

Highlights from a Busy Month for the HIV/AIDS Community

Labor Day Special: “Free Condoms, Free Lube, Free HIV Tests”

(July 30 – Sept. 1, 2008) Art and Soul 2008 brought together the greater Oakland community for three days of food, music, and art in downtown Oakland. As part of Get Screened Oakland’s ongoing HIV education and outreach services, the California Prevention Education Project (CAL-PEP) provided HIV screening on all three days of the event. Eighty-seven people were screened for HIV. In addition, passersby were able to pick up free HIV prevention information as well as condoms and lube.

On the second day of the event, Get Screened Oakland sponsored the Art and Soul Main Stage—handing out condoms, lube and information to more than 1,500 attendees at the performances in front of Oakland’s City Hall.

Thank you to CAL-PEP.

2008 East Bay AIDS Walk more than doubles last year’s success

(September 6, 2008) More than 450 people joined together to raise a record-breaking \$103,000 at the 4th annual East Bay AIDS Walk. Television and movie actor Lamman Rucker joined Mayor Ronald V Dellums, Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, California State Assemblyman Sandre Swanson, and Community Activist and Promoter Joe Hawkins to kick-off the 3.2 mile walk around Lake Merritt in downtown Oakland.

This year’s walk, co-chaired by Gloria Crowell and Get Screened Oakland’s Adriann McCall, surpassed all previous records. Get Screened Oakland wishes to acknowledge the following for their contributions to the success of this year’s walk:

- Positively Speaking for providing the most walkers: 88. Maurice Graham of the East Bay Church of Religious Science coordinates the Positively Speaking program.
- Dr. Ann Petru and the Children’s Hospital HIV Team for raising the most funds— \$12,500—for East Bay’s HIV services and programs.
- Cheerleading Team from Bishop O’Dowd High School for providing the most lively cheers and chants.

After a morning of walking around Oakland’s Lake Merritt and talking about HIV, AIDS Walk participants were treated to a BBQ lunch of hot dogs and hamburgers provided by Volunteers of America. Thank you to the walk’s corporate and community partners: Starbucks Coffee, Walgreens, Flowers Heritage Foundation, Gilead Sciences, OraSure Technologies, Kaiser Permanente, Farmacia Remedios, and Alameda County Office of AIDS. Bravo to the honorary committee of more than 15 locally elected officials from Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Next year, 2009, will mark the 5th anniversary of the annual East Bay AIDS Walk. Let’s set the bar at \$250,000 and 1,000 walkers.

National African HIV/AIDS Initiative launched

(September 11-13, 2008) Many HIV and health care-related providers do not distinguish between Africans and African Americans in their data systems. This can lead to the invisibility of the African immigrant population. It can also lead to cultural competence challenges in the delivery of health services. In several large metropolitan areas, African-born immigrants are beginning to outnumber African Americans in the local HIV testing and treatment programs.

In response to these challenges, the Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has launched a new initiative: the National African HIV/AIDS Initiative (NAHI), which is designed to improve the health outcomes of African refugees and immigrants living in the United States. The main purpose of the initiative is to develop culturally competent HIV advocacy, care, treatment, education, and research that focus on African-born immigrants. The initiative is an African-peer oriented program.

More specifically, NAHI's objectives are to create a national platform that 1) increases the availability of targeted HIV resources, 2) facilitates the development of educational materials and programs that reflect the cultural diversity of African populations in the United States, and 3) develops and implements a data-collection mechanism that captures the dynamics of the changing needs of this growing population.

The Oakland/East Bay region is home to a large number of African immigrants. For this reason, Get Screened Oakland was invited to participate in a three-day meeting in Rockville, MD, which is in the Washington, DC-Metro area. The meeting was the last in series of NAHI meetings that took place over the last year and a half. Other meeting locations were Seattle, WA, Boston, MA, and Atlanta, GA.

