

Twenty Five Years and Counting

By: Jose M Davila

Just a few years after the HIV/AIDS epidemic was identified in this country, a coalition of over 60 Bronx based agencies founded the Bronx AIDS Task Force, in response to the overwhelming numbers of Bronx residents being affected by the disease.

With limited funding from the NYS Department of Health and a lot of selfless giving, they began offering case management, outreach and community education. A core of 15 employees and many volunteers began a fight that almost 25 years later continues...

Bronx AIDS Services, as the organization was finally incorporated or BAS, as most of our constituents refer to us, has tirelessly been in the forefront of fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic and we have seen the fruit of our efforts, together with the many other organizations that share the work we do, in the significant reductions of overall infection rates and in better health outcomes for those infected that we help stay in care, resulting in longer life expectancies. However, there are some indicators that our work is far from being done: the Bronx continues to lead the City in the number of deaths attributable to AIDS; we also lead the City in the number of concurrent HIV and AIDS diagnosis, meaning that people in our borough are testing and seeking treatment too late after infection, and we are seeing a spike in infections in certain segments of the population, such as men and young men of color who have sex with other men.

Knowing that HIV transmission is preventable and that early detection and treatment can lead to healthier life outcomes for those that become infected, why haven't we made more progress? Individual behavior does not happen in a vacuum; we know that many elements of the social environment affect how one behaves. And in the Bronx, many of the social determinants of behavior converge negatively to create the "Perfect HIV Storm". As evidenced by the latest Census figures, over one third of Bronx residents live under the poverty threshold and a recent study* showed that the Bronx had the lowest health outcomes rating (62 out of 62) of all NYS counties and also ranked lowest in socio economic factors which include measures of education, employment, income, family and social support, and community safety. At BAS we are convinced that unless we help our clients achieve better socio-economic outcomes; our efforts to change and sustain individual behavior that reduce HIV infection will be lost. This will guide our purpose and mission for the next twenty five years, with the same vigor and passion as from Day One!

*County Health Rankings, University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, 2010

Save the Date: BAS World AIDS Day Conference

Saturday December 4th, 2010

Fordham University's McGinley Center Faculty Lounge, 2nd Floor

10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

*"Many Stories... One Voice:
The Ongoing Struggle for Human Rights"*

Join us and our community partners for workshops on:

Domestic Violence and HIV • Housing • Faith communities involvement • Parenting • Aging and HIV • Homophobia/Trans-phobia • Bullying

Theatrical presentation by BAS GoGirl! Theatre Troupe

Continental Breakfast & Lunch
Door prizes
MetroCards provided

For more information, contact Sojourner McCauley, Community Services Coordinator at 718-295-5605, x.263 or at communityservices@basnyc.org

Program co-sponsored by the Black Leadership Commission on AIDS (BLCA) and Leroy Pharmacy



Collaborators: AIDS Community Research Initiative of America (ACRIA), Bronx Community Pride Center, The Anti-Violence Project, The LGBT Center (List in formation)

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OUR MISSION

"BAS empowers and improves the lives and circumstances of adults and adolescents in the Bronx who are HIV positive or at risk and lack resources to meet their daily needs."

Newsletter Editor
Jose M. Davila

Design and Printing
Bronx Design Group

Staff Member Spotlight

Staff members Sandra Thomas and Anthony Betancourt celebrate their 20 years of service to BAS



Sandra Thomas

Sandra Thomas, Executive Assistant and Anthony Betancourt, Senior Health Educator; the longest running staff members of the agency sat down with Vanessa Rodriguez, Operations Associate for a candid interview about their 20 years with BAS. Following are their answers to five questions:

What was the first position you held at BAS and how did the HIV epidemic look to you then?

(ST) I first started at BAS as the Receptionist. I was sent here on a temporary assignment and the rest is history. At that time, HIV was not talked about much in my circle (family/friends) but you knew it was out there and that it was deadly. After a few hours of answering the phones and interacting with staff and clients, I soon realized exactly what kind of services were being provided by SBHDO - The South Bronx Human Development Organization, where BAS was first housed - and because I had no clue how the virus was transmitted, I became very nervous and wanted nothing to do with the place. Thankfully, I came to my senses before the end of that workday and decided to stick it out and see what I could learn.

