

Good Morning!

My name is Alana Lehr and I am the Assistant Director of **Bethany Place** which is located in Belleville, IL

Bethany Place is the largest comprehensive HIV/AIDS organization in Southern Illinois and in the St. Louis Metropolitan area. The vision of Bethany Place was founded out of the compassion of two Franciscan nuns ~ over 20 years ago. Back then, if one was diagnosed with HIV, local business owners, the police departments, and politicians would make a call the two nuns to pick up those infected with HIV ~ to get 'them' off of the streets. The nuns were the only people in Belleville who opened their hearts and home to this devastating disease and were the only ones who were not afraid nor did they judge those infected.

Soon, though, the numbers were too much to handle, and the two nuns realized they had to open up more than just their homes ~ they had to open up an organization. The nuns appropriately called the organization Bethany Place, as this was a place referred to in the Bible that 'outcasts' from the city and lepers could go to. In the Bible this was a place where people could be themselves and not be harshly judged. It was a place of refuge for so many. Today, Bethany Place remains just that ~ and their mission is the cornerstone of HIV Care and Prevention in Southern Illinois still today.

As you can imagine, Bethany Place has expanded greatly since the 1980's. Since then, the county that we serve (St. Clair County) has grown to have the highest rate of HIV outside of the Chicago area in the State of Illinois. Bethany Place had to expand its services to serve that growing number and keep up with the times. Bethany Place now offers Housing, Case Management, Rental Assistance, Syringe Exchange, and Prevention Education to our community.

What an *investment* shown by the nuns. They could have turned their back. But they didn't.

Today, Bethany Place continues that '*investment*' and has *invested* in our experienced staff, we have *invested* in our community, and our neighbors have an *investment* in our trust. Over the years, the state budget for Prevention Programs has been cut year after year. None more devastating than right now!!! Bethany Place continues to be creative with dollars received as not to *invest* any less in our community, even though the *state's investment* in our Prevention programs dwindles.

Have you ever sat across from a pregnant woman of 5 months to tell her she is HIV positive?

Have you ever had to tell a teenager he was positive, due to using the same steroid needle as another teenager prior to a baseball game?

Have you ever had to tell a married woman of 27 years that she is HIV positive?

Have you ever had to tell a Grandfather that he is positive after the blood he was transporting for the Red Cross spilled on cut on his hand?

Their life doesn't stop after the diagnosis. Their new life begins in a way No ONE can even imagine. What is the drive home like for them? What is that night like for them? Did they sleep? Did they cry? Were they alone? Who have they told? Are they afraid to tell? Who will abandon them? Who will hang up on them? Who is *invested* in them *now*? Bethany Place.

The **cure** to HIV is *Investing* in Educating our community **PRIOR** to the exposure? We have to educate pregnant mothers. We have to educate married women. We have to educate teens. We have to educate the elderly. Is the state willing to be proactive and **invest** in this cure, or does the state want to continue to funnel dollars when it is too late? Without a Prevention System in place, HIV statistics will reach unobtainable heights.

You were presented with handouts and I would like to summarize the findings quickly:

The impact of the state cuts = :

- Decrease in staff hours
- Decrease in staff benefits
- Decrease in Prevention Education Presentations
- Decrease in Risk Reduction Counseling
- Decrease in Testing availability

The only *increase* in all of this decrease will be in HIV statistics! And behind each of those statistics is a family member, a loved one, a neighbor, A LIFE.

In the past two years those that have tested positive in our area has continued to rise. Why? Prior to the influx of more people requesting to get tested, we were educating more people and informing them about the importance to know their status (that was when more funding was available).

In conclusion, more education = more tests which will = more HIV positive stats...however the more people we educate over time will eventually = a decrease in positive results.

We are **invested**....is the State **invested** in a Prevention System? Is the State of Illinois's priority to Invest in the Market of Prevention in order to yield the highest gain in this recession – as the highest gain is the life of our neighbor, loved ones, and community in which we live.

