

# AFC launches 'Cure' program

BY SAMUEL WORLEY

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) launched "With Me Comes a Cure," a public awareness campaign designed to combat the spread of HIV infection in the African-American community, on Feb. 7. Although Black people make up 15 percent of the population of Illinois, 51 percent of new HIV diagnoses come from the African-American community. Particularly hard hit are Black men who have sex with men (MSM)—indeed, one of the few populations experiencing an increase in new infections in an overall context of decline.

According to Jim Pickett, AFC's advocacy director, public-health efforts to test for HIV have ignored the needs of specific communities at high risk of infection—communities that include African Americans, MSM of all races, sex workers and injection-drug users.

With "limited resources," Pickett said, efforts are needed to address potentially risky behaviors, such as anal sex, that government agencies are generally unwilling to consider addressing in detail. Citing "structural homophobia" as prohibitive, Pickett added that health agencies "do work that doesn't speak directly to gay men. Resources should be directed to the populations that need them," rather than those that are "politically palatable."

The AFC's "With Me Comes a Cure" campaign is designed as just such a new direction.

"It's not enough to talk about HIV prevention in isolation," said AFC Communications Director Johnathon Briggs, stressing that such talk needs to be explicitly concerned with those groups that have the "greatest need for intervention." Briggs began working on the campaign in August 2008, with help from a grant from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) HIV Vaccine Research and Education Initiative. Not limited to simply inciting discussion on HIV within African-American communities, the AFC's goal for the campaign is more ambitious—indeed, a redefinition of the concept "cure" itself.

"Any preventative action you take is in essence a cure," Briggs said. "The cure is what you're doing right now to prevent infection." The campaign, he stated, is meant to demonstrate to people that "they have power to actually be a part of the cure."

Centered around the Web site [www.withmecomesacure.org](http://www.withmecomesacure.org), the campaign asks community members to imagine what words or ideas to insert in the title in place of the word "me." With what, then, comes a cure? Some words that have been input into the Web site that have been conceptual become concrete: Dance. Unity. Writ-

ing. Islam. Playing the cello. Science. Community members are encouraged to identify ways that their input can lead to action around HIV infection—how dance, for instance, can communicate a message of prevention.

"Everyone has a talent, a passion, or a resource" that can help prevent HIV, Briggs said.

Based on a concept created *pro bono* by Chicago Creative Partnership, "Cure" was developed through the input of three focus groups—made up of Black women, Black MSM and Black youths from throughout the city—held late last year. All three were vital, said Briggs: While the group of women was intrigued by the ambiguity and potential of the campaign's concept, the youths were most engaged in thinking about cultural activism and HIV.

One plan developed by the youth group, said Briggs, is for a video emphasizing condom use based on the Young Jeezy song "I Put On for My City."

While the NIAID grant funded CTA ads and "Cure" paraphernalia such as T-shirts, compact mirrors and condom cases, the year-long campaign will include a number of public events, including a mural painting in May on the city's West Side—all designed to emphasize prevention, frequent testing and enrollment in clinical trials.

One area of the campaign focuses on connecting affected communities, especially communities of color, with the kinds of healthcare they might not otherwise be exposed to. Epidemiologist Yaa Simpson, whose organization, the Association of Clinical Trials Services, is working with AFC on "Cure," says that her goal is to "bring the science to the people. Curing people is everybody's business. HIV is everybody's business. No scientist or researcher has ever cured anything without people."

The open-ended nature of "Cure," Briggs said, offers a way to think of "HIV as a proxy for other kinds of social inequality": how communities affected disproportionately by HIV are also communities affected by poverty, high incarceration rates, and lack of access to education and social services. The deliberate vagueness of the title—with the words "HIV" or "AIDS" not readily apparent—give participants the opportunity to think creatively about the larger structural problems they face.

Recalling the words of one focus group member last year, Briggs said, "Sometimes you have to take out the word to get out the word."

## Einstein's Bros. store shut down

An Andersonville bagel shop was shut down Feb. 13 by Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) inspectors.

Einstein Bros. Bagels, 5318 N. Clark, was ordered closed when CDPH inspectors found mouse droppings in the kitchen, dining room

senior designer for Johnson and Associates, a sales and interior design firm.

White volunteered at the AIDS hospice Bonaventure House and was a member of several gay organizations during the 1980s and '90s.

He was well-read and highly intelligent, a fact he let known in a light-hearted manner. He was also a kind, sharing person with an infectious laugh and a warm heart. He loved life and was vested in the conviction that life was meant to be lived to its fullest—and that he did.

