



PRESS RELEASE

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Harlem United and Partners Form *Uptown Health Link* with a Grant from the New York State Department of Health to Fight AIDS in Upper Manhattan

New York, NY (October 9, 2008) – Yesterday, the New York State Department of Health – AIDS Institute announced \$1,057,780 in funding for an HIV/AIDS Community Services Center in Upper Manhattan, which was awarded to Harlem United Community AIDS Center as lead agency for a unique consortium of organizations. These include the Dominican Women Development Center, Washington Heights CORNER Project and the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS.

The newly formed group, Uptown Health Link, will collaborate with community partners in East Harlem, Central Harlem and Washington Heights/Inwood to increase HIV/AIDS awareness, leadership and commitment; help reverse the epidemic by reducing the number of new HIV infections; and reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with HIV/AIDS in Upper Manhattan by connecting people to high quality health care and supportive services. Patrick J. McGovern, CEO and President of Harlem United, asserts, “Uptown Health Link aims to transform Upper Manhattan’s AIDS response by elevating the fight against the epidemic in the collective consciousness of the community and by adopting a systematic block-by-block approach to outreach, case-finding, testing, and linkage to services.”

Rosita Romero, Executive Director of the Dominican Women’s Development Center (also known as El Centro), a Washington Heights/Inwood-based agency that contributes to the empowerment of Dominican/Latina and other women and their families through holistic social, health, education and community empowerment initiatives, emphasizes, “Far too many people in Upper Manhattan, including Latinos and recent immigrants in Washington Heights/Inwood, are unaware of their HIV status and are only diagnosed late in the course of infection. We will work with our Uptown Health Link partners to increase HIV, STD and hepatitis screening and linkage to care by expanding our unique and effective peer-based, community health promotion approach.”

Jamie Favaro, Executive Director of Washington Heights CORNER Project, a street-based syringe exchange program in Washington Heights, states, “The CORNER Project will facilitate access to HIV and HCV testing, syringe exchange and other harm reduction services. Drug users are an exceptionally marginalized high-risk population in Washington Heights; stigma is compounded with homelessness, a history of trauma, and disconnect from the medical and mental health system, these factors create a culture of hopelessness. Uptown Health Link is essential in enriching CORNER Project services to provide resources, education, targeted referrals and support which not only directly reduces HIV and HCV transmission, but also shifts the culture towards wellness and recovery.”

C. Virginia Fields, President and CEO of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS (NBLCA), affirms, “There is an urgent need to elevate awareness of HIV and perception of individual risk, increase knowledge of HIV serostatus, link individuals to needed services, and galvanize greater community action, particularly in the African American community. NBLCA will expand work to mobilize faith-based groups to address the AIDS epidemic in Upper Manhattan in partnership with Harlem United, the CORNER Project, El Centro and other Uptown service providers.”

For more information on Harlem United and Uptown Health Link, the newest Community Services Center, go to www.harlemunited.org.