The Rockville NAHI meeting brought together more than 200 African-born immigrants from over 20 African countries. It included discussions on HIV education and outreach services for African immigrants, advocacy issues, HIV prevention and care programs that focus on immigrant populations, young people living in African communities within the United States, model HIV programs, and results from rapid assessment programs. Keynote addresses were given by the following individuals:

- Kevin Cranston, Director of the HIV/AIDS Bureau at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, who presented a data update and reviewed the bureau's efforts to reach African immigrants in the Boston-Metro area
- Christopher Bates, Director of Office of HIV/AIDS Policy at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), who discussed the challenges confronting this invisible population and encouraged meeting attendees to continue to develop their programs and advocacy agendas
- Dr. Magnus Azuine of the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University, who gave an overview of the issues confronting African-born immigrants as they try to access HIV services

African immigrants are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. black population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the number of Africans immigrating to the United States more than quadrupled in the last two decades. Their number—109, 733 for the years 1960 to 1980—rose to 531, 832 for the years 1981 to 2000. For more information about NAHI and reports from the summits, visit the Web site for the Office of Minority Health at www.omhrc.gov.

Congresswoman Barbara Lee hosts congressional briefing on men who have sex with men (MSM) and the global HIV/AIDS epidemic

(September 15, 2008) Congresswoman Lee and several of her House and Senate colleagues gathered for a briefing dedicated to exploring the importance of understanding and responding to the HIV epidemic among men who have sex with men in light of the continuing and growing global pandemic. The briefing continued discussions that had begun in August at the 2008 International AIDS Conference (see GSO newsletter from September 2008). The briefing was sponsored by the Men Who Have Sex with Men and HIV Global Forum (MSMGF), among others.

As funds and resources to expand services and programs for the global HIV/AIDS pandemic expand, program administrators and advocates who specialize in the service needs of MSM are asking that attention turn toward the realities of this population. The

briefing speakers echoed this point in their remarks, cautioning that until MSM needs are addressed, there will be little progress in mitigating the global epidemic. The speakers also presented epidemiological and surveillance highlights that demonstrated the relationship and connections between the worldwide MSM epidemic and the global pandemic.

The following individuals gave presentations at the briefing:

- Chris Beyrer of the Center for Public Health and Human Rights at Johns Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health, who provided an epidemiological update on HIV among MSM in low- and middle-income countries, which showed increases in the numbers of HIV-positive MSM.
- Robert Carr, Executive Director of the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition, who reviewed the relationship between gender-biased attitudes and advocacy and protections for MSM in the Caribbean region, and highlighted the need for structural intervention.
- Kevin Frost, CEO of the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amFAR), who reported on amFAR's research into global access to HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment services for MSM, and stressed the need to build much more upon effective models of intervention for MSM.
- Dr. Paul Semugoma, Founder of Uganda's Frank and Candy, a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) health and HIV information organization, who reviewed recent actions against gay and bisexual men and HIV advocates in Uganda and emphasized the need to establish human rights protections. In addition, Dr. Semugoma discussed the impact of stigma and discrimination on members of the Ugandan GLBTI community as well as the recent jailing of some gay and out men who were attempting to attend a Global Fund meeting in Kampala, Uganda.

The staff of Get Screened Oakland attended the briefing. The briefing's other sponsoring organizations were AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA), Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), amFAR, The AIDS Institute, AIDS Action, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, and the MSMGF. For information about MSMGF, visit www.apla.org.

Key Outcomes from Mexico City: AIDS 2008

(September 15, 2008) Staff from Get Screened Oakland attended an event hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) on the outcomes of the XVII International AIDS Conference (IAC) in Mexico City.

The event offered a panel discussion on these outcomes, which was moderated by Jennifer Kates, Vice President and Director of HIV Policy for KFF. The panelists were Craig McClure, Executive Director of the International AIDS Society, Dr. Kevin Fenton, Director of the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention, J. Stephen Morrison, Director of CSIS' Center on Global Health, and Katherine Bliss, Deputy Director and Senior Fellow of CSIS' Americas Program.

Mr. McClure provided some statistics about attendance at AIDS 2008, the second largest International AIDS Conference ever. There were 24,000 delegates, half of whom were first-time attendees. Forty percent were from the Latin America/Caribbean region; 24% from North America, 16% from Asia, 12% from Africa; and 10% from Europe.

He then turned his attention to the conference's content. He said that there were key messages that the International AIDS Society—his organization and the IAC convener—wanted to drive home during the conference. They included the following three:

- 1) In order to strengthen the global response to HIV, HIV treatment must be linked to HIV prevention. And, he observed, HIV testing is an important bridge between the two. Because HIV testing is a means of diagnosis, it can open the way to treatment. Mr. McClure also said the earlier HIV is treated, the better it is for the individual.