(AB) My first position at BAS was Outreach Coordinator. At the time I became employed, HIV was having a devastating impact on the borough of The Bronx. In the early 90s people who were infected didn't have many choices of what medication they could take and as a result had to take AZT, which we later found out, was very toxic in the dosages being prescribed.

How has the epidemic changed since and what impact do you think BAS has had on it?

(ST) The most notable thing for me is that individuals are living longer and healthier lives. I have known women who although they are HIV positive were able to give birth to healthy babies with the help of medication without transmitting the virus to their children. Although some people still engage in risky behavior thinking it cannot happen to them, it's important to note that others are taking precautions to stay healthy because of the prevention work BAS does in the community.

(AB) There have been major improvements in the field of medications. We now have medications that allow people who take them to live a healthier and more productive lifestyle. BAS continues to be on the forefront of the HIV epidemic and plays a key role in advocating for persons who are infected. The agency has almost tripled its size since I started and has been able to create programs and services that touch many more people in different segments of the population.

What impact has BAS had on you?

(ST) Let's seeproud to work here....proud of the work that we do....I have learned a great deal....have had the opportunity to work with some wonderful people....have formed lifetime friendships.....

(AB) BAS has provided me with a nurturing environment and played a major role in my personal growth and development. I think had it not been for the support of BAS staff, I would have never returned to school and gotten my BA.

BAS will be commemorating 25 years of service in 2011; what direction you think the agency should take to continue helping people affected by the HIV epidemic?

(ST) I don't believe BAS should entirely change its direction, so far the way we have been providing services is working. What will have to change are our fundraising methods since government funding is decreasing each year.

(AB) One of the things I would like to see is for BAS to become a "one stop shop". I would like BAS to include more substance abuse services, housing and mental health services.

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

(ST) I hope to be retired and volunteering at BAS a few hours per week.

(AB) I would very much like to return to school and complete a graduate degree. I also hope to continue my employment at BAS but if for some reason can't, I would still ask to be involved with BAS as a community member or even being on the Board of Directors.



Anthony Betancourt

BAS In the Community



Performance at BAS' first Mini Ball

BAS In the Community

NOVEMBER 9TH RALLY FOR DIGNITY & HOUSING NO MORE HIV/AIDS DISCRIMINATION 30% RENT CAP NOW!

Thousands of low-income New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS and their families are at risk of homelessness or are already in the shelters... because they are denied affordable housing. Join us for a historic rally calling for a fair rental assistance policy that ensures clients of the HIV/AIDS Services Administration (BAS) pay no more than 30% of their disability income towards their rent, the same standard in every other housing assistance program in the state.

WHAT: HIV/AIDS Rally For Dignity & Housing

WHERE: Tuesday, November 9th at 11am

WHERE: City Hall Park

GETTING THERE: Subway: 2, 3 to Park Place R to City Hall
4, 5, 6 to Brooklyn Bridge - City Hall
A, C to Chambers / J, Z to Fulton St

RSVP: Jason at jason@cityhall.org or call (718) 864-3932

SPONSORED BY: Mayor's Committee, Bobby House, Bronx AIDS Services, Brooklyn AIDS Task Force (BATF), Columbia University, Community Health Center of Queens Island, Drug Policy Alliance, Espinoza, CHAC, Harlem United, Home Builders Coalition, Housing AIDS Forum, Housing Works, Latino Communities AIDS, New York City Health Education Center (NYCH), Positive Health Project, Street Housing Institute, Street Hospitality, Strong Force, Women of Color AIDS Alliance, Women of Color AIDS Housing Network (WOCAN), West Side Healthcare for Seniors and Supportive Housing. Additional sponsors online at www.housingaids.org

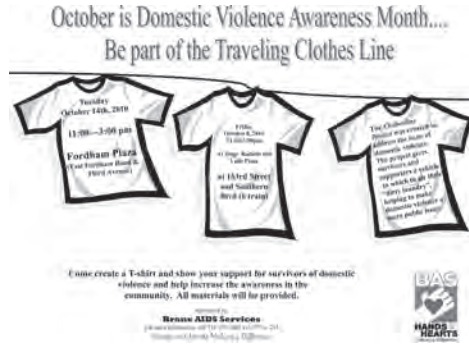
For updates and campaign information visit:
WWW.HOUSINGFIGHTSAIDS.ORG



