

## Get Screened Oakland: The Highlights

### **Houston HIV Bureau Chief and Community Advocate visit Oakland**

(April 27, 2009) Marlene McNeese Ward, Houston's Bureau Chief of HIV/STD and Viral Hepatitis, and Dena Gray, Executive Director Bread of Life, Houston, TX, met with staff from Alameda County Office of AIDS Administration and Get Screened Oakland to discuss HIV programs.

Ms. Ward thanked "Alameda County for working to declare HIV an emergency." Houston followed suit, declaring HIV an emergency in the African American community. As a result of that action, the city received local support and increased revenues. She also thanked Marsha Martin "for starting the ball rolling. In 2006, Dr. Martin rolled out Come Together DC, Get Screened for HIV in 2006, when everyone thought she was crazy, Ms. Ward explained. Now, several of us in different cities are trying to do some thing similar."

During the lunchtime meeting, Ms. Ward gave an overview of Houston's HIV prevention programs, HIV screening scale up efforts, Web-based HIV prevention system, and its HIV data reporting system. The Houston HIV program is housed within the STD Bureau and "piggybacks" on STD public health approaches. For example, Houston's HIV program uses STD Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS) to notify partners of newly diagnosed HIV-positive persons through its partner counseling services program.

The HIV/AIDS data reporting system in Houston is integrated. Surveillance data is matched with treatment data in order to monitor the local epidemic and determine service and resource allocation, creating a new geo-coding program. Ms. Ward said the name of the game is "partnership, collaboration and integration."

One of Houston's major HIV events is an annual hip-hop concert. This year's concert will take place on July 11. All of the HIV testing programs and community HIV providers will gather to offer non-stop HIV screening and education. The event/music festival is the largest, single-day HIV screening event in the United States.

Each year, more than 40 classrooms are created to provide HIV education services, and thousands are tested. The concert generates anticipation and excitement within the Houston community. People who get tested receive free tickets to the concert, which has proven to be a great way to encourage people to learn their HIV status. Last year more than 15,000 people were screened at events associated with the hip-hop concert.

Houston is a member of the Urban Coalition of HIV Prevention Services (UCHAPS), which is an important leader in efforts to expand HIV testing and prevention services within U.S. metropolitan areas. The coalition's other members are Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, New York City, Washington, DC, and Miami/Dade area.

Ms. Gray described the Bread of Life program, which began as part of an effort by the St. John's Downtown Church to reach and provide services to Houston's homeless population. Now, the program not only provides HIV services, but also 40 units of housing funded by Housing for Persons Living with AIDS (HOPWA), a federal HIV program in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

St. John's Downtown Church is led by Pastor Rudy Rasmus. Fifteen years ago, he decided to make the fight against HIV a part of his ministry because he had received far too many funeral service requests for young people who had died from AIDS complications. He dedicates one Sunday a month as HIV testing Sunday. In addition to calling these days HIV testing Sunday, he always has someone from the pulpit ask, "Are you ready to change your life in twenty minutes? Get tested for HIV."

Ms. Gray is also very active in helping to engage HIV-positive persons in advocacy. The HIV-positive community in Houston has organized itself around three key areas: media, action, and advocacy. A recent media effort, entitled "Its REAL," features many individuals living with HIV on posters and billboards. One of their advocacy programs is "Project LEAP," which trains newly diagnosed persons to be advocates and to participate in the local prevention, care, and treatment planning bodies. Ms. Gray told us that the Houston advocacy community is "constantly and consistently out" about HIV. She reported that over the years, the relationship between the government and community has improved. It now resembles a collaborative partnership, where each partner is clear about its role, responsibilities, and function. She credits the leadership of Ms. War, who comes from the city's HIV community, for the increased level of engagement and involvement by all sectors of the community.

## Other Oakland Community News

### **Ambassadors for Change share gospel and HIV messages at Lake Merritt**

(April 25, 2009) The Ambassadors for Change reached out to the Oakland community with a powerful gospel concert and HIV education and awareness day at the bandshell in Lake Merritt Park. In addition to the musicians, several community leaders also participated in the program. Bringing messages of encouragement to the concert were Ron "Kabir" Hypolite, Director of Alameda County Office of AIDS Administration; Rev. Damon Powell, Outreach Coordinator of Get Screened Oakland; Alvan Quamina, Executive Director of AIDS Project East Bay (APEB); and Marlene McNeese Ward, Bureau Chief of HIV/STD and Viral Hepatitis in Houston, TX. The staff from APEB and Alameda County provided educational and HIV testing support. Mr. Roosevelt Mosby, Executive Director of the Sexual Minority Alliance of Alameda County, organized the event and served as the emcee for the day.