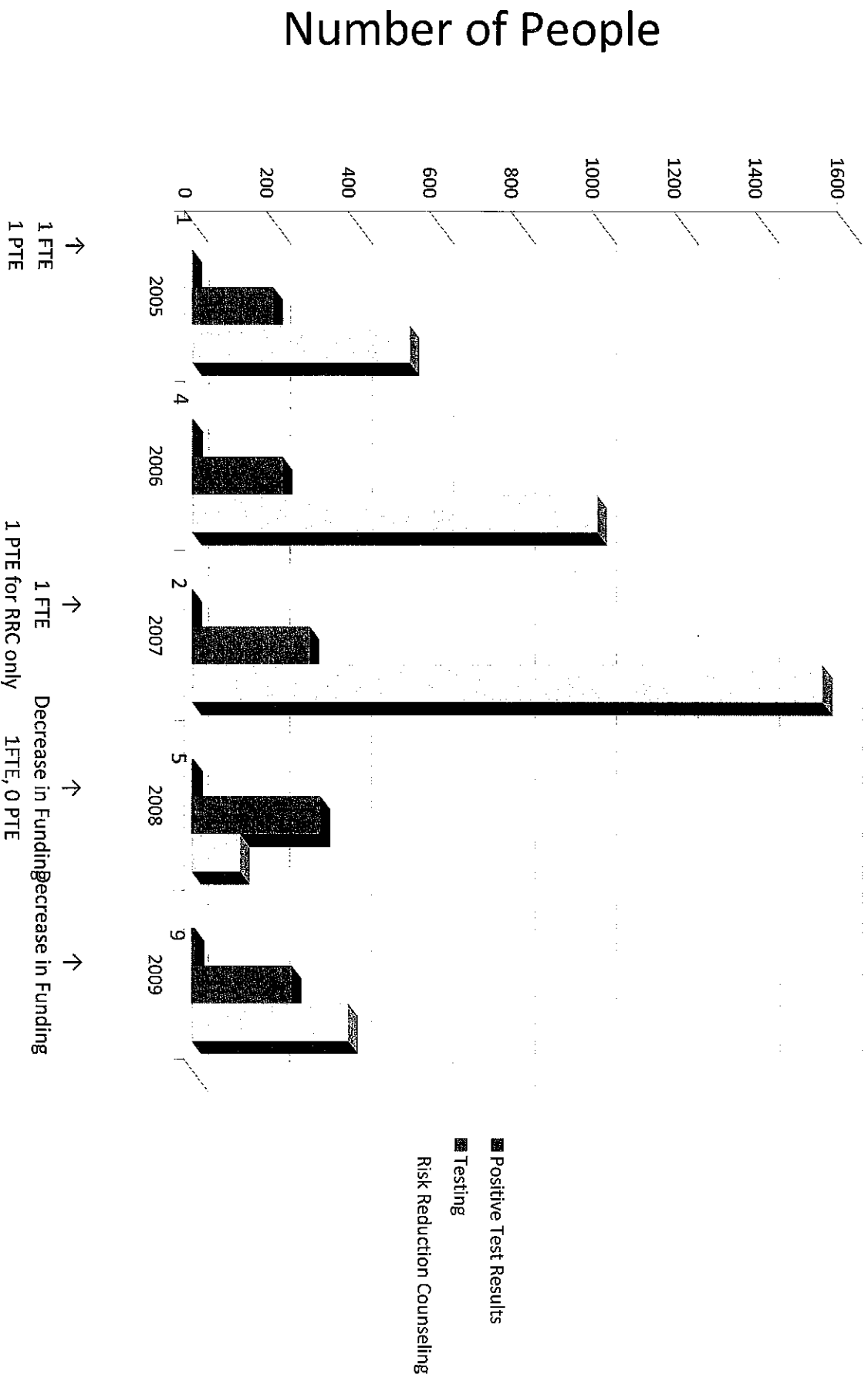
Thank you!

If funding continues at a rate of a 20% decrease, we will only be able to have an employee here part time.

