

**CHAMP plays key role in organizing AIDS caravan across the Northeast**

From October 29<sup>th</sup> to November 4<sup>th</sup>, people living with HIV/AIDS and their supporters traveled across the Northeast, stopping in cities along the way to tell their political leaders: “We have the tools to stop AIDS. Now it’s up to you to make those tools available worldwide.” Known as the **Nor’easter Caravan of the Campaign to End AIDS**, participants staged powerful events in every state from Maine to Pennsylvania, and met up with nine other national caravans in Washington, D.C., for four days of lawmaker visits, protests, education, and a March to End AIDS. Sonny Suchdev of CHAMP was the field organizer for the caravan, and CHAMP’s Executive Director Julie Davids served as one of the caravan co-coordinators. Following are some highlights from the road. (Cont. Pg. 3)



Caravan participants and community members, Albany, NY



Matt Kavanagh of the Student Global AIDS Campaign, Ron Crowder of StreetWorks in Tennessee & Julie Davids presented the **Golden Funeral Urn Award** to President Bush at the White House.

**Protest, March & Die-In Against Bush’s Campaign to INCREASE AIDS**

Coinciding with the Campaign to End AIDS’ four days of action, 500 people marched to the White House on November 7 to protest the radical right-wing’s influence on Bush Administration policies on sex education, needle exchange, and global AIDS. **CHAMP** collaborated with **ACT UP Philadelphia, ACT UP New York, Student Global AIDS Campaign, and HealthGap** in planning this action. Joined by busloads of protesters from **Harlem United, Exponent/ARRIVE, and C2EA participants** from around the country, demonstrators presented “Golden Funeral Urn Awards” to five fundamentalist religious right organizations for placing ideology and Christian fundamentalism over sound public health. The marchers then staged a Die-In at the White House, and 29 people were arrested, including 3 members of the CHAMP staff. (Cont. Pg. 2)

(Protest Cont. from Pg. 1)

Organizations such as **Concerned Women For America, Eagle Forum, Family Research Council, Heritage Foundation, Medical Institute for Sexual Health** and **Traditional Values Coalition** have exerted their influence on Administration policies that are increasing HIV infections around the world. From placing strict limits on funding for prevention efforts worldwide through PEPFAR (Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), to peddling harmful abstinence-only-until-marriage policies here at home, examples of their influence on the White House abound.

As HIV infections continue to rage through our communities in the US, and AIDS destroys millions of lives globally, these groups are getting millions of taxpayer dollars to spread misinformation, block access to condoms and needles, and substitute prayer for HIV prevention programs.



C2IA Graveyard at the White House  
For more photos of this action go to:  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/alookaskance/sets/13194>

**CHAMP's Board member Judith Dillard** states, "I'm marching right from the office of Concerned Women for America to the White House, because it's our president who puts this group on government panels that decide who gets taxpayer money to go into the schools, and they're spending it on programs that tell our kids that condoms don't work and that the way to stay safe from HIV is to stay away from people like me."



Sonny arrested at the WH

*"We have been calling people into action who have been passive before -- whether they have been members of African American churches, their family members, or people who are afraid in small towns to say that they have HIV,"*

*"They spread the word through the press, community institutions, and by calling their congressmen and senators to let them know that this is a national and international problem and telling them that we need a stronger response."*

— **CHAMP Board Co-Chair Walt Senterfitt**, quoted in a Nov. 9<sup>th</sup> broadcast about C2EA on Voice of America

(Nor'easter Caravan Highlights, cont. from pg. 1)

**Boston, MA** - Activists from throughout New England converged for a kickoff event in Dorchester at the Greater Love Tabernacle Church, where CHAMP's Julie Davids welcomed local church members and neighbors. The event highlighted the State of Emergency recently declared by the Boston City Council addressing HIV/AIDS in the African American community.

