oakland-specific services (people are often referred to San Francisco for gay-related services), and coping with missing links—i.e. the absence of a cohesive out network of gay and bisexual men.

Pre-conference Meeting

At a pre-conference, which was held the evening before, Dr. O'Brien reviewed the epidemiological data. Here are the estimates he presented:

California Data

HIV cases in California: 150,000

Residents unaware of HIV-positive status: 37,500 (assumes the national estimate of 20 percent of people unaware of status also applies to the state)

Number of new infections annually: 6,000

National HIV Incidence Rate for MSM, 1995 - 2005

- Community-based samples: 2.39%
- HIV test sites samples: 2.49%
- STD treatment samples: 3.84%

National MSM Prevalence Rates for HIV by Race

- White: 21%
- African American: 46%

Local MSM Prevalence Rate for HIV

- San Francisco: 25%

As the incidence and prevalence data demonstrate, men who have sex with men continue to be a population at high risk of HIV infection. Dr. O'Brien therefore raised the following question: Is HIV Prevention working in MSMs? He then provided the obvious answer: "Not as well as we would like."

Following Dr. O'Brien's presentation of data, the pre-conference attendees were divided into seven small groups to discuss the following topics: Racial Disparities; Prevention/Promoting Healthy Sexuality; Access to Medical Care (including STD screening, mental health, and substance abuse services); Young MSM Issues; MSM Activities/Venues; Structural Issues; and HIV and Advocacy and Capacity Building. The pre-conference gathering ended with reports from the small groups and a commitment to get together again to follow up on the suggestions from the small groups.

HIV Update

The 21st HIV Update officially opened Friday morning with words of welcome by Dr. Steve O'Brien and an overview of the epidemiological data. Dr. O'Brien gave an update on the new Alta Bates Summit (AB) Emergency Room HIV screening project, which is modeled after the successful Alameda County Medical Center Highland Hospital Emergency Room screening program under the direction of Dr. Douglas White.

Implementation of the screening project began in February 2008 in the AB Emergency Department, which reports about 40,000 emergency room visits per year. Operating 17 hours a day, seven days a week, the project has screened 3,100 people to date. Of those screened, 13 have been confirmed positive; there have also been 23 false positives.

In the morning's first major session, "Controversies in HIV Treatment," Drs. Steve O'Brien and Kathleen Clanon offered diverging views on the following topics: Early antiretroviral treatment (ART): Smart to Start or Foolish Fad?; HCV: To Treat or Not to Treat; and Sex and the Swiss: Playing Safe? Each presenter was given three to four minutes to present their views. The audience was then asked to vote, by a show of hands, which argument was the most logical.

In discussing the pros and cons of starting ART early, the presenters considered the new U.S. and European guidelines—which now recommend an earlier start to ART than in the past—and weighed them against the risk of unknown toxicities, the adherence issues that people on ART struggle with for life, and the high cost of treatment. Audience members were split 50-50 on whether to start ART earlier or to wait until someone's CD4 count falls into the 200 range.

On the issue of HCV treatment, the presenters contrasted its ability to suppress HCV in some patients with its high expense and disappointing effects in other patients. With HCV treatment, the audience wondered, is the glass half full or half empty? Ultimately, two-thirds of the audience voted that the benefits of HCV treatment did not outweigh its financial and human drawbacks.

The last controversial topic covered was the recent institution in Switzerland of a national HIV-related guideline. The guideline indicates that some HIV-positive people with undetectable virus can forgo condoms without risking transmission of HIV to their sexual partners. On one side of the issue, the arguments favor individuals enjoying the rewards of doing what is necessary to achieve undetectable levels and improving their quality of life. On the other side, the argument favors greater measures to prevent HIV transmission and to protect sexually active people from other STDs. When does being undetectable justify being unprotected? For the audience, the overwhelming response was never, especially given the increasing rates of syphilis in men.

Cheryl Gore Felton, PhD, of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University gave the second morning presentation, entitled "HIV and Trauma: Strategies for Building Relationships—and Dealing with Troubled Patients in a Primary Care Setting."

Dr. Gore-Felton began her work in HIV and Trauma after working with women with end stage breast cancer. In her breast cancer work, she learned about trauma and how women cope with a life-threatening illness. Following that work, she was funded to examine the role trauma plays in the lives of people living with HIV. In her research, she found that people living with HIV tend to report more traumatic life events, particularly violent ones. Her research also suggested a pattern of trauma being followed by HIV infection. Risk behavior often develops in response to traumatic experiences, she observed.

According to Dr. Gore-Felton, "Trust is at the heart of working with trauma populations—building an alliance that has rules and boundaries to create a safe environment." She finished her presentation with case examples and offered the following as best strategies for working with trauma populations: clear and enforced rules (which are in place for a reason); compassion (because rules are hard to follow, and trust is hard to gain); transparency (i.e. say what you mean and mean what you say); consistency; boundaries; consequences; and system support.

