Dear Chicago Campaign to End AIDS planning committee members,

There is BIG news to report. Please read this entire message.

We want to immediately inform you that a vote has just been taken among national leaders on the Campaign to End AIDS to postpone the Caravans for a month, responding in large part to the changed landscape after Hurricane Katrina. A statement from the national organizers is below. This means that the Caravans will depart from their locations October 16th and the days in Washington will begin November 5 and could go til the 9th. However, national leaders recognized that some local events can and should continue as scheduled.

The Campaign was, and is not contingent on Caravans alone. While Caravans are an important component to C2EA, our local events are equally as significant.

Here in Chicago, WE WILL MOVE FORWARD on our local events as scheduled. Our events will not be cancelled nor will we change the dates. Keep Friday, September 30 and Saturday October 1 highlighted in your datebooks!!

The events that WILL GO ON include our visit to Speaker Hastert’s office in Batavia, our spiritual celebration Friday night at Wesley United Methodist Church, our Rainbow/PUSH Coalition Saturday Morning Forum broadcast, and our Michigan Avenue awareness activity later that day. To repeat, these events WILL happen, and they will be fantastic! We will still need your time, energy and passion to pull them off.

Because the Caravans are leaving a month later, we will no longer be housing caravan riders on the eve of Sept. 30, and we are canceling our plans for a potluck that same evening so we can simply focus our energy and resources on making the celebration FABULOUS.

This schedule change was a very difficult decision for all involved, and quite contentious. It remains to be seen how we will engage with the Caravan when (and if) it does swing through Chicago, potentially late October.

For clarity, the original days of action in Washington DC around Columbus Day weekend have been moved to early November. There will be no DC mobilization October 8 – 12. If you have purchased plane tickets or otherwise made plans based on October dates, you will need to make the necessary changes.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch..... Please join us for poster-making tomorrow, Friday September 9, here at AFC (411 S. Wells, 2nd Floor), and for the super important organizing meeting on Wednesday, September 14 at 5:30 PM here at AFC. See you all then!

If you have any questions about this decision or activities in Chicago, please feel free to contact me at 312-334-0920 or jpickett@aidschicago.org or John Peller at jpeller@aidschicago.org.

Thanks for taking the time to read all of this, and see you all soon.

Jim Pickett, on behalf of the Chicago C2EA team
CAMPAIGN TO END AIDS MOVES FORWARD THIS FALL

Organizers in states hardest hit by Katrina urge continuation; 4-week delay allows activists to plan alternate caravan routes in wake of disaster

(September 9) The Campaign to End AIDS (C2EA), a new national grassroots movement supported by AIDS and community groups across the country, will continue to organize hundreds of local events and ten cross-country caravans this fall while making some scheduling changes due to the impact of Hurricane Katrina, organizers said today.

"Many of the same churches, service groups and community members that want to house and feed folks on the C2EA caravans are currently sheltering Katrina survivors," said Charles King, C2EA co-chair. "A few weeks will allow us to work out alternate plans where they're needed and keep these historic efforts going – our voices won't be silenced."

C2EA organizers in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama feel strongly that the Campaign must go on, even if Katrina delays some events and caravans. "C2EA leaders in states affected by Katrina need to deal with the reality on the ground and ensure an adequate response that will save lives," said Thelma Wright of North Carolina, a C2EA national co-chair. "At the same time, they told us that our nation needs to hear about how HIV/AIDS is devastating their communities. That makes it more important than ever for all of us to move forward together".

Kathie Hiers, CEO of AIDS Alabama and Chair of the Southern AIDS Coalition, is one of the C2EA leaders urging that the campaign continue. "Southerners need the Campaign to End AIDS more than ever," said Hiers. "I feel very strongly about it, and I appreciate that with a chance to recover we'll come back better and stronger."

Many C2EA local events, including rallies and marches, prayer breakfasts, concerts and advocacy days will continue as planned. Some events will now focus on support and fundraising for Katrina HIV/AIDS relief efforts, as well as a call for strong new government action to strengthen and heal wounded communities.

"People living with HIV/AIDS understand how government inaction can lead to needless suffering and death," said Walt Senterfitt of Los Angeles, another C2EA national co-chair. "Sadly, as AIDS activists, we are all much too familiar with this systemic inaction -- particularly when it comes to poor people, people of color and other marginalized people. It's our duty to keep our country's eyes opened to these mass inequalities and their deadly consequences," said Senterfitt.

Ten C2EA caravans planned for this fall will still travel across the country to Washington, DC but will kick off on October 15, about four weeks later than planned.

C2EA activists said the national response to the Katrina disaster may allow their message to be better heard in the days and weeks ahead.

"There are natural disasters, and there are avoidable catastrophes," said Jean Ann Van Krevelen of Oklahoma, C2EA co-chair. "Our nation is beginning to understand the difference, and we're beginning to see that the government won't always take appropriate action unless the people demand it. We have what it takes to end AIDS right now – it's time for all of us to insist on simple actions that will save millions of lives."

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