**New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Pennsylvania** – More riders joined the caravan in cars and the big yellow van lent by AIDS Care Ocean State in Providence. *Earlier events in Keene, New Hampshire (including a pumpkin-fest spelling out C2EA in jack-o-lanterns), a moving AIDS vigil in Central PA, and a rally on HIV prevention and Medicaid in Philadelphia, set a great tone for the trip.*

**Northampton, MA** - Smith College students organized a student-community forum on HIV prevention activism in Western Massachusetts. Members of the Smith College Student Global AIDS Campaign joined with representatives from the Springfield-based grassroots activist group ARISE for Social Justice, Tapestry Health, and the Statewide Harm Reduction Coalition to tackle issues such as needle-exchange, condom access, and HIV in prisons.

**Albany, NY** - A press conference and interfaith prayer service featured Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings, State Senator Neil Breslin, and community representatives.

**Syracuse, NY** - A forum on the Ryan White Care Act was held at Syracuse University.

**Binghamton, NY** - The Nor'easter caravan, now 20 people strong, held a C2EA press conference, where caravan riders shared their stories and AIDS advocates highlighted local concerns.

**State College, PA** - Caravan participants met with Penn State University students, community members, and the Mayor of State College for a roundtable on HIV/AIDS awareness. Props to the Penn State Global AIDS Initiative who then organized a bus load of students to attend the November 5<sup>th</sup> action in Washington, DC!

**Harrisburg, PA** – A screening of the film *Pills, Profits, Protest: Voices of Global AIDS Activists* was held. The next morning, the caravan participated in a rally organized by ACT UP Philadelphia in front of the office of right-wing PA Senator Rick Santorum urging him to fully fund the Global Fund and to roll back cuts to Medicaid. The creative rally of about 60 people dressed as "The Medication Army" received great coverage.



Smith College student activists with the Nor'easter Van, Northampton, MA



Julie spoke in front of Senator Rick Santorum's Office in Harrisburg, PA



**Lessons From The Road:** Following is an excerpt of a conversation between CHMAP staffers Sean Barry & Sonny Suchdev on their experiences as organizers for the C2EA **Northern Tier/Diva Express, American Heritage** and **Nor'easter** caravans. These three caravans traveled through a combined 30 states. You can read the entire exchange on our website at <http://www.champnetwork.org/index.php?name=c2earoad>



## On people they met along the way:

**SS:** I was amazed by people's energy and enthusiasm. My impression is that folks not previously involved in activism are going to go back to their communities and get involved. Many people stepped up and took risks to show their commitment to the struggle. We had six people from our caravan get arrested at the White House. It was really inspiring.

**SB:** At each stop, host committees (often just one energetic individual or a small team) arranged welcomes, meals, lodging, and events for us. Each day we were humbled by the support we received. However, a typical refrain was that advocacy is difficult to do and participation in all types of activities – from AIDS Walks to support groups – is declining.

## On the hard times:

**SS:** The logistics! Focusing the majority of my energy on the details of transportation, housing, food, and budget for months was difficult to sustain at times. But it was necessary...

**SB:** Logistics were definitely a big challenge for us too! Tensions within our caravans also become apparent towards the end of our first week, but these conflicts also presented opportunities for us to address prejudices we bring with us and become more honest with each other. It was also demoralizing when we encountered relatively low levels of public support in communities we stayed in, especially in more rural areas, although it also reinforced for us the greater need to step up our advocacy.

## And the good times:

**SS:** The best part was how the caravan galvanized individuals and communities around policy issues. Our message really got a lot of people excited and energized. The local events were powerful, effective, and got solid coverage from the media. The other best part was the relationships that were created. People from very different backgrounds got to know each other REALLY well after all the time we spent together.

**SB:** It was nice to witness how genuinely excited people were about the vision of C2EA - that we have the tools, but it'll require a dramatic revitalization of grassroots advocacy to end the AIDS crisis. The informal conversation on vans and the bus was an easily underestimated part of the caravans. People regularly stepped up into different leadership roles after the caravans started. Tangible signs that we were having an impact buoyed us the most.

## What's needed next?

**SS:** We need to continue to build relationships and provide activist and advocacy training opportunities in order to develop stronger grassroots leadership. We all need to be thinking like organizers in order to really build an effective social justice movement. I think that's what we're trying to build through C2EA, and I hope we follow through.