The afternoon's keynote presentations, "Beyond Condoms—What Works for Prevention" and "Lessons Learned from Working in the Developing World," were presented by Kevin Farrell, Chief of the HIV Education and Prevention Branch at the California Department of Public Health, and Catherine Lyons, BS, RN, NP, of the University of California San Francisco Health Program at SF General Hospital.

Mr. Farrell provided participants with an update from the state HIV prevention branch, sharing the data on the following page:

HIV/AIDS Case Reports for California

Population	AIDS	HIV
MSM	67%	66%
IDU	10%	8%
MSM/IDU	9%	7%
Heterosexual	6%	9%
Other	7%	10%

Cal. AIDS cases since 1981: 147, 821
 Cal. HIV cases since 2006: 24,477

Continuing his remarks, Mr. Farrell announced the introduction later this summer of a state-issued condom. Because condoms, along with syringe exchange, have been proven to be the most effective means of preventing HIV transmission, local health jurisdictions (LHJs) will distribute 3 million condoms. Along with distributing condoms, Mr. Farrell said, the following strategies comprise California’s “Prevention Menu”: increasing HIV testing, counseling, and screening; raising the bar on behavioral interventions; expanding research efforts on the efficacy of interventions; and expanding population-specific efforts for IDUs, African Americans, Latino/as, transgender people, and women.

According to Mr. Farrell, there are other challenges that still need to be addressed, including the increasing number of people living with HIV (6,000 - 9,000 new cases of HIV annually); flat funding of HIV-prevention programs; and finding ways to put new ideas to action and develop new approaches that can get California ahead of the disease.

Following a discussion about the changes that have taken place at the federal level and how the State Office of AIDS is responding to them, Mr. Farrell concluded his remarks by discussing a new report issued by the National Association of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD), entitled “Changing Hats: A National HIV Prevention Strategy.”

In her presentation, Catherine Lyons gave an overview of international work currently underway through a partnership between the University of California, San Francisco and the San Francisco General Hospital. The objective of this partnership is two-fold: to develop the skills and expand the number of health care workers; and to bring much needed HIV clinical expertise to clinics across the continent of Africa.

Ron “Kabir” Hypolite of the Alameda County Office of AIDS also spoke, marking the first time a local Office of AIDS senior official has addressed an audience at the East Bay HIV Update. Mr. Hypolite brought greetings from the office and shared some local HIV statistics: 982 individuals in the county are living with HIV without an AIDS diagnosis, and another 3,295 HIV-positive people have been diagnosed with AIDS. He talked about the importance of condom availability in the jail and reaching those who are returning to the community from local, state, and federal correctional institutions. Mr. Hypolite has been in his position for little more than five months, and once the Office of AIDS has been relocated to 1000 Broadway, he hopes to spend more time visiting and meeting the HIV providers in Alameda County.

The Update also included eight educational workshops: “Aging and HIV - Does HIV Really Make You Age Faster?” by Marshall Kubota, MD; “HIV 101 for the Non-Provider” by Claire Borkert, MD; “East Bay MSMs - Next Steps” by Steve O’Brien, MD; “Women and HIV - The XX Factor,” by Monica Gandhi, MD; “Keeping People in Care - New Strategies for Success,” by Marsha Martin, DSW; “HIV Resistance Testing - New Drugs/New Test,” by Jeffrey Burack, MD; “Oakland 2008: The Real Picture - Where are the HIV+ Youth?” by A. Daniel Ramos and the Downtown Youth Clinic Panel; and “Peer Advocacy: Evidence & Experiences - A Candid Discussion” by Kathleen Clanon, MD and a peer advocacy panel.

Alameda County Office of AIDS Hosts HIV Prevention Conference

(June 19-20, 2008) Alameda County's Office of AIDS Prevention and Care Division sponsored the conference *Prevention with Positives: Promoting Healthier Lives*. Coordinated by Shelley Stinson-Barron and Lori Williams of the Alameda County Office of AIDS, the conference brought together people living with HIV, HIV prevention providers, and HIV care and treatment providers to talk about HIV prevention with people living with HIV in 19 workshop sessions, roundtables, and town hall-style meetings. Among other topics, the sessions covered intervention strategies, working with transgender clients, having healthy sex, HIV status disclosure issues, medication adherence issues, syringe exchange, HIV from a women's perspective, street-level outreach to crack user, men who have sex with men issues, Latino community issues, re-entry of HIV-positive persons after release from correctional institutions, and addressing stigma.

The conference opened with a keynote address by Phill Wilson of the Black AIDS Institute. Mr. Wilson described the goal of the Black AIDS Institute: to stop the AIDS pandemic in Black communities by engaging and mobilizing black institutions and individuals in efforts to confront HIV. "In short, my job is to get black folks involved in fighting AIDS and creating a cultural shift in our communities," he said. Mr. Wilson concluded his remarks by telling people their next steps were to "educate, educate, and educate."

