

Get Screened Oakland: The Highlights

Oakland participates in Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS

(March 1-8, 2009) Oakland faith institutions joined thousands across the United States to celebrate, commemorate and participate in the national Black Church prayer and healing program of The Balm in Gilead, Inc. The program, which began in Harlem, NY in 1989, is designed to encourage, support and assist faith institutions that primarily serve people of African descent to hold ecumenical services and community programs in AIDS awareness, education, healing and spiritual renewal during the first week of March.

The Oakland/East Bay community participated in this year's commemoration of the Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS. What follows are some highlights of the community's activities.

A Community Ecumenical Service

On Sunday, March 1, Reverend Timothy Manly and the Amos Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church hosted an ecumenical service of healing and renewal. Congresswoman Barbara Lee and 100 community members joined in the celebration, which brought together leaders and representatives from a diverse network of Oakland and East Bay faith institutions.

The network included representatives from the following faith institutions:

Allen Temple Baptist Church
Amos Temple CME Church
City of Refuge and Liberation Ministries
Cosmopolitan Baptist Church

Imani Community Church
St. Benedict Catholic Church
Tapestry Ministries
Wo'se Community Church

The program for the ecumenical service blended spiritual enlightenment and worship with community support, song and dance, personal testimony and HIV/AIDS information. It included a libation ceremony officiated by Minister Greg Hodge, a personal testimony by Sister Nell Davis, an HIV/AIDS 101 Update by Dr. Robert Scott, and a message of renewal from Rev. Robert E. Collins.

In addition, the program provided space for a healing circle of prayer and a love offering. Once collected, the offering was presented to the Sexual Minority Alliance of Alameda County (SMAAC) in support of their efforts to reach at-risk youth. Roosevelt Mosby, Executive Director of SMAAC, accepted the goodwill love offering on behalf of all of the youth in need of a supportive and nurturing community. The Imani Praise Dancers and the East Bay Church of Religious Science Choir offered movement and musical performances respectively. Minister Rhonda White-Warner and Rev. Damon Powell, Outreach Coordinator for Get Screened Oakland, led the worship service.

As he was pouring the libations to the ancestors, Min. Hodge said those who went before us worked hard to create the "way" for us. Now, "service to people living with HIV" is the rent paid in their honor." Sis. Nell Davis told attendees that HIV is a wake up call for each of us – not just for "those" people, but for all of us. "We all must learn to work from a place of compassion and hold each other in our heart," she said. Dr. Robert Scott, an HIV physician who has been in practice for more than 20 years, reflected on his two decades of experience. He spoke of the early days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and contrasted it with his experience today. Then, he was treating people who were preparing to die. Now, he treats those who are living with the disease.

He said current treatments and services are nothing short of a miracle. Reverend Robert E. Collins presented the following guidances:

- Change your thinking, change your life.
- All of us are whole, perfect and complete, made in the image of the one true God.
- We must see others as we see ourselves: whole, perfect and complete.
- We must love one another as the one true God loves us.
- We must all get ourselves into alignment: Yes, this is the wake up call.

As the service concluded, Sis. Nell Davis offered this call to commitment:

“Church, we are the body of Christ. We are the body of Christ with HIV and AIDS. If we choose, we can make a difference. If we choose, we can contribute to the healing of AIDS in our homes, in our churches, in our bodies, in our minds, in our spirituality. My sisters and brothers, our parents and children are infected with HIV. Our community is living and dying with AIDS. If we choose, our blocks to acceptance and healing can be removed. We can choose compassion. We can choose to respond. With your time, love, we are the body of Christ. We chose to respond that AIDS may be healed. We pray and act for the healing of AIDS.”

Founder of The Balm in Gilead closes Week of Prayer in Oakland

(March 7-9, 2009) Pernessa Seele, Founder and CEO of The Balm in Gilead, spent a long weekend in Oakland to participate in community events in support of Oakland’s Black Church community. Her first stop on the whirlwind weekend tour was Scotts Restaurant at Jack London Square on Saturday for the First Ladies and Women in Leadership Luncheon.

