

**2005 Annual Meeting of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago's
Board of Directors and Service Providers Council
November 16, 2005**

Remarks by Executive Director Mark Ishaug

Good evening everyone and welcome.

Thank you, Isiaah, for being a great friend and a great board president. It is an honor and a privilege to do this work with you.

And thank you Maurice Chapman, chair of AFC's Service Providers Council. We've worked together for nearly 14 years, and you continue to inspire me, professionally and personally.

Twenty years ago this month, in a cozy Thai restaurant on Chicago's near northside, the AIDS Foundation of Chicago was established by four local visionaries. Our founders, Dr. Renslow Sherer, Dr. Ron Sable, Judy Carter, and Bill Young, armed with big ideas, bigger hearts, and pretty good rolodexes, created an organization whose mission was both simple and grand: to lead the fight against AIDS in metropolitan Chicago and improve the lives of those living with and at risk for HIV.

For 20 years, we have never strayed from this mission; we have only expanded our reach and effectiveness, growing and evolving to meet the changing needs of those affected by the epidemic.

Tonight, I will recount the successes of this past year, our 20th year of service.

Since my top ten list has worked so well for the past couple of years, I thought I'd try this format once again.

10. The AIDS Marathon Training Program. Over the past three years, this remarkable program has netted, I repeat netted, over \$2 million for our grantmaking, advocacy, and other programs. We have brought thousands of new donors and advocates to the fight against AIDS, and have raised awareness among hundreds of thousands more, through our point of purchase displays, which are everywhere, and through the bright yellow/orange running tank tops seen by a million spectators every year. We are gearing up already for 2006. You can sign up tonight for the Chicago Half Marathon, the LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon, the Honolulu Marathon, and/or the Florence, Italy Marathon.

9. All of Our Collaborative Projects, including the Chicago Housing for Health Partnership, the Employment Task Force, the South Side Women's Collaborative, the Food and Nutrition Advocacy Partnership, and of course Faith In Prevention. These collaborations have enabled AFC and our Service Providers Council (SPC) agencies to bring new resources and new partners, many outside the HIV exclusive arena, to the table. These ventures, I submit, are the future for the HIV movement. We cannot win this battle on our own. As AIDS exclusive

resources shrink and the number of clients we must serve increases exponentially, we need to challenge ourselves and others to think and act way outside the box.

8. **Our 2005 Speakers Series.** To commemorate our 20th anniversary, we organized a series of public lectures on critical HIV prevention, care, treatment and advocacy issues. The goal of the series was to reach people we don't normally reach. We have all become experts at talking to ourselves and those already converted. The beauty of this series is that it was designed to bring new supporters to our cause. While all three symposia were marvelous, *The Time is Now: Confronting HIV/AIDS in the African American Community* was the standout. The standing room only crowd at the Museum of Contemporary Art showed that if you build a great program, with a little star power added, they will come. Thanks to all the staff and volunteers and our partner agencies that helped pull off this amazing series. Next year we will be taking the show on the road, to college campuses, so stay tuned.
7. **AIDS Run and Walk.** Yes, this event is raising more money and getting bigger and better every year. Thanks to the generosity of the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Chicago Department of Public Health, and our corporate supporters, the Run and Walk is nearly completely underwritten, which means that all money raised by runners and walkers goes to services. But the biggest reason this event keeps getting better is because of Community Direct, which allows SPC agencies to raise money directly and receive 50% back within weeks of the event. Community Direct Teams raised nearly \$100,000 this year, \$40,000 more than last year. And next year our goal is \$150,000. Thank you all 45 teams for your remarkable commitment to this most important community-wide event. And thanks to Special Events Management and the AFC development team for simply being the best!
6. **The Chicago Crystal Meth Task Force.** In response to a number of high profile meth-related incidents in Chicago's gay community, the Chicago Department of Public Health and AFC convened the Chicago Crystal Meth Task Force in February. Key partners, including SPC agencies, bar and bathhouse owners, government officials, and communications experts, came to the table to develop program, policy, outreach, and media strategies to prevent the use of crystal meth and to help those using the drug to access treatment programs. In August, the Task Force launched Crystal Breaks, a multi-media public awareness campaign targeting gay men. Through billboards, TV, print advertising, a website, and outreach at Halsted Market Days and other venues, Crystal Breaks' message has reached hundred of thousands of people, and this is just the beginning. Thanks to AFC's Jim Pickett, CDPH's Lora Branch and Simone Koehlinger, and of course board member Alberto Senior and his colleagues at Láviz and StarCom for their creative brilliance and generosity.
5. **The AFC Junior Board.** For years, we have been scratching our heads trying to figure out how to bring more young people, young future leaders, to AFC and our SPC agencies. While we get thousands of young men and women to the AIDS Walk and Run, most HIV community events and fundraisers are not geared for younger folks. So we decided to create a junior board, comprised of 21-35 year olds, who could assist AFC in reaching out to other young people, including young professionals, support our events and create their own events, and inform our policy and program efforts, especially as they pertain to young adults. So we posted information on a website and encouraged folks to fill out an application and attend an

