Iris House’s 14th Annual Women as the Face of AIDS Summit Highlights Leadership and Voices of HIV+ Women

On May 6, Iris House held its 14th Annual Women as the Face of AIDS Summit at the Bethel Gospel Assembly in Harlem. More than 250 people from New York and other cities along the East Coast attended the all-day conference, where many of the participants, presenters, and speakers were HIV+ women.

The Summit featured 16 workshops, two plenary sessions, a networking session and a keynote address by Robert Fullilove, EdD, Associate Dean for Community and Minority Affairs of the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. In his presentation, Dr. Fullilove explored the impact of 400 years of slavery and mass incarceration on rising HIV rates in this country, observing “Public policy has as much to do with spreading HIV as anything else.” He challenged the audience with a call to action, “Prepare observances for the 400th anniversary of Jamestown and take every opportunity to denounce structures of inequality wherever you see them.”

Another highlight of the event was the presentation of awards to four women who have made extraordinary contributions to ending the AIDS epidemic. Lorena Borjas; Gina Brown, MSW; Kimberly Canady; and Antionette Etienne were all celebrated for their activism and accomplishments.

Iris House

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This issue of Bloom is the perfect time to reflect on the theme of the 2019 Women as the Face of AIDS Summit, “Our Thoughts, Our Voices, Our Time.” As federal and state agencies are crafting implementation plans to end the epidemic, we need to ensure that our voices, the voices of women, are included and being heard. We were disappointed when the original National AIDS Strategy included very little on women, so in order to change that and ensure the needs of women are going to be met, we need to be responsive and vocal.

It’s not just women whose voices need to be heard, but the voices of people of color who are the most impacted by HIV in this country. The data still shows how we are infected at rates substantially higher than other populations and this must change. People of color have to have a seat at the table when decisions are being made that impact our communities. Now is the time to have our thoughts and our voices heard.

Iris House stands committed to continue working locally and nationally to help end the epidemic. Many of our new programs, such as our Love Your Life virtual support group for women living with HIV and Project 1329, aim to help reduce the stigma of living with HIV while connecting people with needed support services. Our long-standing housing and nutrition services are ensuring that we address the social determinants of health that help our clients achieve viral suppression at rates higher than the national average.

We know that support services are important to the women, men and families who depend on us and it’s because of friends like you that we are able to continue to save lives. Thank you!

Ingrid Floyd
Executive Director

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Project 1329 offers services to African American and Latino young men who have sex with men, and heterosexual youth, ages 13-29, who are HIV+ and high-risk negatives, to prevent HIV, STI, HCV, and substance abuse.

For more information,
Contact Ofelia Barrios, Senior Director of Community Health Initiatives
(646) 548-0100 or obarrios@irishouse.org

Project 1329 is sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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Iris House Pop-Up Services
East Harlem Neighborhood Health Action Center
158 East 115th Street

It’s one-stop shopping on Tuesdays in East Harlem, from 10 am—5 pm (pantry at 11 am). Iris House provides pantry bags from our Food and Nutrition Services program and our full panel of testing, (HIV, Hepatitis C, Syphilis, Gonorrhea and Chlamydia) and community outreach and referrals. Contact Ken DeJesus at kdejesus@irishouse.org or Jon Diamond at jdiamond@irishouse.org.
SEEN AT THE SUMMIT!

Thank you for supporting Iris House in this year’s AIDS Walk NY
Iris House Community Health Fair

August 6th ☀ 6 PM

The Plaza of the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building
163 West 125th Street

- Free and Confidential!
- HIV Rapid Tests
- Hepatitis C Rapid Tests
- Sexually Transmitted Infection Testing
- Community Resource Tables

Services Offered in English & Spanish

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
June 27th is National HIV Testing Day

Iris House Events

Father's Day Luncheon
Thursday, June 6, 2019

Community Health Fair
Tuesday, August 6, 2019

Family Summer Picnic
Friday, August 23, 2019

To donate or volunteer, call Kim at (646) 548-0100 ,x221

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Jenessis Troche

Title: Health Educator
Hometown: Queens, NY
Time at Iris House: 6 months
Time in the Field: 2 years

What do you do? I work with youth in the community by educating them on topics such as mental health, sexual health, and more! Project 1329 gives youth the opportunity to participate in our monthly youth advisory board. We also provide free and confidential counseling sessions, as well as HIV, HCV, and STI testing.

What's your favorite part of working at Iris House? I LOVE the family atmosphere. This is literally my second home and having great colleagues makes my work so much more worthwhile. Also being able to do counseling work with youth has been my favorite part. I'll be going back to school to get a master's degree in mental health counseling therefore I get to dive right in and get great experience.

What makes you smile? Just about everything but more specifically, listening to music and reading self-improvement books.

Favorite Song: Alicia Keys – If I Ain't Got You
Favorite Food: Vegan Mac & Cheese and any vegan desserts
Favorite Quote: She is clothed with strength and dignity and laughs without fear of the future. Proverbs 31:25

Please visit our website (www.irishouse.org) to learn about upcoming events and new programs. You can also follow us on Twitter @IrisHouse or Facebook (Main Iris House Page, Iris House: New Jersey).