As he explained, HIV causes chronic inflammation from the beginning of infection. As HIV disease progresses, this inflammation damages vital organs, such as the heart, liver, and kidneys. Treatment helps to reduce the consequences of this inflammation. It can also reduce viral load. According to Mr. McClure, reducing viral load may help to reduce the likelihood of transmission. In these ways, treatment supports prevention. In working to tighten the link between treatment and

and prevention, it is also important for countries to develop national strategies that protect against HIV discrimination, Mr. McClure added. Such strategies should also establish mechanisms to enforce protections against discrimination, he added.

- 2) The idea that the response to HIV damages health systems, especially in low-income countries, must be put to rest. As a number of major reports, including one by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, have concluded, the expansion of HIV health services in developing countries is actually contributing to the strengthening of health systems, Mr. McClure said. For example, HIV resources have helped to build clinics, labs, and train new health workers. Nonetheless, HIV care must become less of a specialized area, he said. It must be integrated with reproductive health, primary health, maternal health, and TB treatment and care so that it's much more a part of routine care.
- 3) It's important to recognize the one-size responses can't fit the context of each and every epidemic. Because the exact nature of an HIV epidemic varies from one country to the next, so, too, must the response. This notwithstanding, HIV infections tend to be concentrated in three populations in countries outside sub-Saharan Africa: sex workers, gay and other men who have sex with men, and people who use injection drugs. Thus, responses should be inclusive of all three populations.

Dr. Fenton gave an abbreviated presentation on the new estimates of HIV in the United States in his presentation, *Current Trends, Future Challenges*. In 2006, an estimated 56,300 new HIV infections occurred in the United States, 73% were among men, 27% among women. Estimates for the percentage of new HIV infections by transmission category were as follows: MSM-53%, Hetero-31%, IDU-12%, MSM who also inject drugs-4%. In conclusion, Dr. Fenton summarized his talk with these three bullets:

- HIV/AIDS continues to evolve in the U.S. with a high burden among MSM of all races and African Americans, Hispanics.
- Major challenges remain in meeting unmet need, increasing coverage of effective prevention interventions, and expanding the cadre of culturally competent interventions.
- Renewed commitment to mobilizing communities, HIV testing, intensifying and targeting prevention efforts [is] needed.

Stephen Morrison and Katherine Bliss discussed the implications of convening AIDS 2008 in the Latin American region, which enabled 6,000 delegates from the region to participate. There are an estimated 1.3 million people living with HIV in the region. Holding the conference in Mexico City allowed the region to showcase both challenges and opportunities, they explained. For example, Mexican President Felipe Calderon, during the opening ceremony of the conference, committed to establishing universal access to treatment and pharmaceuticals. Jorge Saavedra, Mexico's openly gay head of the Centro Nacional para la Prevencion de VIH/SIDA (CENSIDA), spoke out against policies that criminalize homosexuality in a region where gay and bisexual men are 33 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the rest of the population. The conference also marked the first time a sex worker addressed the delegates during a plenary session. Elena Reynage, Founder and Executive Director of the Argentine Association of Female Sex Workers, spoke about the need for programs targeting sex workers.

To see the event in full—or to download an audiotape or read the transcript, link to http://www.csis.org/component?option=com_csis_events/task/view/id,1772/.

Congressman Henry Waxman holds hearing on U.S. HIV epidemic

(September 16, 2008) Get Screened Oakland staff attended a congressional hearing on HIV. The hearing, *The Domestic Epidemic is Worse than We Thought: A Wake-Up Call for HIV Prevention*, was held at the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill.

Congressman Henry Waxman (D-CA) chairs the Oversight and Reform Committee, which convened the hearing. In addition to Representative Waxman, the attending committee members were Representatives Tom Davis, R-VA; Diane Watson, D-CA; Christopher Shays, R-CT; John Sarbanes, D-MD; Jackie Speier, D-CA, and Maxine Waters, D-CA.