The plenary session that followed Mr. Wilson's remarks included epidemiological information on HIV/AIDS in Alameda County as well as discussions on the realities of living with HIV today and the role what the faith-based community can do to alleviate the negative effects of these realities. Each of the panelists came from a different stakeholder group in the U.S, response to HIV. The panelists were Barbara Green-Ajufo from government; KT Henderson from the faith community; Desiree Rushing from the health sector, and Bill Stewart from the community.

Sheryl Lee Ralph, renowned actress and former star of the Broadway hit *Dreamgirls*, was the second keynote speaker. During her address, Ms. Ralph spoke poignantly and eloquently about her own experience of grief and loss resulting from HIV and AIDS. She reminisced about her days on Broadway with the *Dreamgirls* cast and projected photos of her friends from the production who had succumbed to the disease. Ms. Ralph then shared how the loss of these friends had solidified her support of care, services, and prevention until a cure for HIV disease is found. She finished her remarks with a sincere and rousing call for continued commitment and action and gave statistics and information that illustrated the epidemic's present state of emergency. After her keynote, Ms. Ralph remained at the conference to participate in some of its workshops.

The Bay Area Regional African American AIDS State of Emergency Coalition convened a town hall-style panel discussion to review and discuss the impact of HIV and the response in the African American community. Gwen Rowe Lee of the Bay Area Coalition for Health Care moderated the town hall. Speaking on the panel were Robert Williams, of UCSF's 'Mpowerment' Program; Cathy Adams of the Bay Area Coalition of 100 Black Women; Cheryl Walker of the NAACP's Oakland Chapter; and Viera Whye of Silicon Valley's Coalition of 100 Black Women. Their discussion focused on the role each could play in addressing HIV and ways to bring in non-traditional partners. Recognizing that HIV is 100 percent preventable, each speaker was asked to identify people, places, and partners who could help to make a difference in the current epidemic. They looked especially at the roles men and women could play together.

Also speaking at the conference was Ron "Kabir" Hypolite, who is now in his fifth month as Director of the Office of AIDS for Alameda County. He began with a story: a man had a dream about a beach, waves, and beautiful black birds with their heads in the sand. Continuing, he explained that he was the man in this story; the waves were HIV; and the birds—whose heads remained stuck in the sand until the big waves of HIV swept them out to sea—were the conference attendees. He told this metaphorical "story" to caution people about the dangers of avoidance and inaction in the face of HIV/AIDS.

Lori Williams, Director of Care Services at the Alameda County Office of AIDS, gave a closing summary of the two-day meeting, providing highlights of the plenary sessions, keynotes, and workshop.

In addition to the workshops, the conference provided chances to win great raffle prizes (MP3 players; spa treatments, gift baskets, etc.) and dine to the sounds of a Motown Revue and musical tribute to Phyllis Hyman.

Community Calendar 2008

Upcoming Events and Dates to Keep in Mind

July

- Sa. 7/19 11th Annual La Clinica de la Raza Community Health Fair; Cesar Chavez Community Center, 2825 International Blvd., Oakland; 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. For more information, contact A. Fabian at afabian@laclinica.org.
- Th. 7/17
way, Community Thank You Party; Everett and Jones Barbeque-Jack London Sq., 126 Broadway, Oakland; 5:00 p.m.- 7:00 p.m. Come ready to have some good old-fashioned fun. For more information, call Damon at 510-238-6291.
- Su. 7/20 San Francisco AIDS Walk. Join Team Get Screened Oakland and walk to support the Bay area's HIV/AIDS services.. For more information, link to www.aidswalk.net/sanfran/.
- .Th. 7/24 Kick Off Party - East Bay AIDS Walk; Washington Inn, 495 10th St., Oakland; 5:30 -7:30 p.m., RSVP to 888-510-EBAW.

August

- M. 8/3 - Su. 8/8 XVII International AIDS Conference 2008, Mexico City, Mexico;
Theme: Universal Action Now.
- Sa. 8/23 2nd Annual HIV/AIDS Awareness Evening at the Bench and Bar, sponsored by Grupo Fremont VIP—very international program. HIV testing from 5:00 p.m.- 9:00 p.m., 2111 Franklin St., Oakland. For more information, contact Ron at 94538@yahoo.com.
- 8/25—8/28 New Era, New Act: Ryan White Grantee Meeting and 11th Clinical Update; Marriot Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, DC.
- M 8/25 - Th. 8/28 Democratic National Convention: Denver 2008.

September

- M 9/1 - 9/4 2008 Republican National Convention; Minneapolis/St. Paul.
- Sa. 9/6 East Bay AIDS Walk, Lake Merritt. For more information, contact Kim at pathwaysconsultant.com.
- Th. 9/18 - 9/21 U.S. Conference on AIDS; Miami, FL. For more information, send e-mail to conference@nmac.org or call 202-483-6622.