The luncheon was sponsored by Get Screened Oakland and hosted by Ms. Mayberry, the wife of Rev. Harold Mayberry of the First African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, Oakland, CA. The gathering provided an opportunity to enlist the twenty women attending in efforts to increase awareness about HIV.

Among those who joined Ms. Mayberry were Carole Watson of the Bay Area United Way; Gloria Wade-Lesster of Sisters Network; Felicia Hames, First Lady of Beebe Memorial; Genea Brice, First Lady of Peoples Baptist Church; Regina Jackson of East Oakland Youth Development; Gloria Crowell of Allen Temple Baptist Church; Stacy Hogg of the Sharon Randolph Breast Cancer Foundation; Charlotte W. Thyess of California Interfaith Power and Light; and Reverends Denise J. Burroughs of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, San Francisco/Sacramento District, and Sharon Hollie of Destiny, A Community of Faith.

Ms. Seele gave an overview of The Balm in Gilead’s programs to address health disparities in HIV and cervical cancer. In addition to highlighting the organization’s more than twenty years of work to increase HIV awareness and testing, Ms. Seele introduced the group to her organization’s work in cervical cancer through the Isis Project. Isis is an education and awareness program that seeks to increase awareness about cervical cancer and human papillomavirus (HPV) in the black community. Following a period of questions and answers, the First Ladies participated in a networking session and agreed to work within their respective institutions to raise awareness about HIV and cervical cancer.

On Sunday, Ms. Seele gave messages of special emphasis at Allen Temple Baptist Church and Beebe Memorial Church. At both faith institutions, Ms. Seele thanked the clergy for their leadership and work to develop HIV support, testing and treatment programs. Ms. Seele asked those in the pew to get tested for HIV and to go the distance in addressing the needs of people living with the virus in Oakland.

On Monday, Ms. Seele met for a breakfast meeting with a group of Oakland faith leaders to discuss faith-based HIV outreach and education programs. Ms. Seele agreed to work with Oakland faith leaders to develop HIV health ministries.

Bay Area Men meet to plan next steps in addressing HIV among men in Oakland

((March 7, 2009) Twenty-five men came together for a dinner meeting at Mua, a restaurant in Oakland, to discuss the needs of men who have sex with men (MSM) in the Oakland/greater Bay Area community and to plan next steps in addressing HIV among men in Oakland. Activities on the agenda of this dinner gathering included assessing current resources to serve men who have sex with men in the East Bay and brainstorming about ways to create more opportunities to meet their needs. The Host Committee for the dinner included Jay Founier, Juba Johnson, Kabir Hipolyte, D. Mark Wilson, Angel Fabian, Aaron Testard, Joe Hawkins, Alex Williams, and Koji Sakakibara.

The event grew out of a series of meetings that were convened over the past year by Get Screened Oakland in order to explore ways for MSM to receive increased community services, including HIV/AIDS and STD services. Among those attending the meeting were representatives from the Bench and Bar, an Oakland establishment; the East Bay AIDS Center; the Downtown Youth Clinic; the Berkeley Department of Public Health; the AIDS Healthcare Foundation; the Alameda County Medical Center, the Alameda County Office of AIDS Administration; the Pacific Center for Human Development; Asian Health Services, La Clinica, Grupo Fremont VIP, and the Black Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. Also attending the meeting were many longtime community activists from the San Francisco/Oakland/East Bay LGBT community.

At the close of the evening, those gathered agreed to work collaboratively on a series of community events and activities including, but not limited to, a street fair, establishing an Oakland-based STI clinic, expanding the reach of the Black Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, and establishing an LGBT community center in Oakland.

For more information about the meetings and/or proposed initiatives, contact Damon Powell, Get Screened Oakland, at 510-238-7070 or at dpowellgso@gmail.com.

Sisters Doing It for Themselves - Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

(March 10, 2009) The AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) sponsored a luncheon at Caffe Verbena, a restaurant in downtown Oakland, with support from Get Screened Oakland. The luncheon was in recognition of National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. Hosted by Joe "Juba" Johnson of AHF and Shelley Stinson of the Alameda County Office of AIDS Administration, the luncheon commemoration brought together more than forty-five women living with HIV to reflect on life with HIV and to learn how to keep the mind, body and spirit healthy.