**SB:** If we start where we're at now, many people aren't equipped to form and sustain effective campaigns and draw in the necessary allies. But there's a passion and a depth of pain and experience driving people to fight back and challenge the systemic problems in their lives. We just can't win on anger or frustration alone. Trainings that focus on developing and implementing campaigns are absolutely critical. And perhaps most important is making sure there are winning campaigns grounded in people's experience that keeps them motivated and involved.



The **Find the Condoms in Your School Campaign** is a youth-driven campaign for better condom access and education in New York City Public Schools. The campaign was created and initiated by CHAMP's HIV Prevention Organizing Project (H-POP) in the spring of 2005. *CHAMP staffer Sarah Howell reports:*

New York City is unique and lucky in that we have mandates that give youth the tools and information they need to protect themselves from HIV. These laws say that students in NYC public high schools have the right by law to receive six age-appropriate lessons on HIV prevention each year. They also say that public schools should have health resource rooms, open 10 class periods a week, where condoms are available for students who ask for them.

However, as H-POP members talked with high school students and people who work with them, we began to realize that these mandates are not being met. We heard stories of expired condoms being handed out to students, as well as many stories of students, teachers, and school administrators who weren't aware of the mandates and their rights and responsibilities under them.

*"If you spend most of your time at school, I think that's where the condoms should be," said Bailey Ramos, one of the campaign's activists and a sophomore at Martin Luther King Jr. High School for Arts and Technology. "If you go to the store in your neighborhood, you're afraid of your parents finding out or 'What if they tell this person?'"*  
— FTC member in *New York Newsday*, Nov. 4, 2005

The **Find the Condoms (FTC)** campaign was created with two goals in mind: to investigate the real deal with condom availability and education in schools, and to foster school-level and city-wide advocacy for new and better condom access and education. Halfway through the campaign, we have reached our first goal and are embarking on the second.

*"Students don't have the tools they need to have to protect themselves from HIV and sexually transmitted diseases," Howell said. "New York City has historically been a focal point of the AIDS epidemic, and what that means is that the Department of Ed and the city has a huge responsibility to students."*  
— CHAMP staffer Sara Howell, *New York Newsday*

Students and H-POP members created a survey that asked students in public high schools to take a moment during a week in October to try to access a condom in their school and report the results in the survey. We distributed surveys to students across the city and have received results from schools in four of

the five boroughs. Overwhelmingly, students report that they are unable to access Health Resource Rooms in their schools, and that they did not receive a condom.

H-POP also initiated a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to determine how many condoms were distributed to schools by the city. Those results confirmed what students were saying: since June of 2004, over half of city schools have ordered no condoms at all. In total, the number of condom ordered is enough to distribute **just 1.4 condoms per sexually active student per year** – a dangerous shortage.

As we move forward with the second half of the Find the Condoms in Your School Campaign, we will be initiating school-level condom advocacy clubs for students and teachers interested in working to keep their school in compliance with the mandates. We will also be requesting a meeting with Chancellor Joel Klein to demand that the city put in place an effective and transparent plan to ensure all schools have condoms available.

**WHAT'S UP @ CHAMP** – On top of our involvement in the Campaign to End AIDS, the past three months were chock full of events at CHAMP. Here are some juicy tidbits:

**September 2** – As the devastation caused by **Hurricane Katrina** and the disastrous government response to the crisis came out in the news, the AIDS community swung into action. **CHAMP** collaborated with the **American Academy of HIV Medicine, AIDS Institute, AIDS Alliance for Families, Youth & Children** and others, initiating a series of conference calls and assisting with a web log to coordinate help for people and agencies in the affected region. Action alerts were sent out to our *National AIDS Mapping and Mobilization Project* database to channel donations towards AIDS service agencies in New Orleans, Mississippi, Texas, and Alabama.

**September 11-14, Washington, DC** – CHAMP worked with the **Save ADAP Committee** of the **AIDS Treatment Activists Coalition** for constituent visits on Capitol Hill. This year, we brought people living with HIV from the home states of the Senate & Appropriations Committee leaders to educate them about adequate funding for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program.