During the hearing, committee members heard witness testimony on the state of the U.S. epidemic and the implications of the

surveillance data that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released at the 2008 International AIDS Conference. The witnesses were as follows:

CDC Director, Julie Gerberding, MD, MPH; Kevin Fenton, MD, PhD, Director of CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention; Anthony S. Fauci, MD, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH); David Holtgrave, PhD, Professor and Chair of the Department of Health, Behavior and Society at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; Adaora Adimora, MD, MPH, of the Division of Infectious Diseases at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine; George Ayala, PsyD, of RTI International and AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA); Heather Hauck, MSW, LICSW, Director of the Maryland AIDS Administration and Chair-Elect of the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD); and Frank J. Oldham, Jr., President of the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA).

Chairman Waxman permitted a lively discussion and encouraged the witnesses to think differently about the U.S. response to HIV/AIDS and to reconsider budget requests in light of the new data. In addition, Rep. Waters asked them for their comments on the Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI). Both she and Rep. Watson expressed frustration with the state of HIV in the African American community, challenging Drs. Fauci, Fenton, and Gerberding on the lack of urgency in responding to the new data. Full transcripts and video recording of the hearing can be found on Chairman Waxman's Committee Web site: www.oversight.house.gov.

Looking Back, Moving Forward: this year's USCA theme

(September 18-21, 2008) Following the relocation of this year's U.S. Conference on AIDS (USCA) from Miami Beach to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, more than 3,000 delegates gathered for workshops, roundtables, seminars, and institutes on best practices, new models, updated science, new ideas, and advocacy strategies designed to enhance and strengthen the U.S. response to HIV/AIDS. The annual conference is convened and coordinated by the National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC).

In the words of Paul Kwata, NMAC's Executive Director, the conference theme, *Looking Back, Moving Forward*, serves as "a tribute to the milestones achieved toward ending HIV/AIDS, while keeping in mind the work that still needs to be done to make AIDS history." He further stated, "The theme is reflected throughout this year's program of more than 150 cutting-edge plenary sessions, institutes, seminars, workshops, roundtables, and poster sessions: all of which promise insight into the state of AIDS today."

Staff of Get Screened Oakland, AIDS Project of the East Bay (APEB), CAL-PEP, SMAAC, and Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Diseases (WORLD) attended and participated in the conference. This article summarizes some of the conference's highlights.

The opening breakfast plenary session, *Soy...la voz del cambio. I am...A Voice for Change: Heroes in the Response to the Latino HIV/AIDS Crisis*, drew its title from the first Spanish-language media campaign to profile Latinos living with HIV and their loved ones. Moderated by Univision Correspondent Teresa Rodriguez, the session featured an intimate conversation with the following representatives of the Latino response to HIV: Guillermo Chacon of the Latino Commission on AIDS; Carmen Zorillo, MD, an OB-GYN from Puerto Rico; and Damaris, an HIV-positive woman, and her mother. The plenary was the product of a collaborative effort among the following organizations: the Kaiser Family Foundation, Univision, and the Latino Commission on AIDS.

To Commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI), a luncheon plenary session featured video messages from U.S. Representative Maxine Waters and Delegate Donna Christensen as well as remarks from Dr. Beny Primm, Executive Director of the Addiction Research and Treatment Corporation (ARTC), Public Health Consultant Miguelina Leon, and Ernest Hopkins of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. Collectively, their remarks provided an overview of this historic initiative and a review of its progress to date.

Begun in 1998, the MAI has provided millions of dollars to strengthen organizational capacity and expand HIV-related services in minority communities across the United States, Dr. Primm said. In outlining how the MAI came to be, he stressed the importance of working both inside and outside government regulatory and legislative processes. "There were people working on the

like Congresswoman Maxine Waters and the Congressional Black Caucus.

Ms. Leon walked through the steps taken in the advocacy, legislative, and regulatory processes in order to create the MAI. She emphasized the need for ongoing advocacy to keep the initiative funded. Mr. Hopkins, who described the legislative aspects of the MAI effort, said the decision to focus on race and ethnicity issues resulted in less attention on—and resources for—gay and bisexual men of color. This invisibility has resulted in worse outcomes for these men, he added. Mr. Hopkins went on to say, “Gay and bisexual men of color must now assert an advocacy and health care agenda that addresses the specific and particular needs left out of the discussion ten years ago.”