The agenda included several presentations. AHF's Lisha Wilson, MD, discussed how to keep the body healthy by being in regular HIV medical care, eating right and getting the right amount of exercise. Sandra Madison and Carla Wright of the Bay Area Consortium for Quality Health brought powerful messages of hope and strength through spoken word performances. Cynara Chatman-Dillon, a woman living with HIV for many years, shared her personal story. Marsha

Martin, DSW, of Get Screened Oakland brought greetings on behalf of Mayor Ronald V. Dellums. The women who participated in the downtown luncheon want to make it an annual event.

One Sister at a Time – Screening and Discussion honors Women Living with HIV

(March 10, 2009) Oakland-based WORLD (Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Diseases) celebrated Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Day with a screening of a new documentary film, "One Sister at a Time."

Screened at Joyce Gallery in downtown Oakland, the film was produced by Debra Craig, a student at San Francisco State University who had volunteered for WORLD in late 2008. The film features women from WORLD (Naina, Janell, Sylvia, Anita and Sharon) speaking out about the realities of living with HIV and it answers many questions from a woman's unique perspective. After the standing room-only screening, a panel featuring the film's participants discussed their current lives and their feelings about participating in the documentary. The evening concluded with Loren, who provided an overview of the work of the Positive Women's Network, a national organization currently housed at WORLD.

The film was well received, and copies are available for a small donation to WORLD. To coincide with the screening and Women's History Month, Joyce Gallery exhibited artwork exclusively by women. For more information about the film, con-

HIV Treatment is Power

(March 25, 2009) Gilead Sciences, Inc. unveiled a new advertising/social marketing campaign and community initiative at City Hall in downtown Oakland. The campaign, entitled “HIV Treatment is Power,” focuses on providing educational material and information about HIV treatment and support services in U.S. cities with long established African American communities. The campaign includes a Web site that provides useful information about HIV treatment and local HIV services in several cities including Oakland, CA, Atlanta, GA, Harlem, NY, and Washington, DC.

The new campaign seeks to encourage African Americans and other people of color who are living with HIV but not in regular HIV care to re-consider HIV treatment. The campaign was developed by the Oakland-based Carol H. Williams public relations firm after a series of outreach meetings and focus groups in a number of U.S. cities. Deborah Wafer, a Gilead employee and Oakland resident, is coordinating the initiative.

The official Oakland launch brought together many members of the city’s HIV service community for an evening of refreshments and renewed commitment to addressing HIV. The social marketing campaign includes the use of billboards, radio announcements and bus shelter ads throughout Oakland and the other targeted cities. The launch was co-hosted by the Office of Mayor Ronald V. Dellums and Get Screened Oakland.

Get Screened Oakland encourages service providers to familiarize themselves with the site’s content and to encourage their clients to visit it as well. The Web site’s address is www.hivtreatmentispower.com.

Community Calendar 2009
Upcoming Events and Dates to Keep in Mind

April

- F. 4/24 - Su. 4/26 Third Transgender Religious Leadership Summit, All Souls Unitarian Church,; 2835 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC.
- Sa. 5/2 – Su. 5/3 Camp Courage: Building a Grassroots Army for Marriage Equality; Bay Area Camp Courage, Oakland, CA; 8:30 a.m.- 5:00 p.m. For more information, contact Get Screened Oakland at 510-238-7070.

May

- Tu. 5/19 National Asian and Pacific Islander (API) HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- Sa. 5/30 Public Recognition of Private Courage: the 6th Annual Asian Family Pride Banquet; Hotel Whitcomb, 1231 Market St., San Francisco, CA. For more information, contact Belinda Dronkers-Laureta at info@apifamilypride.org or at 510-818-0887.
- Sa. 5/30 Walk to End Poverty; Lake Merritt Band Shell; 8:00 a.m. For more information, call the Office of the Mayor at 510-238-2141.

June

- Th. 6/4 **Hold the Date:** Faith Leaders Summit on HIV: Cancer, Health and Wellness; Marriott Hotel, Oakland City Center; 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
- F. 6/12 **Hold the Date:** 22nd Annual East Bay AIDS Update
- Sa. 6/27 National HIV Testing Day
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