

The HIV Prevention Conundrum

By: JOSE M DAVILA

As national HIV researchers, scientists and policymakers contemplate a move to medical models to prevent the spread of HIV disease and funding begins to follow that trend, many communities like ours where large segments of the population affected remain disenfranchised face a potential dismantling of the social service structure which has been at the forefront of the fight against this pandemic for the last 26 years.

While it is true that HIV/AIDS has increasingly become a treatable disease thanks to the many advances in HIV/AIDS anti retroviral treatments (HAART) and that individuals who follow proper treatment regimens can achieve undetectable viral loads, hence reducing the risk of HIV transmission, it is also true that many individuals lack the basic socio economic necessities (housing, education, employment) which present barriers to accessing care. These same individuals, mostly People of Color continue getting infected by HIV at accelerated rates. This is the epidemic that we are fighting in NYC's Borough of The Bronx, still the poorest congressional district in the nation

and with almost 2% of its residents living with HIV/AIDS.

What to do? The answer for me is simple, as much as the HIV epidemic is complex. There is no single approach to combating the spread of HIV. Disease prevention models have to be tailored to the community factors influencing transmission. As long as there are people affected by homophobia, domestic violence, substance use, homelessness and hunger, and as long as people feel culturally, socially and economically alienated, no medical model will contain the epidemic. Government, who until now has been mostly responsible for financing HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, must continue supporting social models of prevention that have been proven effective, while introducing new clinical approaches. One should not exist at the expense of the other. Anything less than this will be a disservice to the thousands of persons affected by this disease that depend on organizations like BAS to help them fight for their basic human rights so they can think about addressing their medical needs.

Diva Day V: Divalicious!!

On August 14th, the GoGirl! Program, BAS' skills building and empowerment program for Adolescent girls conducted its 5th annual conference at Hostos Community College. Under the theme "*Red Ribbon: Red Carpet*", 60 registered participants benefited from a presentation on the State of HIV/AIDS in the Bronx, as well as individual workshops addressing life issues such as Self Esteem Building, Conflict Resolution, Sexual Health and Applying to College. Keynote Speaker LaQwana Finkley, a 21 year old HIV+ young woman spoke about the importance of getting tested and staying protected in long term relationships and a Youth Panel directed a vibrant discussion about sexuality, self-esteem, HIV/AIDS, peer pressure and dating violence to close the conference.

The GoGirl! Program is funded by grants from SAMHSA and the NYS DOH AIDS Institute.



Chair
Mari Nobles da Silva

Rev. Theodora Brooks
Mera Eisen
Jerome A. Ernst, MD
Alan B. Goldberg
Ben Rodriguez
Jorge L. Rodriguez
Deirdre Wallace-Hines

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Executive Director
Jose M. Davila
Chief Operating Officer
Candia Richards-Clarke
Director of Finance and Administration
Michael Winter

Newsletter Editor
Jose M. Davila

Printing and Design
Bronx Design Group

OUR MISSION

“Bronx AIDS Services is committed to improving the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS. Our mission is to deliver consumer-centered services to people living with HIV/AIDS, to people at risk for contracting HIV/AIDS, and to people affected by HIV/AIDS. We do this through education, advocacy, outreach, direct services, prevention programs and connecting people to care. We commit to being a safe haven for clients, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, immigrant or economic status.”

Domestic Violence: Raising Awareness in the Community

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month and is designated as a time to take collective action, to celebrate survivors, raise public awareness of domestic violence, and remember the millions of lives lost as a result of abuse. As is now tradition at BAS for the last five years, the Family Justice legal team, our Coordinator of Community Services and an army of volunteers pack their t-shirts, color markers, string cord, purple ribbons and balloons and hit the street to hold “The Traveling Clothesline Project”, a grassroots effort where T-shirts are created and hung on a clothes line by community members and other individuals with personal messages surrounding Domestic Violence and abuse. The project gives abused persons, survivors and supporters a vehicle in which to air their “dirty laundry”, putting domestic violence in the public’s eye. 350 t-shirts were created by individuals in the community at two events held at Fordham Plaza and Monsignor Del Valle Square on Monday, Oct 19th and Thursday, October 22nd respectively; many with poignant messages about personal experiences of domestic abuse. In addition, free HIV testing and counseling was provided at one of BAS’ mobile outreach units and six organizations that provide services to victims of domestic violence were present disseminating information and offering advice to the public on this pervasive issue in our community.

The Bronx had the second highest rate of family related homicides in 2008 in the City of New York. In that same year, the Family Justice team in our Legal Department provided assistance to 33 domestic violence survivors and helped 8 clients with obtaining or enforcing an Order of Protection, thereby protecting 8 women and 14 children from violence.



Exec Director Jose Davila and Community Services Coordinator Sojourner McCauley take a look at some of the messages written on t-shirts at the Traveling Clothesline event.



Staff, peers and community participants and the Traveling Clothesline on Monsignor del Valle Sq.



Mobile HIV testing and Tabling at the Fordham Plaza event.

Front Runners NY supports BAS

On Saturday morning, September 26th runners, family members and supporters gathered at Van Cortland Park for the Annual 5-Kilometer Cross Country Race sponsored by Front Runners NY. The runners club, who has been an active running and cycling club for gays, lesbians and LGBT friendly athletes for more than 25 years was donating the proceeds from the event registration to support BAS. BAS Executive Director Jose Davila and staff from the Prevention and Case Management Departments were there to thank the runners and to cheer on their very own running contingent: Michael Winter, Director of Finance, Rick Kahn, Director of Legal Services and his lovely wife Kathleen and Board member Alan Goldberg.