The plenary luncheon on September 20 featured Veronica Jenkins, MD, who is the Medical Director of Family and Medical Counseling Services in Washington, DC. Dr. Jenkins presented an update on new treatment options for persons living with HIV/AIDS. Entitling her remarks *Testing, Testing 1..2..3...The Essential Role of Diagnostics in Managing HIV Disease*, Dr. Jenkins talked about new and essential diagnostic tools and lab tests for people with HIV. She described how the new diagnostic tools help to improve treatment outcomes and how the new lab tests assist clinicians in identifying the correct course of treatment and treatment regimen for people living with HIV and HBV.

The closing plenary luncheon, *HIV/AIDS Issues Affecting Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM)* featured remarks by Sean Strub, Founder of POZ Magazine. Mr. Strub described the early days of the U.S. epidemic and the involvement and activism of HIV-positive people. He then challenged people to renew their commitment to addressing HIV in the U.S. and around the globe. His remarks were followed by a plenary panel, which included Rashad Burgess, Acting Chief of CDC’s Capacity Building Branch.

Mr. Burgess gave an overview of the U.S. epidemic among men who have sex with men. Following his remarks, a panel of speakers, all of whom were living with HIV, shared their personal experiences coming out, struggling with loss, and coming to terms with their gay identity and HIV status. The panelists were Jose Antonio Vargas, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter for *The Washington Post*, Tommy Chesbro, an NMAC Board member, Fashion Designer Esra Tuaolo, Former Atlanta Falcon Jack Mackenroth, and “Noah’s Arc” actor, Wilson Cruz.

Get Screened Oakland participated in and helped to facilitate the daylong institute, *Why U.S. Activists are Key to Global AIDS Advocacy*. The Institute, sponsored by the IAS, focused on a wide range of topics, including global AIDS epidemiology, global lessons on working with vulnerable communities, and the effect of U.S. policies on the global AIDS response. In addition, the Institute examined global and national funding structures. The objectives of the session were 1) to increase knowledge on global AIDS issues, strategies, and advocacy, 2) to increase participants’ ability to draw parallels between the global AIDS response and the U.S. response; and 3) to increase understanding of global AIDS advocacy issues and effective advocacy strategies.

The agenda for the Institute comprised the following presentations, which were delivered by an international group of experts: *Overview of MSM Epidemiology in the Global South*, presented by Robert Oelrichs of the World Bank; *Issues Reaching the Hardly Reached*, presented by Richard Burzynski of the International Conference on AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO), Penelope Saunders of the Sex Worker Outreach Project, Robert Carr of Jamaica’s Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVCC), and Othoman Mellouk of the Moroccan NGO Network on HIV/AIDS. In addition, Beri Hull of the International Community of Women Living with HIV and AIDS (ICW) reviewed the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV (GIPA) principle. Smita Baruah of the Global Health Council presented and reviewed global and national funding structures; and Eric Sawyer offered remarks on global AIDS advocacy. At the end of the day, Dr. Robert Fullilove of Columbia University, who is an NMAC Board member, summarized the key points raised during the Institute.

What follows on this and the following page is a sampling of the USCA workshops attended by GSO Staff.

Cause-Marketing Prevention Strategies

In our new world of communication, it is imperative that organizations have the capability to interface with clients and customers in a variety of ways. Recognizing this need, Cable Positive, an organization that works with the cable television industry to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, presented a workshop, *Cause-Marketing Prevention Strategies: Using Media to Impact Outreach Efforts*.

The workshop provided an overview of innovative media strategies that could be used in a public education campaign or in providing information to clients. Methods discussed included nontraditional means of communication, including blogs, text messages, video messages, and online social networks (Facebook, MySpace, etc.) to reach wider audiences.

African Americans and HIV/AIDS Institute: The Board is at Play

While HIV may be “just a virus,” its presence has a social and psychological effect in communities of color. In this workshop, African American men and women discussed racism, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, and other issues. To guide the discussion, Quadrant Behavior Therapy was used as a tool that attaches power and preference to social identity dynamics. The groups discussed how power and privilege based on race and gender play a role in relationships.

