



Diverse & Resilient



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CITY OF MILWAUKEE JOINS FORCES WITH LOCAL AGENCY TO ADDRESS HEALTH DISPARITIES BY PROMOTING FURTHER ACCEPTANCE OF GAY AND LESBIAN PEOPLE

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, City of Milwaukee Department of Health Commissioner Bevan K. Baker, and local agency leader Dr. Gary Hollander today announced the launch of a campaign to reduce health disparities among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Milwaukee by encouraging acceptance.

A recent study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Infection (CDC) showed that the sharp increase in transmission among gay and bisexual men in Milwaukee, particularly among young African American men, is in part attributable to homophobia, social exclusion, unstable housing, and family upset. Currently it is estimated that between 2 and 4 in 10 African American gay and bisexual men in Milwaukee is HIV+.

The partnership will largely support the implementation and placement of media messages aimed at reducing anti-gay discrimination that makes gay and bisexual men vulnerable to HIV infection risk. The messages come in the form of pictures and stories by family members, friends, co-workers and neighbors who contributed their time to tell about their individual journeys in coming to accept the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in their lives. The project, called *Acceptance Journeys*, includes 32 stories at this time, and additional stories are in production.

The effort is funded in part through an award from the M·A·C AIDS Fund as part of the 2011 VIVA GLAM campaign led by spokesperson, pop icon Lady Gaga. The M·A·C AIDS Fund initiative aims to support programs that address the social determinants, including stigma, violence, racism, homophobia, and poverty, and community barriers that increase the risk of HIV infection among gay and bisexual men.

In preparation for this project, Diverse and Resilient contracted with the Center for AIDS Intervention Research at the Medical College of Wisconsin to determine the readiness of Milwaukeeans to address the issues of anti-gay discrimination. The study found that while a few groups were somewhat aware of the impact of bias, most were unaware of discrimination or were reluctant to address it. The agency also worked with Dr. Shawnika Hull of the University of Wisconsin School of Journalism and Mass Communication to determine what messages would be impactful in the community.

The resulting project, *Acceptance Journeys*, seeks to give greater voice to those people in the city who have addressed some of the biases they have been exposed to in the past. Their stories show a diversity of perspectives and relationships.

Gary Hollander, Executive Director of Diverse and Resilient, observed, "M·A·C AIDS Fund support allows us to do what most communities only dream of. We can work on the root causes of HIV and the many other health disparities that affect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people. The turmoil surrounding government funding at this time and particular political perspectives that may seek to keep us invisible make this support more important than ever."

The City of Milwaukee, through the Health Department, has been actively working to reduce HIV and AIDS infection rates through grant collaborations, programming and coordination with the CDC, the State of Wisconsin Department of Public Health, and the Medical College of Wisconsin, as well as community organizations like Diverse and Resilient, Inc. Recent activities have included: a Women's HIV Case Management program directed to underinsured/uninsured women and providing appropriate delivery of medical, mental health and social service needs; cutting edge behavioral interventions through self-assessment of high risk behaviors; Directing a small grant provision through the Milwaukee AIDS Initiative to assist community-based organizations in reaching hard to reach populations for purposes of awareness, screening, counseling, testing and treatment; and integrating the latest testing models into the health centers to enhance screening rapidity and identification of HIV cases, including assuring counseling, treatment and follow-up of contacts.

ABOUT DIVERSE AND RESILIENT, INC.

Diverse and Resilient, Inc. is a nonprofit organization whose mission is the healthy development of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in Wisconsin by creating and sustaining groups and communities to take action. The organization's name is intended to serve as reminder that LGBT people are everywhere, engage in interesting and meaningful lives, and contribute to the welfare of each other and the broader community. For additional information, visit www.diverseandresilient.org.

ABOUT THE M·A·C AIDS FUND

The M·A·C AIDS Fund, the heart and soul of M·A·C Cosmetics, was established in 1994 to support men, women and children affected by HIV/AIDS globally. MAF is a pioneer in HIV/AIDS funding, providing financial support to organizations working with underserved regions and populations. As the largest corporate non-pharmaceutical giver in the arena, MAF is committed to addressing the link between poverty and HIV/AIDS by supporting diverse organizations around the world that provide a wide range of services to people

living with HIV/AIDS. To date, MAF has raised \$202 million (U.S) exclusively through the sale of M·A·C's VIVA GLAM Lipstick and Lipglass donating 100 percent of the sale price to fight HIV/AIDS. For more information visit www.macaidsfund.org