The event raised \$1000. Thank you, Front Runners NY, especially Megan Jenkins and Rob Lennon!



Rick Kahn, Director of Legal Services and Michael Winter, Director of Finance take a respite after their run.



Staff from the Prevention Department join in the cheer of participants at the 5K Run.



Participants at the 5K Run sponsored by Front Runners NY Club to benefit BAS.

Care Coordination...the BAS way

BAS Medical Services, a joint venture of Bronx AIDS Services and VidaCare Medical Services re-opened its doors to the community in an Open House held on August 4th at BAS' Prevention Center on 953 So. Blvd. The clinic space was completely renovated, making it more appealing and user friendly to our patients and the BAS and VidaCare leaderships are invested in developing a comprehensive care model to address the many issues of patients affected by HIV

disease. A Care Team composed of an HIV Primary Care Provider, a Case Manager and a Medical Assistant ensure that patients enrolled comply with visits and treatment, as well as coordinate with outside resources to ensure a holistic care approach.

To refer patients for enrollment, please contact M.A. Bryan Cachola or C.M. Steven Mangual at 718-295-5690.



BAS Case Manager Steven Mangual welcomes the more than 30 community members who attended the Open House.



Partial view of one of the Exam rooms in the recently renovated clinic space.



Staff from VidaCare Health Plan and BAS moments before officially re-opening BAS Medical Services to the public.

Community based HIV testing: A Model in Collaboration

By: TOM O'CONNELL*

The decision to get tested for HIV can be a difficult one. Fear of the virus and the stigma that surrounds it has understandably led people to avoid learning their status in the past. For three days at the end of June, volunteers from around the country, from all walks of life, successfully executed an unprecedented outreach campaign in the Bronx in recognition of National HIV Testing Day during which they conducted 430 tests. More than 25 volunteers joined BAS and Gallery Church's City Uprising Movement to test, conduct community outreach efforts and distribute flyers with information about testing. They were drawn by ties of faith—several volunteers came from a congregation in Nashville, Tennessee formerly headed by the pastor of Gallery Church—and a desire to help raise awareness about HIV/AIDS.

The event was part of the Bronx Knows Initiative, the program that aims to have all Bronx residents between the ages of 18 and 64 learn their HIV status by the summer of 2011. BAS tested members of the Bronx community in testing locations at the BAS Prevention Center on Southern Boulevard, the BAS GoGirl! office on Arthur Avenue, and the Gallery Church. Mobile testing vans also traveled to 149th Street and 125th Street as part of a citywide mobile testing blitz. BAS joined more than ten other HIV and New York City health organizations in that effort.

In addition to the energy and dedication of the volunteers, the spirit of the people of the Bronx served to make the campaign effective. The receptivity of Bronx residents to the message of street outreach workers revealed their awareness of the prevalence of HIV in their community and of the importance of knowing their status. A great majority of passersby paused in the midst of the daily rush to accept fliers and postcards from volunteers. Heartening words came even from those who turned down information. "No thanks, I was just tested last week," one young woman said with a smile, echoing the words of several of her fellow Bronxites who had walked by before her.

**The writer, a Fordham Univ. student, was an intern in BAS' Development office during the summer of 2009. Thank you, Tom for all your hard work!*

Thanks to....

- MAC AIDS Fund for awarding \$25,000. to our Legal Dept. in support of our Homelessness Prevention Program.
- Keith Haring Foundation for awarding \$7,500. to our Legal Department in support of our Homelessness Prevention Program.
- NYS Senator Tom Duane for sponsoring a Special Legislative Grant that awarded \$53,892. to our Legal Department in support of our Homelessness Prevention Program
- The National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS for awarding \$65,000 to our Prevention Department to continue providing HIV Prevention Capacity Building and HIV testing in Bronx Faith Communities
- NYS Senator Rev. Ruben Diaz, Sr. for awarding a \$100,000. Member Item to BAS in support of our Community HIV Prevention activities.

BRONX AIDS SERVICES

Main Office:

540 E. Fordham Road
Bronx, NY 10458

Prevention Center:

953 Southern Boulevard
Suite 201
Bronx, NY 10459

Go Girl! Programs:

1910 Arthur Avenue
Sixth Floor
Bronx, NY 10457

Presorted First Class
US Postage
PAID
Permit # 5198
White Plains, NY



**HANDS &
HEARTS**
making a difference

www.basnyc.org

Staff Extracurriculars

- Chief Operating Officer Candia Richards-Clarke was appointed to the Protocol Team of the NIH/CDC sponsored “Test and Treat” (TNT-Plus) study. The study aims at decreasing transmission of HIV in the community by identifying HIV+ individuals and quickly linking them to medical care and treatment.
- Group Facilitator Michael Serrano received an award from PRIDE (Puerto Rican Initiative to Develop Empowerment) for his activism on LGBTQ Youth issues at their Annual Dinner on Saturday, Nov 14th.
- Executive Director Jose M. Davila was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Latino Commission on AIDS.

Support BAS Today

I would like to make a gift to Bronx AIDS Services of

\$500 \$250 \$100
 \$50 \$25 Other \$ _____

*Please make checks payable to
“Bronx AIDS Services” and send to:*

Bronx AIDS Services, Inc.
540 E. Fordham Road, Bronx, NY 10458
Attn: Michelle Lawrence

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

*To make a credit card donation, please call
(718) 295-5605, ext 231
or to make an online donation, go to www.basnyc.org.*