From the Executive Director

As we look forward to the start of the 1996 AIDS conference across the country, we are reminded of the critical need to address the challenges we face. Despite the progress made in the past decade, we are still far from the goal of ending the epidemic.

We know that we have made significant strides in the fight against AIDS, but we must continue to work together to achieve our goals. We must fight against the stigma and discrimination that still surround the disease, and we must ensure that our efforts are directed towards providing the care and support that people with AIDS need.

The upcoming conference is an important event that will bring together scientists, healthcare providers, and advocates to discuss the latest developments in the fight against AIDS. It is a opportunity to celebrate the progress we have made, but also to recognize the challenges that still lie ahead.

We urge all of you to join us in this important work. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of people with AIDS and their families.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
Executive Director
From top: Some 38,000 people turned out for AIDS Walk ’86: Ruben Blades was among the Latino stars at "El Concierto Por La Vida"; GMHC observed Gay Pride with ads and marching contingents.

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Marcia Tanner  
client and volunteer peer educator for the Child Life program

What do parents with HIV need? Information about medical decisions, someone to help them make sense of benefits and legal decisions, a sense of connection with other families going through the same thing and a place to feel safe. In the parent’s group I helped organize, we talk! Like do you know when it’s the right time to tell your child that you’re infected? I want to tell my son, but I’m not ready. At seven, I’m not sure he’s old enough to understand. His sister, she’s eleven, she’s known since she was eight. Telling her was the hardest and best thing I’ve ever done. I see myself in her, she’s working to do everything right, keep her room neat, studying hard, her dream is to go to Harvard. Mine is to be here to see her graduate. Both my children love coming to the Child Life playroom. I know how they feel. It sounds strange, but I can talk about things here. I’m afraid to be open about it in my own neighborhood. I used to sit around the house, depressed. But I want a teacher before I got sick, am I still. I have to teach, like how to keep the virus from taking control. I want to be an example of power as a mom and a client, helping people see that you can get out there, do research and be your own advocate rather than just giving up or waiting for someone to hand you something.

WHO WE SERVE  
By gender:
Male 80%  
Female 20%

To fight for fair policies and against...
Two of my friends were trying for a month to get me to join the group. It was a real Latin soap opera: they'd say, "you have to come, come tonight," and I'd say, "I could possibly, I don't want to." My little brother is positive. I didn't want to be in touch with it. When I went, it was totally different than I thought, much lighter. People were friendly, joking, laughing each other but doing the work at the same time. I found out later that some were positive, some were negative. We translate things into Spanish, go out to the bars with condoms and literature, try to provide basic information, register people for the Beyond 2000 project. We just try to establish a connection, a relationship. Many of the men we talk to say not at the bar, but still in the club—they tell you flat out they won't come to GMHC to get this information. I gave one guy a condom, and he called me over an hour later and said, "How do you use it?" I thought, "Is this a pick-up line?" but he was serious. He was 25, he didn't know. We're all learning. I went on an all-day retreat with the other volunteers and they asked me to start, to break the ice. Talking about my feelings, my history, it was very emotional. There are so many private things, things you don't want to remember, about your ex-boyfriends, what it felt like when you came to New York, so many wonderful people who got sick. I didn't realize until then how I was holding it all inside, and how strong and good it felt to talk about it, and let it go.
Dimitri Alexander
client and public policy volunteer

I got mobilized when Albany started talking about “partner notification” and criminalization of sex for people with HIV. I was furious when I saw the papers. A week after that I went to a weekend training conference for GMHC’s New York Citizens AIDS Network, and I was impressed. The man leading the workshop was calm, but he knew in exquisite detail how to explain why this kind of conservative thinking discriminates against people with HIV, attacks our civil rights, and fights people with AIDS in the name of fighting AIDS. From him I learned that lobbying is really a form of verbal chess, a way of presenting the issues, grounded in feet and given power by your personal story. I’m an actor, so I have good communication skills. I’m lucky with AIDS, so I have an affinity for the issues. I help others who have AIDS, so I have an affinity for the issues. I led a group of other volunteers hit the streets: getting people to sign letters to members of the Assembly, circulating petitions.