The Ambassadors for Change features local African American gospel musicians, preachers, choir members, and songwriters. Some members of the featured talent are HIV-positive. The goal is to bring together gospel music, HIV education and prevention, and HIV care and treatment. The Ambassadors for Change project is the keystone project of Determining Our Own Destiny of the Sexual Minority Alliance of Alameda County (SMAAC). The brainchild of Mr. Roosevelt Mosby, the Ambassadors for Change made history with the release of their first CD, "Healing is for You." The CD contains

inspiring gospel songs as well as messages that promote HIV testing, education, prevention, care, and treatment

"We realize that if we are to raise more awareness about HIV disease in the Black Community, we must first engage the black church. And if we are to engage the black church, we must align ourselves with one of its core elements – gospel music," said Mr. Mosby. To help accomplish that goal and engage the local church, the Ambassadors for Change has created an inspiring and educational CD in order to have a positive impact in the black church, the black community, and the world. "It is our sincere belief that our music will encourage testing, and will encourage those who test positive to go into care. We declared that HIV will not always be! And if it is to be, so we must become active participants in its elimination," said Mr. Mosby.

Ambassadors for Change invites everyone to help them with their outreach by purchasing their CD, by donating funds in support of their outreach to youth and churches, and by helping to support their trip to the gospel choir contest, which will take place in Indianapolis, IN, in late July. For more information, link to [www.determiningourowndestiny.com](http://www.determiningourowndestiny.com).

### **San Jose State hosts Wall of Pride exhibit**

(April 22, 2009) Asian Family Pride hosted a discussion reception for the opening of their exhibit, "Wall of Pride." The exhibit focuses on thirty-six families who are proud of their Asian Pacific Island (API) lesbian, gay bisexual, and transgender

(LGBT) family members. The exhibit consists of 36 storyboards of families and individuals who have been honored publicly for their private courage.

The opening lunchtime reception included a community discussion about the needs of Asian Pacific Island lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender persons and the important role that family plays in API culture. Belinda Dronkers-Laureta lead the panel discussion with Mark Anthony Molina of Asian Americans for Community Improvement in San Jose, CA. Get Screened Oakland staff attended the opening.

### **Community Providers meet to discuss upcoming HIV events**

(April 21, 2009) Representatives of Oakland community agencies came together to discuss current and upcoming opportunities to expand HIV awareness and increase HIV screening. The meeting started with the following community announcements:

WORLD is hosting a summertime event, entitled WORLD in a Time of Change, at the GAIA Art Center from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on June 11.

In late July, Alameda County Office of AIDS Administration will be issuing an updated epi and surveillance report combining prevention, care and treatment data.

“D-UP: Men keeping men safe,” a new DEBI (Diffusing of Effective Behavioral Intervention) focusing on men is coming to Alameda County.

In addition, several ongoing programs provided updates on their planning, activities, and findings. The programs were Men’s Working Group, Faith Leaders Summit, National Testing Day, East Bay AIDS Walk, and the U.S. Conference on AIDS.

Men’s Working Group: Rev. Damon Powell, Outreach Coordinator of Get Screened Oakland, reported that the group met on April 1, 2009, to discuss the next steps on reaching men who have sex with men in Oakland and greater Alameda County. The group has determined that outreach opportunities must be developed and expanded. To that end, several small projects are under consideration: a street fair in partnership with several local businesses; a drop-in STD clinic; a follow-up to the Men’s Forum; and a film series. It has also been suggested that the group host an informal affinity group meeting at this year’s East Bay HIV Update.

Faith Leaders Summit on HIV, Cancer, Health and Wellness. Marsha Martin, Director, Get Screened Oakland, announced the dates for the second summit, June 4, 2009. This year the summit will feature a plenary session on cancer. The luncheon will feature a discussion of men who have sex with men, similar to the one held during World AIDS Day commemorations. The summit will also offer a series of workshops. The summit is specifically designed to provide information about HIV and Cancer to faith leaders of all traditions. Last year’s Summit was attended by more than 85 faith leaders. Agencies wishing to table at the event, please contact Adriann McCall at 238-7070.

National HIV Test Day. This year Testing Day is on a Saturday. It was agreed that Oakland’s commemoration event will take place on that Saturday, June 27. Several options for this year’s event were discussed during the meeting. The event could take place at Eastmont Town Center, where it was held last year. Alternatively, the event could move to one of the following locations: the Grand Lake Farmer’s Market, Pak ‘N’ Save in Emeryville, Oakland City Hall, or Jack London Square. GSO staff will explore all of these options.

East Bay AIDS Walk. Marsha Martin asked if this year’s walk would happen. Several people present reported that it is currently under review. Dr. Martin raised the possibility of moving this year’s walk to October. She also raised the possibility of having USCA make the Walk an official activity of the conference—thereby encouraging the participation of conference attendees. Since the Walk organizers were not present, the conversation was tabled. Marsha said she would bring it up at the next USCA host committee meeting.

USCA. Rev. Powell reported that City Hall has been reserved for an East Bay event. However, nothing has been finalized.

Upcoming Testing Events: Walk Against Poverty at Lake Merritt on May 31; Art & Soul from August 15 to 16; Cinco de Mayo/Mexican Independence Day on September 13.

### **Mayor Dellums Hosts Regional White House Health Forum**

(April 6, 2009) On Monday, May 6, 2009, Mayor Ronald V. Dellums joined Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Washington Governor Gregoire Christine, and White House Domestic Policy Council Director Melody Barnes in hosting the fifth and final White House Forum on Health Reform. The forum took place in Los Angeles while satellite health reform forums occurred simultaneously in San Diego, Oakland, and Clovis.