BAS' Legal Director Rick Kahn (center) blocks Broadway flanked by Sen. Tom Duane & Jennifer Flynn from Health Gap at the 30% rent cap rally on Nov. 9th



The Clothesline Project at Monsignor DelValle Square



HIV testing and community outreach at Fordham Plaza

National Testing Week June, 2010					
Bronx AIDS Services					
Monday June 28 East 147th Street & White Avenue 10:00am-2:00pm	Tuesday June 29 Westchester Square & White Avenue 10:00am-2:00pm	Wednesday June 30 West 130th Street & East 130th Street 10:00am-2:00pm	Thursday June 30 East 147th Street & White Avenue 10:00am-2:00pm	Friday June 30 East 147th Street & White Avenue 10:00am-2:00pm	Saturday June 30 East 147th Street & White Avenue 10:00am-2:00pm
East 177th & Washington Avenue 10:00am-2:00pm	East 177th & Washington Avenue 10:00am-2:00pm	East 177th & Washington Avenue 10:00am-2:00pm	East 177th & Washington Avenue 10:00am-2:00pm	East 177th & Washington Avenue 10:00am-2:00pm	East 177th & Washington Avenue 10:00am-2:00pm
BAS Prevention Site 113 Southern Blvd 10:00am-2:00pm	BAS Prevention Site 113 Southern Blvd 10:00am-2:00pm	BAS Prevention Site 113 Southern Blvd 10:00am-2:00pm	BAS Prevention Site 113 Southern Blvd 10:00am-2:00pm	BAS Prevention Site 113 Southern Blvd 10:00am-2:00pm	BAS Prevention Site 113 Southern Blvd 10:00am-2:00pm
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BAS staff attending the 30% rent cap rally at City Hall Park on Nov 9th

CARA

CREATING AWARENESS TO REDUCE AIDS

NATIONAL LATINO HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY

OCTOBER 15TH, 2010
3pm-6pm

653 SOUTHERN BLVD
Suite 301

FREE:

- HIV TESTING
- STD TESTING
- PERFORMANCES, GAMES AND PRIZES FOR AGES 13-24
- LIGHT BEVERAGES AND SNACKS WILL BE SERVED
- RETROCARDS WILL BE PROVIDED



BAS' Prevention Director Brad Caughen addressing participants at the Land of Animation Mini Ball



BAS' ED Jose Davila being arrested at the 30% rent cap rally



Performance at the Mini Ball



Guest reviews exhibit during National Latino AIDS Awareness Day Event



Participants registering for workshops during the Divas & Dolls Carnival commemorating Women & Girls AIDS Awareness Day



Birds-eye view of Exhibit Hall during the Divas & Dolls Carnival



BAS' ED Jose Davila & Legal Director Rick Kahn amongst protesters blocking Broadway during the 30% rent cap rally

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Bronx, NY 10458

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953 Southern Boulevard
Suite 201
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Staff Extracurriculars

- Executive Director Jose M Davila presented at The HIV Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment Symposium sponsored by the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx on “HIV testing in nontraditional settings: the BAS Experience” in June.
- Brad Cauthen, Director of Prevention and Michael Serrano, Tony Ray and Blondell Jackson from BAS’ Young Men’s Program presented a workshop on “Building and Sustaining Successful YMSM Programming” at the US Conf on AIDS in September in Orlando, Florida.
- Sojourner McCauley, Community Services Coordinator presented at the Interfaith Dialogue: Responding to Domestic Violence & HIV/AIDS Issues in Faith Communities, co-sponsored by the AIDS Institute’s On Common Ground Bronx Regional Committee and Bronx Lebanon Hospital in October.
- Executive Director Jose M Davila was featured in the POZ.com October 18th weekly issue, discussing his vision for BAS on the eve of its 25th anniversary.
- Chief Operating Officer Candia Richards- Clarke presented on “The Impact of CDC Funding on BAS” at the CDC’s New Grantees Meeting in Atlanta in October.
- Chief Operating Officer Candia Richards-Clarke presented on “Resiliency among HIV-positive young men of color who have sex with men (YMCSM) in the Bronx NY” at the APHA Annual Meeting in November in Denver, Colorado.

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