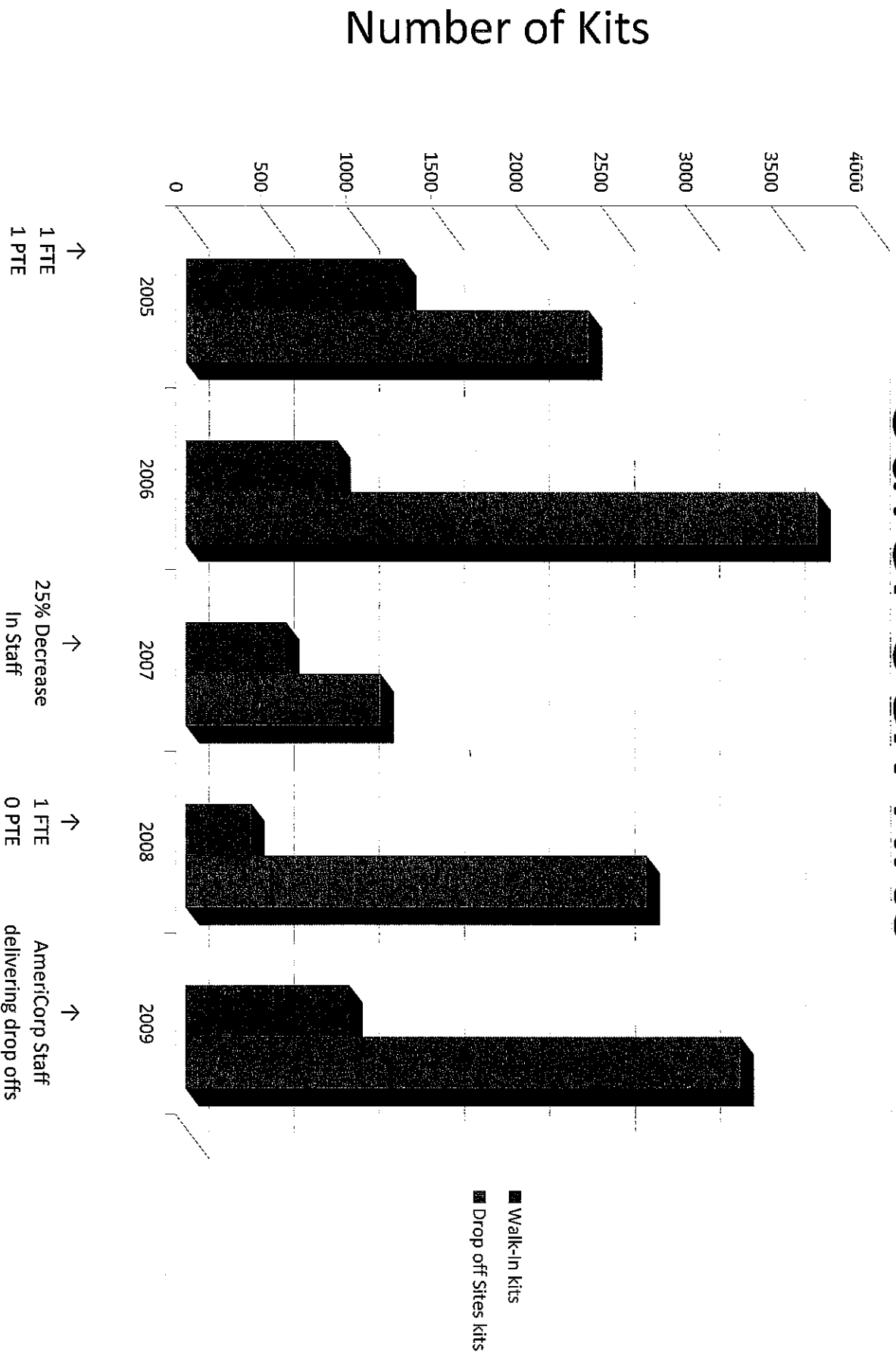
20% funding cut equals:

- ☐~46 weeks FTE **without** benefits
- ☐~42 weeks FTE with benefits
- ☐~Decrease in Staff hours
- ☐~Decrease in Prevention Education Presentations
- ☐~Decrease in Risk Reduction Counseling
- ☐~Decrease in Testing availability
- ☐~The only **increase** we will see will be in HIV statistics

