HIV and Social Justice

The 13th Annual Women as the Face of AIDS Summit

“Nothing Without Us: HIV & Social Justice” was the theme of the day, and with two keynote presenters, seventeen breakout sessions and innumerable sidebar conversations and discussions, our staff and audience came away fully charged to take the battle against HIV to the next level!

Early reports from attendees suggest that the program was among the best we’ve presented, and we were fortunate to have some amazing women leading the charge: Dr. Oni Blackstock, Dr. Joy DeGruy, Dr. Pernessa Seele, C. Virginia Fields and Iris House board member Debra Fraser-Howze electrified and engaged the crowds, who were left feeling empowered and recommitted to helping End the Epidemic, with a focus of meeting the specific needs of women of color. Dr. Seele and Ms. Fields were honored at lunch for their commitment to our ongoing struggle against HIV/AIDS.

Dr. DeGruy’s Presentation, “History, Trauma and Health in the African-American Community,” spanned 400 years of history to contextualize the impact of HIV on people of color, contrasting the depictions of African-Americans in pop culture and media with the way they’re treated categorically in science and medicine.

It was a fully charged day, and we look forward to next May and the 14th Annual Women as the Face of AIDS Summit!

A very special thanks to our leading supporters, the New York City Council (Corey Johnson, Speaker), ViiV Healthcare, Gilead Sciences, Janssen Therapeutics, OraSure Technologies and Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and more than a dozen community organizations. We couldn’t do it without them!

TECHNOLOGY SAVES THE DAY!

This year’s Summit featured a first: a webinar! Travel issues on the day before the Summit prevented keynote speaker Dr. Joy DeGruy from attending in person, but with the help of webinar technology, Iris House managed to get her there virtually! Not only was she able to give her presentation (amazing!), but answered questions from the audience and interacted as if she were in the room live! Moreover, it allowed us to share her webinar broadly before the event so that we were able to offer this piece of our program live to viewers from around the country!
As I write this, I’m still in the glow of this week’s Women as the Face of AIDS Summit. When I joined the staff of Iris House, this was one of the first projects I launched, and I am gratified that there is more and more interest in this program every year. Not only is it an amazing educational event, but it’s also an important community one. This year more than 44 organizations were represented on the planning committee, as sponsors, and as presenters (and many of them in multiple roles!) The Summit is a collaboration, and it is in our collaborations that Iris House is sustainable through its 25th year of serving women and families impacted by HIV.

One of our biggest collaborations right now is the latest phase of our “Love Your Life” campaign. This national program, possible by a grant from ViiV Healthcare, is a collaboration between Iris House, Voces Latinas in Queens, The Minority AIDS Council in Orangeburg, SC, the Afiya Center in Dallas, TX and WORLD in Oakland, CA. Together, we are working on a two-pronged campaign to identify the needs of women who live in isolation: how can they get services and support when they either live in rural areas, don’t have the resources to access on-site services, or are afraid to reach out due to family or community stigma. Working with a diverse array of collaborators means that we all share resources: intellectual, emotional and financial and create a more robust program with greater efficiencies than any of us could do alone. Stay tuned as soon we will be launching an online emotional wellness group available in English and Spanish to allow more women access to needed supportive services.

As we look forward to our next 25 years, we will continue building our relationships with other organizations, fighting to ensure that women, particularly women of color, are included in the conversations. We will seek out new partnerships, continue producing our Summit and look for every opportunity to reach women where they are, to ensure they have a place at the table, and to join us as peer advocates, activists and friends.

Ingrid Floyd, Executive Director

SAVE THE DATE!
Join us on October 10, 2018 as Iris House commemorates 25 years of serving our community at Stage 48 for “A New Orleans Masquerade”

Honoring Marc S. Meachem (ViiV Healthcare), original board member Sukey Wagner, HIV Activist and actress Gloria Reuben.

We are grateful for the early support of sponsors
Leslie Lake and Michael Smirlock
Locke Lord, LLC
Theresa Mack, M.D. and Jason Mack, M.D.
Physicians RX/Broadway Family Pharmacy
Kevin China

Tickets are available at tinyurl.com/IH25Celebration

Host Committee (in formation)
Naima Walker Fierce and Debra Fraser-Howze, Co-Chairs
Tania Barnett, Ofella Barrios, Kevin China, Nicholas DiCeglie, Tracy Mendelsohn, Nina Saravansky, Susan Wolfson
Meet Queenie: Iris House’s New Mobile Outreach Unit

In September, we introduced you to “Diva,” Iris House’s first mobile outreach unit, which was sponsored by a grant from the Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey. Less than six months later, we welcomed “Queenie,” Diva’s sister and our first outreach van for New York City!

Thanks to a NY City Council Ending the Epidemic grant, “Queenie” will help us reach more women of color and their families to provide HIV education, PrEP referrals and counseling, and connection to providers who offer PrEP, as well as HIV and STI testing.

A snowy winter’s day provided the backdrop for the ribbon cutting as we commemorated National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness day with the ribbon cutting, testing event and screening of the documentary “Nothing Without Us.”

If you are in New York City and you or your organization would like Queenie to come visit, bringing with her a complement of staff to provide free PrEP counselling, onsite HIV and STI testing or connection to community resources, please contact our Director of Outreach and Testing, Ken DeJesus at (646) 548-0100 x303.

Iris House’s prevention team post in front of “Queenie,” welcoming our newest outreach van to our family!
STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Name: Crystal Mitchell
Title: Health Educator
Hometown: Plainfield, NJ
Time at Iris House: 5 1/2 Years
Time in the Field: 5 1/2 Years
What do you Do? HIV tester/counselor, SISTA and WILLOW (Group Interventions) Facilitator, Social Media Outreach
What makes you smile: A nice glass of wine and my girlfriend.
Favorite Song: “I Wanna Dance With Somebody” (Whitney Houston)
Favorite Food: Mexican, but I’m a foodie, so I eat just about anything and willing to try anything once.
What Do You Do Outside of Iris House? I’m really involved in my community here in Plainfield...I’m a member of the Plainfield Democratic Committee and I do a lot of community service. For example I do block clean-ups, give away free grocery bags full of food, donated hygiene products, and feed people who are in need.
Hobbies: Reading and coloring.
Favorite Quote: “If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude.” - Maya Angelou

Coming Up at Iris House

Father’s Day Luncheon
Thursday, June 14, 2018
Family Summer Picnic
Friday, August 24, 2018
25th Anniversary Celebration
Wednesday, October 10, 2018

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

SOCIAL MEDIA and IRIS HOUSE

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On the Web: www.irishouse.org
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Please visit our website (www.irishouse.org) to learn about upcoming events and new programs.

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