Committed to a CURE for HIV

August 16, 2012 By Paul Kawata

In 1992, the *San Francisco AIDS Foundation* did an amazing campaign called **"Be Here For The Cure."** It was a beacon of hope during a very dark time in our epidemic. I'm not sure any of us really believed there would be a cure, but we needed to hold on to something while the world was falling apart around us.

Now, two decades later, we're talking about the very real possibility of finding a cure for HIV...

This year's **United States Conference on AIDS** (http://www.2012USCA.org) will have a very special plenary on ***Finding The CURE.*** The session will happen on October 1 at 12:00pm. The keynote will be given by**Dr. Sharon Lewin** from Australia. Dr. Lewin is the Burnet Institute's co-head of the Centre for Virology and world renowned researcher looking for the cure for HIV infection. The session will be moderated by our friend, **Dr. Jack Whitescarver**, the director of the Office of AIDS Research (OAR) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

As we begin to plan for the end of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, we must remember that ending the epidemic does not mean an end to HIV. Even with zero new infections, there will still be tens of millions of people around the world living with HIV. They will still need medications and health care. Only a cure and a vaccine can guarantee the end of HIV.

We should continue to encourage people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) to go on treatment when they are ready in order to improve their health, reduce their viral load and reduce their risk of transmission. At the same time, we must remain committed to looking for a cure and a vaccine. These are two fronts in the same war, and they are both equally important in the fight to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic and to end HIV itself.

I don't know when or if we will find a cure, but I have more hope today than at any other time. Hope that I will be here for the cure. It's this hope and excitement that is the impetus for our work around the**Declaration to End AIDS in America (**http://tinyurl.com/9xca5zj), which will outline a set of principles to guide our movement and the nation as we work to end this disease. It will put leadership of PLWHA front and center and express a commitment to both reducing new HIV infections and identifying a vaccine and a cure. An initial signing ceremony will take place at the **Summit to End AIDS in America**(http://tinyurl.com/8oru736) and those attending USCA will have an opportunity to sign on in support of the Declaration as well.

Hotel

Caesar's Palace is almost sold out of room at our conference rate, we have less then 50 rooms in our block**.** To reserve a room go to https://resweb.passkey.com/go/SCNMA2 or call 1-866-227-5944 on or before**August 27, 2012** (Caesar's will be sold out prior to this date). Make sure to mention the USCA group code: SCNMA2 to access the special rates. We have a limited number of room left at the conference rate. After the 27th rooms will almost double in price because IBM is holding a meeting at the same time as USCA and they are paying a much higher rate.

We also have another block of rooms available at the Flamingo Las Vegas for **$60/night**! The Flamingo is directly across the street from the Caesars Palace. To reserve a room at the Flamingo, go to the following site, http://www.totalrewards.com/hotel-reservations?propCode=FLV&; Group Code=SFNMA2 or call 1-866-227-5944 on or before August 27, 2012. Make sure to mention the USCA group code: SFNMA2 to access the special rates.

We are in Las Vegas because its NMAC's 25th Anniversary and that is where we were founded. However, don't mistake being in Vegas as an excuse not to work. We are here to end and epidemic, this is not a vacation.

Yours in the struggle,

Paul Kawata
Executive Director
National Minority AIDS Council

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