International Faith Exchange to Address AIDS

The Balm in Gilead hosted *International Faith Exchange to Address AIDS*, a two-part panel discussion. Founded nearly twenty years ago, The Balm in Gilead works to improve the health status of people of the African Diaspora by building the capacity of faith communities to address life-threatening diseases, especially HIV/AIDS.

During the event, panelists discussed the mission of The Balm in Gilead and its efforts to reduce the spread of HIV and its effects in both Africa and North America. The panel drew parallels between the epidemic among persons of African descent on both continents, and outlined the ways in which a The Balm’s faith-based response has been effective in supporting both individuals and communities in their efforts against the virus.

Bridging the Gap between HIV/AIDS and the Faith Community

The session sought to highlight effective HIV prevention efforts in the Philadelphia community. The discussion, led by presenters Bridgette and William Brawner, often centered on finding ways to begin to involve a greater number of faith leaders in the response to HIV/AIDS. Many of the strategies discussed called for more HIV education for the local clergy.

The presenters also spoke in detail about a faith-based summit, which they were able to sponsor for clergy members as part of their own efforts to inform them about the virus and how they could help to increase HIV awareness and reduce transmission.

HIV-RAAP Preventing the Spread of HIV among Heterosexual African American Men and Women through a Gender and Culture Sensitive Coeducational Intervention

In this workshop, presenters Jamilla Perry and Ellen Yancy outlined the approach and design of an educational intervention that was developed specifically to inform African American women and men about HIV prevention. The intervention stresses the importance of gaining the trust and buy-in of its participants. In order to achieve these goals, the intervention calls for discussions with key community members, upon their recruitment into the intervention, and negotiating the rules for safe space and dialogue about sensitive topics, such as African American sexuality.

The Role of the Black Church in Confronting HIV/AIDS in the African American Community

In this session, Presenter Natasha Davis reviewed and discussed the findings of a qualitative study that identified the HIV-response efforts of 14 churches in the African American community. Much of the discussion was given to the issue of cultural sensitivity and how it can enhance the effectiveness of health-related organizations as they attempt to collaborate with faith communities within the African-American context. One of this session’s primary aims was to help health professionals and their organizations to see how effective their work can be when they engage in effective dialogue and partnership with African American faith-based institutions.

What’s Prison got to do with it? Project UNSHACKLE: Constructing a Policy Agenda for HIV Prevention Advocacy and Criminal Justice System Reform

This workshop provided information on the high rates of HIV among people who are incarcerated. Presenters Laura McTighe and James Learned provided an overview of the prison industrial complex and explored both internal and external factors that promote the spread of HIV among prison populations. During the workshop discussion, it became clear that new legislation is needed to support efforts to curb the rise in infection rates and to aid in reforming prisons and the criminal justice system.

Urban Coalition on HIV/AIDS Prevention Services Hold Quarterly Meeting

(September 22-23, 2008) UCHAPS members chose to hold their quarterly meeting immediately after USCA. The meeting, which was modeled after the successful think tank that the Flowers Heritage Foundation recently sponsored, had representatives from UCHAPS' eight member cities discuss all aspects of HIV prevention services, including counseling and testing, partner services, evidence-based interventions, capacity building, and program and data evaluation. The one-day think tank was facilitated by Robert Fullilove. During the think tank, participants outlined "what was working and what was not working" in their respective jurisdictions and discussed the possibility of holding additional think tanks of similar schedule and structure in their cities/jurisdictions.

Get Screened Oakland attends the Annual Legislative Conference of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation

(September 24-27, 2008) In the closing days of the month, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Foundation held its 38th Annual Legislative Conference in Washington, DC under the theme *Embracing the Promise, Realizing the Vision*. In an online letter from members of the CBC, the annual conference was described as follows:

The Annual Legislative Conference is a time for [the African American community] to gather from around the country, present our shared issues, brainstorm resolutions and establish an action plan for the coming year. We look forward to your contribution as we move forward to address the issues that disproportionately impact African Americans.

Among the issues covered at the conference that disproportionately impact African Americans were the U.S. HIV and STD epidemics.