Testing and Risk Reduction Counseling

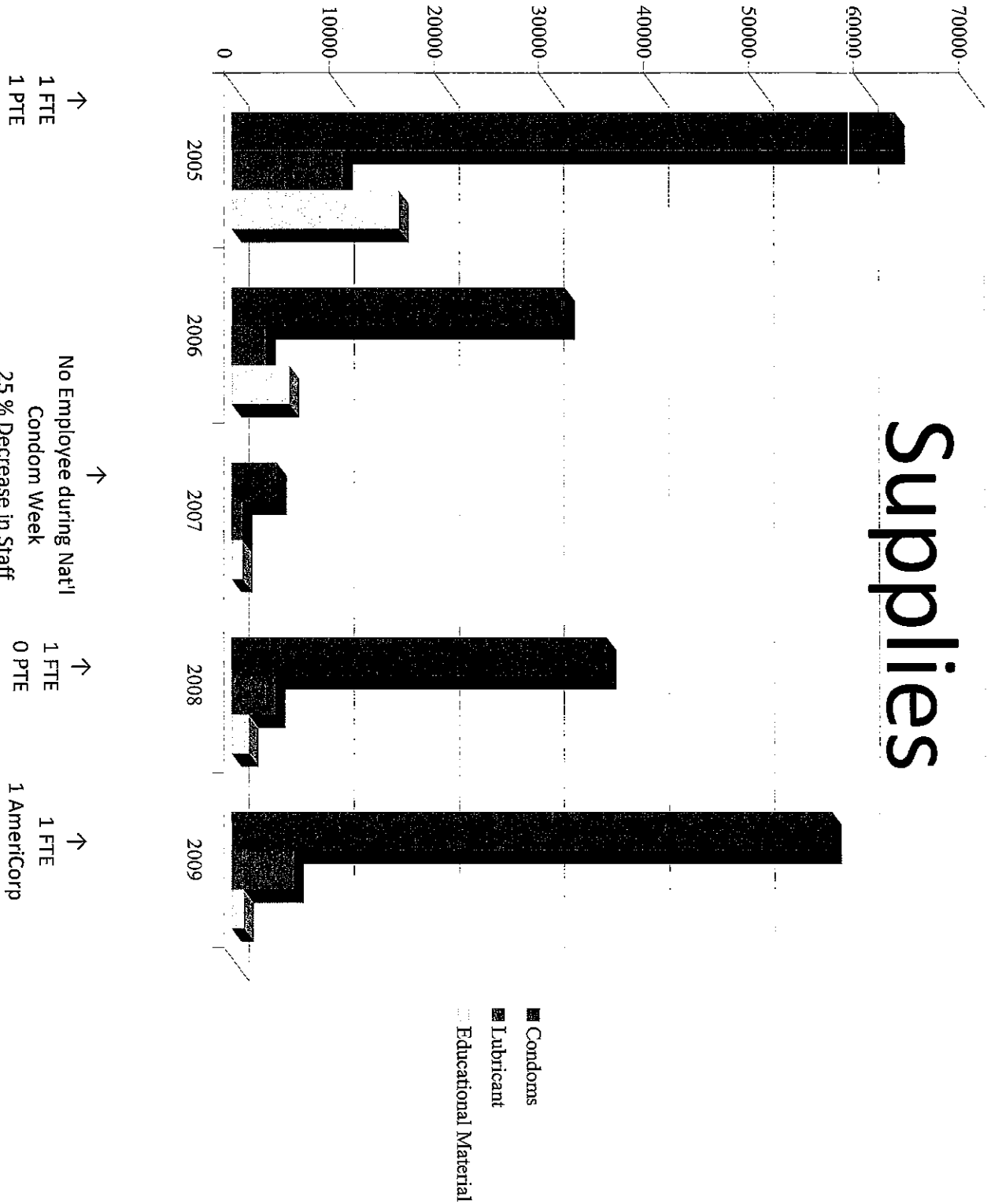


Safer Sex Kits

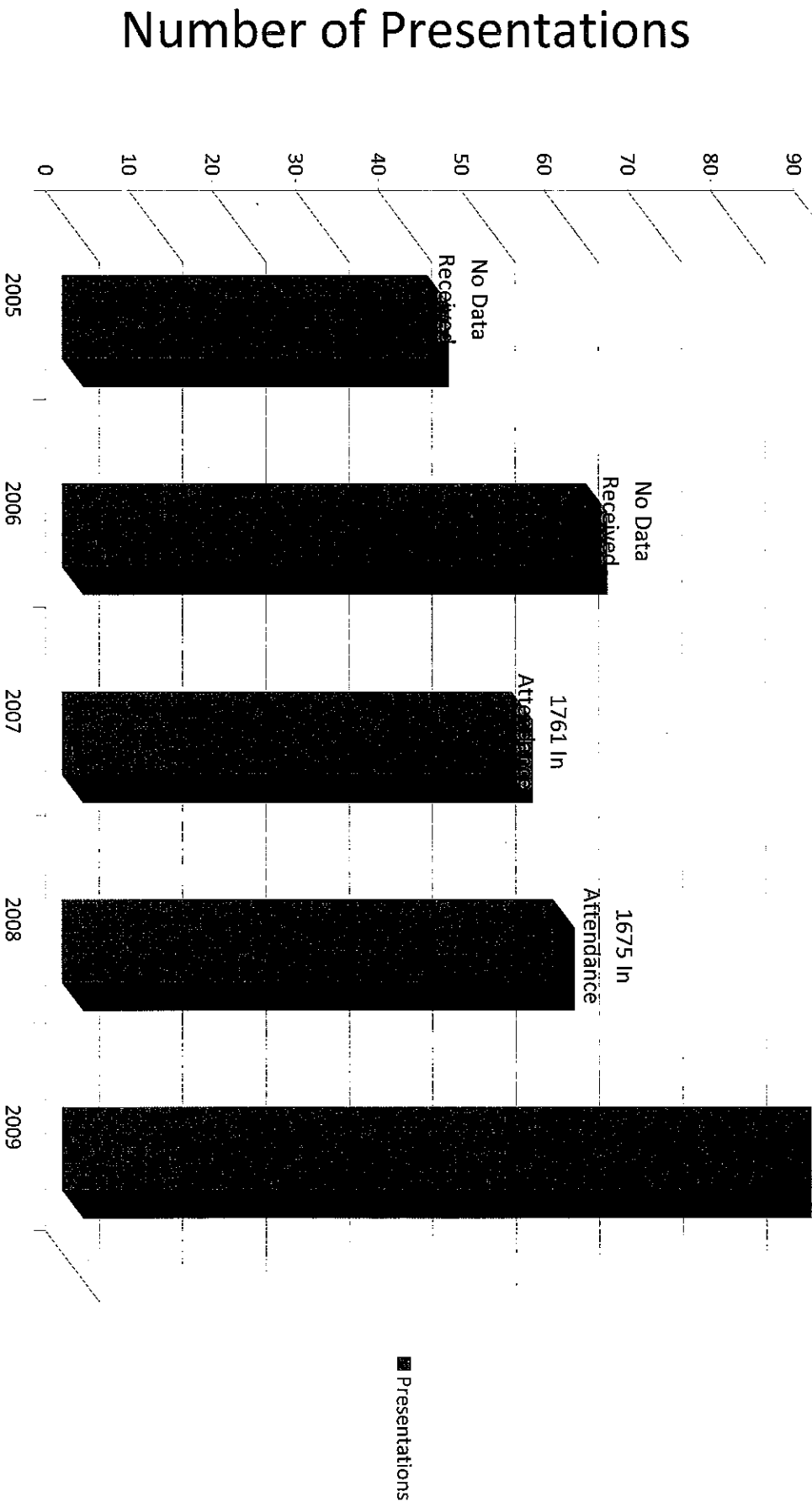


Units of Supplies

Supplies



Presentations



↓
1 FTE
0 PTE
AmeriCorp staff
facilitated presentations