**September 21-22, Chicago** – Executive Director Julie Davids and **Dr. David Holtgrave** of Johns Hopkins presented in the **AIDS Foundation of Chicago Speaker Series** on building a stronger HIV prevention movement. Julie also presented a workshop on “Involving Youth with Prevention Advocacy.”

**October 10, Chicago** – Director of Mobilization Lei Chou participated in a **Fair Pricing Coalition** meeting with Abbott Labs to negotiate a fair price for the new formulation of protease inhibitor Kaletra.

**October 19** – Responding to the disturbing trend in criminalization of HIV transmission and the myth of the “super virus” in popular media, CHAMP issued a **phone zap against the NBC TV show Law and Order**, for an episode that depicted intentional transmission of a fast progression strain of HIV by a gay meth user.

**October 19-23, Salt Lake City** – Julie Davids was a speaker at the closing plenary of the **Gay Men's Health Summit**, addressing 150 attendees on federal policy and organizing. She also presented a workshop on community organizing.

**November 2** – CHAMP coordinated a **Save ADAP Action Alert** to urge passage of an Republican sponsored amendment to increase funding for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program. The amendment failed by a large margin. A separate Democrat sponsored amendment was also defeated due to lack of support.

**November 1** – Lei Chou was the guest curator for the **Visual AIDS Web Gallery** for November. “On the Road, A tribute to the Caravans to End AIDS” can be viewed at [http://www.thebody.com/visualaids/web\\_gallery/2005/chou/01.html](http://www.thebody.com/visualaids/web_gallery/2005/chou/01.html)

**November 2** – CHAMP's **National AIDS Mapping & Mobilization Project (NAMMP)** activated an action alert to stop proposed cuts in the U.S. House of Representative's budget reconciliation package. These cuts would impose new cost-sharing requirements on poor and disabled people living with AIDS across the country. As of this writing, the bill has yet to be finalized.

**November 19** – Julie Davids & Liz Collins were married in Providence in a lovely ceremony officiated by CHAMP Board Member Walt Senterfitt. Read all about it in the NY Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/20/fashion/weddings/20davi.html?ex=1133586000&en=ba4e6122df3d1fb&ei=5070>

## Welcome to our Wonderful New Board Members!

As a non-profit organization, CHAMP is guided by our dedicated and diverse Board of Directors. We are excited to have four new board members:

**Judith Dillard** is a community organizer and treatment advocate in Fort Worth, Texas, and coordinated a cross-country caravan for the Campaign to End AIDS.

**Mark McLaurin** is Director of Federal Affairs for the New York AIDS Coalition in New York City, and is a founding member of the National Black Gay and Same Gender Loving Men's Health Coalition.

**Craig Miller** of Los Angeles, founder of the first AIDS Walk, is the president of MZA Events, which continues to organize AIDS Walks and other community events.

**Susan Wolfson** is the founder and CEO of Sensei Health Communication in New York City and chairs CHAMP's Fundraising Committee.

Our four new members join members of our founding board of directors who are serving a second term:

**Gregg Gonsalves** of GMHC, **Jeff Maskovsky** of Queens College, and our board co-chairs **Walt Senterfitt** of Being Alive/LA and **Erme Maula** of Philadelphia.

Giant thanks to departing members of our founding board: **Chris Bartlett** of the Gay Men's Health Collective, **Amadee Braxton** of the Black Radical Congress, **Rob Camp** of Treatment Action Group, and **Jennifer Flynn** of NYCAHN. We couldn't have done it without you!

## CHAMP Funding Update: MAA and Public Welfare

CHAMP is delighted to be a co-recipient of proceeds from this year's **Move Against AIDS dance-a-thon**, held December 3 at the Manhattan Center in the heart of New York City. The dance-a-thon benefits GMHC, and is a vibrant and colorful event with five hours of non-stop dance action. Contact us for hot pictures of your favorite CHAMPsters shimmying and hoofing it up...

We thank the **Public Welfare Foundation** for their general support grant. It will allow us to ramp up our organizing, training and technical assistance to strengthen local and national AIDS advocacy efforts.

But if you don't dance or have a foundation, you still can help us catalyze AIDS activism across the country! Click on **Support CHAMP** on our website, and your donation of *any amount* will further the work you read about in CHAMP News!

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