

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - EVENT ANNOUNCEMENT

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Community Leaders Rally Behind New HIV Prevention Forums

Private Foundations, Service Organizations and Local Businesses Respond to Rising New HIV Infections and Success of November 16 Event

New York (N.Y.) (January 28, 2004) - From amfAR to Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS to Astor Medical Group, New York City foundations, HIV/AIDS organizations and private businesses are lending support for the upcoming HIV prevention forum entitled "The Crystal-Meth - HIV Connection" hosted by Harvey Fierstein. In turn, they are breathing new life into the public discussion over HIV prevention.

"We cannot ignore the direct link between this insidious drug and HIV transmission," said Dr. Mathilde Krim, amfAR's Founding Chairman and Chairman of the Board. "Methamphetamine use interferes with sound judgment, increasing the likelihood that safer sex guidelines will be abandoned in an environment where a momentary lapse can have enormous consequences."

Given the pervasiveness of crystal-meth use in the gay community and the role it plays the transmission of HIV, forums such as this one could not have come at a better time. "Our community is at a critical juncture for change in the way we view and create HIV prevention," said Jay Laudato, Executive Director of Callen-Lorde Community Health Center, New York's only community health center dedicated to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, "these forums are at the nexus of that change." Dr. Kim of Astor Medical Group, a private medical practice comprised largely of gay men agrees. "By creating a series of community forums where these men can come together to discuss the concerns surrounding the rise of new HIV infection, I feel it will lead to more effective prevention programs."

Much of the outpouring of support for the upcoming series was ignited by the success of the first town hall-style meeting held this past November 16th and attended by over 300 people, entitled "Challenging the Culture of Disease - A Panel Discussion with Harvey Fierstein." As Tom Viola, Executive Director of Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, one of the nation's largest foundations dedicated to HIV/AIDS issues, pointed out:

"Many of our staff attended the November 16th event, which prompted a lively discussion in our office." Said Viola, "We were by what took place that night and we are honored to support this prevention outreach effort. In addition, Harvey Fierstein's involvement makes the synergy between our organization and these events quite strong."

Forum organizers not only believe that these events will unify the community and fuel discussion, but also send out a call to action to individuals and leaders. "We are elated to have the support from such respected organizations," said Dan Carlson, forum co-organizer. "With these forums we strive to unify the gay community in encouraging and supporting people to make the

necessary decisions to remain uninfected." Dr. Kellerhouse, forum co-organizer, commented, "The support from these organizations will ensure that the momentum built this past November 16th will continue and the movement for more aggressive and meaningful prevention programs in New York City will evolve."

A community unified in support against HIV has been, and always will be, our best line of attack. As Dr. Krim of amfAR pointed out, "By directly confronting the dangers of crystal meth addiction with this forum, New York's gay community again demonstrates the kind of concern for mental and physical health that has been one of its best defenses against HIV/AIDS."

The "Challenging HIV" forum series is sponsored by: Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, amfAR, Callen-Lorde Community Health Center, the H. van Ameringen Foundation and Astor Medical Group. Media sponsors are: *Gay City News*, *NEXT Magazine* and *HX* and support services are provided by: Chelsea Savoy Hotel (accommodations) and Westprint (print production).

The "Crystal-Meth - HIV Connection" forum will take place on Sunday, February 8, 2004 from 7-9 P.M. at F.I.T.'s Haft Auditorium, West 27th street between 7th and 8th Avenues.