In Los Angeles, the major topics of discussion among the invited guests, who represented the diversity of California, were the need to provide affordable, quality health care for all Americans and how to curb the skyrocketing costs of health care. The forum's moderator was Columbia University Vice-Chair and Professor of Surgery Dr. Mehmet Oz – who also appears regularly on "Oprah" moderated the discussion.

The White House Forums on Health Reform took place in locations across the country and are part of the Obama Administration's national effort to gain insight and input on the President's own health care plan. As part of his remarks at the Oakland satellite forum, Mayor Dellums discussed Get Screened Oakland and the importance of HIV prevention and early intervention.

“This is our moment, as I see it,” said Mayor Dellums. “We have someone who is in the White House who gets it. I think we've got to join in and say it's time now for access for all, affordability for all, and aggressive preventive action that addresses the social determinants that impact upon health care.”

### **We know. Do You? Social Marketing Campaign**

(April/May) Whether you are walking around your neighborhood, taking the bus, or driving in your car, you are likely to see someone you know asking if you know your HIV status. Mayor Dellums asked several community leaders, HIV service providers, and advocates to join him for a group photograph that is being used as the second part of his billboard and bus shelter campaign about HIV.

The first part of this campaign featured an image of Mayor Dellums with the text, “Get Tested. I Did,” to encourage people to get tested for HIV. The second part is using an image of Mayor Dellums standing among a diverse group of Oakland residents, all of whom know their HIV status. The text that appears with this image is “We Know. Do YOU? Your health is our concern. Get Screened Oakland.”

## **Other HIV News**

### **First National CDC HIV/AIDS Communication Campaign in More Than a Decade**

(April 7, 2009) Every 9 ½ minutes another person in America becomes infected with HIV. Officials from the White House, Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced today a new five-year national communication campaign, *Act Against AIDS*, which highlights this alarming statistic and aims to combat complacency about the HIV/AIDS crisis in the United States.

“*Act Against AIDS* seeks to put the HIV crisis back on the national radar screen,” said Melody Barnes, Assistant to the President and Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council. “Our goal is to remind Americans that HIV/AIDS continues to pose a serious health threat in the United States and encourage them to get the facts they need to take action for themselves and their communities.”

The campaign will feature public service announcements (PSAs) and online communications, as well as targeted messages and outreach to the populations most severely affected by HIV/AIDS, beginning with African-Americans, with subsequent

phases focusing on Latinos and other communities disproportionately impacted.

To help achieve widespread use of the campaign messages within African-American communities, the Obama Administration also announced today the *Act Against AIDS Leadership Initiative* (AAALI), a partnership with 14 of the nation's leading African-American civic organizations to integrate HIV prevention into each organization's outreach programs.

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To promote broad use of the campaign messages, CDC is also collaborating with the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation to focus on outreach and technical assistance to the media and the entertainment industry.

The *Act Against AIDS* campaign will be supported by a CDC budget of roughly \$45 million over the next five years, as well as the efforts of community, media and public health partners across the country to promote and utilize campaign materials and messages.

#### Campaign's Initial Phase to Target General Public and Specific Communities at Risk

The first phase of the *Act Against AIDS* campaign, called "9 ½ Minutes," uses a series of video, audio, print and online materials to increase knowledge about the severity of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the United States. The campaign highlights the simple fact that every 9 ½ minutes someone in the United States becomes infected with HIV.

The materials released today direct Americans to "get the facts" by going to the Web site [www.NineAndHalfMinutes.org](http://www.NineAndHalfMinutes.org) as a first step toward learning how they can help protect themselves and others. The site provides basic education about HIV/AIDS as well as referrals to HIV prevention and testing services and organizations throughout the nation.

United States, every 9 ½ minutes someone's brother, sister, best friend, father or mother becomes infected with HIV," said Jeffrey Crowley, Director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy. "Yet, research shows that many of those becoming infected do not recognize their risk. This is a major concern, because lack of knowledge contributes to increased risk behaviors."

The next phase to launch will focus on African-Americans, who, by far, bear the greatest burden of HIV in the United States. While accounting for just 12 percent of the U.S. population, blacks represent roughly half of new HIV infections and AIDS deaths every year. Targeted communications to encourage increased HIV testing among the two groups of African-Americans most severely affected, gay or bisexual men and women, will begin shortly.

Future phases of the *Act Against AIDS* campaign will focus on reaching specific populations at greatest risk with HIV prevention messages tailored to meet their unique needs including Latinos and other high risk groups.

For more information, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/newsroom/AAAPressRelease.html>.

**Community Calendar 2009**  
*Upcoming Events and Dates to Keep in Mind*

**May**

- Tu. 5/19 National Asian and Pacific Islander (API) HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- Sa. 5/30 Public Recognition of Private Courage: the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Asian Family Pride Banquet; Hotel Whitcomb, 1231 Market St., San Francisco, CA. For more information, contact Belinda Dronkers-Laureta at [info@apifamilypride.org](mailto: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:** 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual East Bay AIDS Update
- Sa. 6/27 National HIV Testing Day