He is survived by his 97-year-old mother, Lula Mae Owens, of Hammond Ind.; his aunt, Eddice White Stevens, of Chicago; cousins, including Mary L. Wiley, Crystal, Rachel, Joseph, Jr., and many others. He is also survived by many friends in the community, including Craig Officer—a former partner and friend of 32 years—Eric Norris, Monroe Floyd, Carol Brice and all those he made laugh and love him over the past several decades. He will be missed everyday. We love you.

—Sent by Craig Officer



## Condom nation

As part of National Condom Month—and to kick off National Condom Week (Feb. 14-21)—Howard Brown Health Center, in collaboration with Beyondmedia Education and About Face Theatre, developed "Condom Sense: A Real Life Education," the first comprehensive, LGBTQ-inclusive sex-education curriculum developed for public-school distribution in the United States. These community partners started the curriculum with a public-awareness campaign on Friday, Feb. 13, that included placing giant condoms on the rainbow pylons along Halsted Street in Boystown. The premiere of the educational video "HIV: Hey, It's Viral!" will take place at Howard Brown Health Center, 4025 N. Sheridan, on Friday, Feb. 20, at 7 p.m.

In addition, volunteers from the AIDS Foundation of Chicago handed out "Love the One You're With" condom kits to passersby near Harold Washington College, at Lake and Wabash, on Feb. 12 to increase awareness about and support for condom access. Contact Pete Subkoviak at 312-334-0963 or [psubkoviak@aidschicago.org](mailto:psubkoviak@aidschicago.org) for more information. Photos of the pylon (left) and of Subkoviak and Rhea Ghosh by Andrew Davis

and throughout the facility. Company representatives will have to explain themselves at a City of Chicago administrative hearing set for March 26 and pay a fine of \$500.

In 2006, Windy City Times reported that the same establishment was ordered closed Sept. 21 after inspectors discovered mouse feces; bagel dogs held at unsafe temperatures; and a build-up of thick black goo in the shop's ice machine.

## Pediatric AIDS Chicago dissolves

Pediatric AIDS Chicago (PAC) has ended its 18-year history as a fundraising entity for pediatric HIV/AIDS services in Chicago, dissolving as a nonprofit organization to concentrate on the direct-service organization Pediatric AIDS Chicago Prevention Initiative (PACPI). This transition is a result of the need for a centralized approach to ending mother-to-child HIV transmission, by combining forces in the fight against pediatric AIDS in Chicago.

PAC began in 1991 from a friendship between Debbi Klein, Lynne Weber, Susie Ortner and Elizabeth Glaser (co-founder of the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation).

For more about PACPI, contact Cecilia Boyd at 312-334-0972 or [PACPIDevelopment@gmail.com](mailto:PACPIDevelopment@gmail.com).

## Children's HIV/AIDS org helping Guyana

Chicago's HIV/AIDS agency The Children's Place Association is working with the government of Guyana—a country with one of the highest HIV-infection rates in the Caribbean—to implement programs and services to help children and families affected by HIV/AIDS in this high-need region of the world.

The association held a roundtable in Georgetown, Guyana, to discuss the family-focused model of care that can enable adults to live longer, thereby reducing the number of children orphaned by the epidemic.

Visit [www.childrens-place.org](http://www.childrens-place.org) for more information.

## Center accepting apps for census jobs

Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, is taking applications for jobs with the U.S. Census Bureau, as the federal office is recruiting for temporary part-time census jobs for the 2010 census.

Individuals should come between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. through Friday, Feb. 20, and should bring a U.S. Passport or drivers license and a social security card or birth certificate. See [www.census.gov/2010censusjobs](http://www.census.gov/2010censusjobs).

### PASSAGES

#### Ernest White, Jr.

Ernest White, Jr., died at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, on Saturday, Jan. 24. He was 78.

White was born to the union of Lula Mae Owens and Ernest White, Sr., in Greenville, Miss. The younger White attended #4 Elementary School in Greenville and graduated from Coleman High School in 1949. He was a music (voice) major at Jackson State University, where he graduated in 1954. He attended Harrington Institute of Interior Design and was certified as an interior designer in 1984.

After college White enlisted in the United States Army, where he assigned to the Army Security Agency as a cryptanalyst. He served in Germany and traveled extensively throughout Europe during that time.

Other employment included a position with the Illinois Department of Labor as a deputy claims examiner. He also served as regional director for District 5 in the United States Office of Economic Opportunity. Later, he worked as a

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