Thank You

NMAC is grateful for the over 3,000 attendees of the 2022 United States Conference on HIV/AIDS, which was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

October 18, 2022 By Paul Kawata

Thank you for joining us in San Juan. NMAC is very grateful. While the meeting was relatively smooth, getting there was tough. 3,000+ folks showed up for Puerto Rico. Mark your calendars now for the 2023 United States Conference on HIV/AIDS in Washington, DC on September 6-9, 2023.

Life is hard. Every week it seems like another shoe drops. COVID and politics have stolen our swagger. Just when it seemed like we might have to cancel, there was a clearing. Our movement needed to meet to remember why we do this work, to listen and learn from colleagues across the country, reconnect with old and new friends and heal our souls. Thank you for showing up because the work is not over.

NMAC is already working on the 2023 meeting. Next year will have a special tribute to Dr. Anthony Fauci. Honestly, he was hesitant to be honored. I let him know it's not for him. The HIV movement needs to say thank you. He understood. His only request is that we don't embarrass him. I do hope we can surprise him. Our movement and the world own him a huge debt. His was the voice of sanity during some very uncertain times.

Part of what makes USCHA and the HIV movement so unique is the active voice of community, particularly people living with HIV. NMAC asked the amazing Puerto Rico host committee to tell the story of their people. Please appreciate the vulnerability it takes to speak your truth. When the local host committee said to move forward, NMAC knew we had to fight for Puerto Rico like we fight all the communities highly impacted by HIV. While we would never knowingly put constituents in danger, our movement needed to meet. I am an old man who missed my family. The hugs and gratitude were genuine. They meant the world after all the traumas of the last three years. USCHA brings together and builds a movement of diverse communities, where all the people highly impacted by HIV are celebrated.

$20,770 was raised for Coaí to support people living with HIV who were impacted by Fiona. NMAC will match this amount and, per an earlier email, thanks all the people who supported PLHIV in PR during this difficult time. Thank you Carlos Vergara Herrera, Scott Poland, Carmen M Vega, Sabina Hirshfield, Pedro Serrano, Russell Campbell, Audrey Harkness, Jeffrey Crowley, Jenney Harkness, Carlos Velez, Amanda Baerga, Judith Auerbach, Olga Price, Stefan Stefan, Katiejoy Fernandez, PROCEED, (Teresa Soto Vega), Dale Tarpenning, Latino Commission on AIDS (Guillermo Chacon),

Matthew Pagnotti, Dolores M Rivas, Julie Vitale, Mary Dino, Daneva Moncrieffe, Katherine Bloom, Yasaman Khorsandi, Patrick Beane, Justin Sitron, Arturo Arzola, Nahima Uddin, Emily Klukas, Lara Jackson, Ronald Weiss, Angel Vazquez Lozada, Luis Moreira, Jenny Liu, Global Policy Solutions, Daisy Gely, Leah Vargas, Talia Parker, Thespina Yamanis, Paulette Heath, Philippa Garson, Gregory Gross, John Hatchett, Jeffrey Berry, Kyle Melin, Ayriane Bailey, James Beglund, Deena Murphy, Ayriane Bailey, Aamina Mohamed, Jasmine Black, Jorge Benitez, James Drake, Abraham Corcino, Laurie Sylla, Jerry Washington, Jamal Price, Moja Ashanti, Danielle DeFeo, Carter Oselett, John Meade, Malcolm Reid, Jessica Leston, Michael Stirratt, Terry Hightower, David Gonzalez, Unlimited Potential Coaching, Capric Shaw, Kelly Krammer Cousins, Amanda Reed, Faith Furno, Kelly Wilkins, Sharon Hesseltine, Rashad Burgess, Katie Hager, Candace Meadows, Alfredo Santiago, Serett King, Nicole Pepper, Cindy Calhoun, Cagney Gladin, Charles Straight, Eskenazi Health Foundation, Paula Peters, Rowland Mendoza, Katie Hiers, Iris House, Orasure, and Union County Savings Bank Charitable Foundation. Coaí's PayPal account is still open and there is still time to donate.

There would be no USCHA without sponsors. Their support provides hundreds of scholarships to ensure diversity and representation. Working with Industry is a difficult balance, and I expect community to hold us accountable. At the same time, I really need to thank our sponsors. I've been taking NMAC staff to meetings with donors to give them an experience of the difficult position of saying thank you but you need to do more. That is also NMAC's role with the federal government. Now that Tony's leaving, I think I'm the oldest Queen in the room. I have a responsibility to say thank you, and to say the difficult things that others might not share. We will never end the HIV epidemic by 2030 without pushy visionary Queens and money. Thank you to our 2022 Sponsors and we need more in 2023.

Sponsors of USCHA 2022Courtesy of NMAC

This year’s meeting was an opportunity to celebrate our Latinx staff, board, and community advisory members. They have fought for years to bring this meeting to PR. As noted earlier, this year was tough. Thank you for hanging in there through the insanity of too many challenges. If it weren’t for NMAC staff, particularly our conference staff, the meeting would not happen. Shout out to Damián, NMAC treatment manager who lives in Puerto Rico. So thankful to have someone on the ground to advise us. We are a small but mighty agency. Tara, Alison, and Shanta’ put it all together. I walk in their magic, and I am so proud they are part of our agency and the movement.

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