Ending the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Black America

(September 25, 2008) Congresswoman Barbara Lee sponsored *Race, Sex and Politics - Ending the Scourge of HIV/AIDS in Black America*, an important braintrust on HIV. The braintrust focused on the implications of the new data released from the CDC and the report released during the International AIDS Conference by The Black AIDS Institute—"Left Behind." Dr. Melanie Tervalon, Director, National Diversity Institute for Culturally Competent Care, Kaiser Permanente served as the moderator of the session. On the panel were Congresswoman Donna Christensen, Dr. Kevin Fenton of the CDC, Phill Wilson of The Black AIDS Institute, C. Virginia Fields of National Black Leadership on AIDS, Dr. Shannon Hader, of the Washington, DC HIV/AIDS Administration, Dr. Pierre Vigilante, Director of the DC Department of Health, and Naomi Long of Drug Policy Alliance.

The discussion focused on what could be done to address the staggering problem of HIV in the African American community, how to develop and deliver culturally competent care, and how to secure funding to strengthen and sustain programs serving members of the African American community. The topics of discussion included the importance of testing, the need to develop a national strategy, addressing stigma, homophobia, discrimination, and the need for comprehensive sexuality education in public schools.

African Americans and STDs—A Silent Epidemic – Special Session

(September 26, 2008) In a statement issued in April, National STD Awareness Month, the late Congresswoman Stephanie Jones Tubbs called on her colleagues in the U.S. Congress to focus greater attention on activities related to the prevention, screening and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. Ms. Tubbs said that the United States currently has the highest rate of sexually transmitted diseases, and almost half of the infections occur in young people between the ages of 15 and 24. The high infection rate in the U.S. costs more than \$15 billions per year. In an effort to educate her constituents, Congresswoman Tubbs' office organized a forum on STDs.

The forum hosted a panel discussion that focused on the disproportionate and often detrimental impact STDs have on African Americans—especially young African American women—and the important role testing, prevention, and education play in efforts to curb the STD epidemic. Forum panelists included Jo A. Valentine, Chief of the CDC's Division of STD Prevention, who provided an overview of the STD epidemic in the United States, with a focus on the racial and ethnic disparities. Another panelist, Dr. Karen Ashby, Director of the Medical Student Clerkship in Case Western Reserve, OH, discussed myriad challenges in treating STDs from a health care providers perspective. Dr. Estelle Whitney, an OB/GYN with more than 20 years of practice,

discussed STDs among seniors. Reverend Edwin Sanders, Senior Servant of the Metropolitan Interdenominational Church, spoke about STDs from a faith-based perspective. Finally, Lesha Kimbrough and Gloribel Rodriguez, students offered two student perspectives on STDs and peer outreach services in the schools. The Office of the late Stephanie Jones Tubbs organized the panel.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Passage of legislation to facilitate HIV testing

On September 29, 2008, Governor Schwarzenegger signed two very important pieces of legislation that Mayor Dellums and the Oakland intergovernmental team helped to bring to fruition:

AB 1894 compels insurers operating in California to cover the cost of routine HIV testing in medical and health settings, such as emergency rooms and community clinics.

AB 2899 will now allow testing centers to streamline and improve the testing process by eliminating the need for comprehensive, but oftentimes repetitive, HIV prevention education and counseling.

Thank you Governor Schwarzenegger and everyone who worked on this.

Community Calendar 2008
Upcoming Events and Dates to Keep in Mind

October

- W. 15 National Latino AIDS Awareness Day
- Th. 10/16 Bay Area National Latino AIDS Awareness Day Commemoration; La Pena, 3105 Shattuck Ave., Berkely, CA; 6:00-9:00 p.m.
- Tu. 10/21 - Th. 10/23 The 2008 Black Church Institute on HIV/AIDS and Other Health Disparities; The Balm in Gilead; Founders Inn and Conference Center, Virginia Beach, VA. For more information, link to www.balmingilead.org.
- Sa. 10/25 - W.10/29 American Public Health Association's 2008 136th Annual Meeting & Exposition: San Diego Convention Center, San Diego, CA. For more information, link to www.apha.org.

November

- Tu. 11/25 City Hall Brown Bag Lunch and Film on Women and HIV; 11:45 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
- Tu. 11/25 Town Hall and Global Forum on MSM; Oakland City Hall; 6:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m.
- Su. 11/30 **Save the Date:** Interfaith Service; details to be determined.

December

- M. 12/01 **Save the Date:** World AIDS Day Commemoration; Oakland City Hall ; 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.