I went to the Press Magazine convention, the gay and lesbian business expo, street corner, everywhere where there were other people with AIDS who could understand. This year at the training workshop, I was teaching rather than sitting in the audience. I’ve also started a new project, getting people in their districts to meet with their legislators and form an ongoing relationship. These are general meetings, not agenda driven, not to get people into their legislators’ offices, but to get them known. We started a month ago and we’ve already had visits in Harlem, Brooklyn, and a few in Manhattan. We get people in the district to call other people in the district to see if they want to go along. For Brooklyn we got a woman whose sister had died of AIDS, and she was bringing up the sister’s teenage daughter. She went in and she said what she had to say. And there was no question. That legislator was listening.
Jamie Pittman
Volunteer, David Geffen Center

When I first heard the words "doctor," and "HIV testing center," I was expecting someplace where there would be tons of rules and everyone was judging you with their eyes. People are focused here, but it's not stuffy and stigmatized. I came new to NYC 30 years ago, from rural North Carolina. Watching how hard staff here work to build relationships has helped me figure out some relationship questions of my own. Everyone is caring, but relaxed. The same person who can give you the best possible counsel and draw your blood a person, who can talk to you about HIV. The staff here is even coming to the presentation of my newest creation at design school, which is where I am when I'm not volunteering. Actually, Bernadette, one of the counselors: she's wearing it!

To stop HIV and the harm it causes in 1997–1998, GMHC:

Performed more than 3,000 evaluations, counseling sessions and group meetings in English and Spanish through our groundbreaking Substance Use Counseling and Education Programs;

Offered dozens of workshops whose topics and titles — "One Night Stands," "Love Stories," "Positive and Sexual," "Sex is..." — gave nearly 1,000 gay men new ways to talk and think about HIV risk, love, and sex;

Delivered more than 5,000 free acupuncture treatments to calm our clients and help them contemplate the risk for HIV and ways to lower it;

Created a Department of Women and Family Services which offers a sweeping array of programs, counseling and trainings;

Pioneered programs to reach lesbians struggling with HIV or fighting to stay uninfected, creating workshops, support groups, and peer education through our Lesbian AIDS Project, an initiative setting a national standard on reaching women too often overlooked;

Organized hundreds of forums, trainings and workshops in English and Spanish at AIDS organizations, health care settings, prisons and community centers to help people understand changing AIDS treatment developments;

Forged new programs — Gay Men's Counseling and Education, Soul Food (for Black men), Proyecto R.A.P.I. (for Latina women), and Peer 2000 (for young men) — to reach gay men at high risk for HIV infection;

Created groundbreaking new publications — including GMHC's first safer sex kit for women, the Spanish language treatment publication Notes Clinicas, booklets and fact sheets on AIDS drugs and recreational drug use, as well as an annual magazine, Beyond 2000, which carried GMHC's messages to more than 500,000 readers;

Distributed more than one million pieces of educational literature on HIV, how to prevent it, and how to treat it, making GMHC the world's largest distributor of AIDS information in the world;

Published L.A.P. Notes, the only regular publication devoted to issues relevant to lesbians with HIV and those who care about them, and more than 200,000 copies of the internationally respected treatment publication, Treatment Issues;

Answered more than 38,000 calls for help on the GMHC AIDS Hotline, providing counseling, emotional support, information and referrals to AIDS services across the country;

Offered free, confidential support, information and face-to-face peer counseling to more than 300 people who walked into GMHC in need of advice, many facing critical issues such as a new HIV diagnosis, recent risky behavior, the decision to test for HIV;

Volunteers provided 3,838 hours of support to GMHC's MEALS PROGRAM this year, making every dollar go farther. In 1998, the program served more than 61,000 hot meals to people with AIDS who might not otherwise eat, find social support or successfully meet the demands of their HIV treatments.

Fighting for fairness, and an AIDS-free future