



November 20, 2011

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Dear Friends,

When you hear politicians and supercommittees talking about massive cuts, *they're talking about cuts to the programs that fund Iris House.*

When bureaucrats forget about real people, they're forgetting about the people that you pass on the street every day, the people that you share a subway with. They're cutting programs away from Iris House clients like Lillian, Casilda and Cynthia, and that's not fair.

In the last year alone, shifting national strategies have diverted more than \$300,000 in long-term funding for our Food and Nutrition programs to other areas. A last minute showdown at New York City Council kept dollars for housing people living with HIV from being radically cut, but didn't save it all. Even where funding is increasing, priorities and money are being directed AWAY from women, AWAY from families, and away from the very people for whom Iris House was founded almost 20 years ago.

We need your help, and we can use it now.

Lillian used to teach health education classes at a public school. When she was diagnosed with HIV, shame and fear kept her from seeking treatment for a decade until related health problems became critical. She came to Iris House for help, and is now back to an active, healthy lifestyle. Not only is she an advocate for women who are paralyzed by the fear that often accompanies an HIV diagnosis, but she's giving back to our community as a volunteer fitness instructor offering group classes and individual counseling to other Iris House clients. We were able to help Lillian because of people like you.

Last year, contributions and support from our friends ensured that a *dedicated team of counselors and caseworkers were on hand to help people like Lillian.* I am asking for you to increase that gift this year in recognition of the 30th Anniversary of the AIDS Pandemic so we can continue to save lives every day.

Casilda is the primary caretaker for her grandchildren. Her diagnosis sent her into a downward spiral of depression, compounded by a number of other factors, including her age. Iris House gave her a chance to stop her fall, empowered her to make better choices for herself, and provided opportunities for her to share her story with others. She's now a peer educator at a New York City hospital, helping other women, newly dealing with HIV, to meet their goals and get beyond the diagnosis. Her granddaughters have someone getting them off to school each day, get a few presents at Christmas and have a healthy grandmother because of people like you.

This barely touches the surface of the work that the case managers, social workers and outreach staff do each and every day, seven days a week to try and *stop the AIDS pandemic,* one person at a time, while continuing our desperately needed work

providing services and support for people living with HIV/AIDS. *Despite exciting news this year about a potential cure, that day is a long time off*, and the clients of Iris House – among the most vulnerable populations in New York City -- still need our help desperately.

Cynthia, longtime Iris House client, received her G.E.D. this year and has gone back to work part time while exploring options for college. She is raising the standard of living for herself and her family, with a hopeful outlook toward a long, productive future, thanks to gifts from people just like you.


Your gifts mean more today than ever to women like Lillian, Casilda and Cynthia. You've heard the stories about how the government is cutting budgets left and right: *programs like Iris House's are in the crosshairs and we need your support now.*

A gift of

- \$25 provides one free HIV Rapid Test
- \$50 provides MetroCards to ten women in our domestic violence support group
- \$100 provides a 15-meal pantry bag for four members of our community
- \$250 provides educational materials and lunch for ten teenagers at our annual Teen Summit
- \$500 provides 5,000 prevention palm cards for our Love Your Life: Keep it 100 NYC Campaign
- \$750 helps keep electricity and phone service on for a dozen clients in supportive housing
- \$1000 underwrites a Party With a Purpose for 150 young people's prevention education
- \$1500 would provide two new computers for our life-skills classes, offered to women and men
- \$2500 distributes 100,000 free condoms to 125 business in high-risk neighborhoods each month
- \$5000 would cover the costs of running a Divas Support Group (HIV+ women over 50) for a Year

More than ninety cents of every dollar goes directly to client programs. Your gift means so much more because it goes right to the people who need it the most. *I support the incredible work of Iris House, won't you do so too?*

Sincerely,



Ingrid Floyd
Executive Director