informational meeting. I was hoping for 10 responses. We got 60! I am so energized by this, and believe these youngish folks are the future of our movement. Thanks to AFC board members Joe Moroschan and Shawna Ross, and Chris Matthews from the development team for making this happen.

4. **Code of Ethics.** When AFC board member Marcus Dodd, a fraud risk consultant at PricewaterhouseCoopers speaks, people listen. When Marcus Dodd said to me early this summer that the AIDS Foundation of Chicago needed a Statement of Values and Code of Ethics, I listened. It wasn't too hard for him to convince me and the board this was an important thing to do, and over several meetings this summer a working group created our Code of Ethics, which was approved by the AFC board at its October meeting. This document, which not surprisingly doesn't really include anything really new, codifies, if you will, who we are, what we believe and how we intend to do business. I encourage you all to review this on our website and consider creating, if you already have not done so, a similar document. In an era of increased government scrutiny and private sector concerns about non-profit management, having a code of ethics is both the right thing and the smart thing. Thank you Marcus for your leadership and vision, oh and for running the AIDS Marathon, too!
3. **\$1.5 million in Private Grantmaking.** We have managed over the past 7 years to give away about \$1 million a year, so this year, increasing private grantmaking by a whopping 50%, is simply remarkable. Donors really stepped up this year for our 20th anniversary, and we are grateful beyond words. As everyone in this room knows all too well, private dollars are key to organizational and program success. While public dollars may fund the program, private dollars make the program work, simple as that.
2. **Passage of the African American AIDS Response Act and Securing \$2 Million in New State Resources** for HIV prevention and care programs targeting people in correctional settings and those returning to the community. The dynamic duo of State Representative Connie Howard and AFC's own John Peller took Springfield by storm this year, convincing legislators and the administration that the AIDS crisis among African Americans and those in the criminal justice system warranted extraordinary measures and additional funding. While there is still much work to do to secure funding for the African American AIDS Response Act and to ensure that the corrections funding is used wisely and achieves the greatest impact, these measures have taken Illinois to a new level in the fight against AIDS. And this is just the beginning. Thanks to the SPC policy committee, Let's Talk Let's Test, Black Health Alert, The HIV/AIDS Policy and Research Institute at Chicago State, our hundreds of statewide advocates and the remarkable policy and communications staff at AFC for your hard work and commitment. You are amazing.
1. **The Campaign to End AIDS.** This folks, is what it's all about. Everything we do should be about the Campaign to End AIDS. As the tag line states: "We know what it takes, do we have the heart?" I'd say yes, we have the heart. From prayer services at Wesley United Methodist Church to town hall meetings in Aurora with Speaker Hastert's staff, from demonstrations on Michigan Avenue to caravans converging on Washington, DC, the Campaign to End AIDS draws on our history as a grassroots movement and portends our

future as a grassroots movement. If we are going to save the Ryan White CARE Act, it will be through activism exemplified in the Campaign to End AIDS. If we are going to save Medicaid and expand it to cover all poor people with HIV, it will be through the activism of the Campaign to End AIDS. And if we are going to ensure that the government keeps its promise to fund global AIDS efforts, it will be through the Campaign to End AIDS.

I know I should talk about the future, not just the past year. But I don't want to end this speech on a bummer note. The economic and political forces working against our sector are so strong, that like the Hurricanes and Tornados that have ravaged this country, the AIDS sector as we know could simply disappear. Our challenge, in addition to playing defense and protecting what we have created over 20+ years, is playing offense, which means reinventing ourselves, our agencies, and our sector, challenging the paradigm of AIDS exceptionalism without abandoning all the good – indeed great -- things that the AIDS community and people with HIV have created, and both banding together and expanding the tent in ways we've never done before. For as strong as the external forces are that threaten to destroy us, I believe we are stronger, because we are in the right. We have to work together as a community, overcome parochial, institutional interests, and support each other to take ourselves and the system to a whole new level.

Thank you again everyone for your unwavering support, generosity and kindness. I am grateful to work with such amazing staff, the greatest board members ever, and service providers and advocates second to none. You are my heroes.