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NEW NUMBERS, NEW CHALLENGES

Changing the Course of Conversations about HIV/AIDS in America

WASHINGTON, D.C. – August 4, 2008 – On Sunday, August 3, 2008, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released its latest numbers framing the portrait of HIV/AIDS in this country. As rates of infection among men who have sex with men (MSM) of color and African American women continue to skyrocket, **one of the more astonishing findings in the data show that for 15 years, the number of new HIV infections has been underestimated—in fact, there are about 56,300 new infections in the United States every year as opposed to prior estimates of about 40,000.**

Kali Lindsey, NAPWA VP of Federal Government Affairs, tells his story: “I acquired this virus in 2003, not because I wasn’t aware of HIV or my risk, but because my partner wasn’t honest with me. It is imperative that we collectively combat HIV-related stigma so people are encouraged to learn their status and disclose to their partners without being discriminated against.” Mr. Lindsey’s story demonstrates our need to change the conversations we have about HIV/AIDS in this nation to incorporate comprehensive sex education and to de-stigmatize how we view people living with HIV. In fact, these new numbers offer up a whole platter of new challenges with regards to the epidemic in this nation. The increase in statistics shows that there is an identifiable population in America that needs services and outreach. With decreases in funding for AIDS outreach and service organizations, it is imperative that we continue to create, employ and sustain programs that provide support for people living with and at-risk for HIV/AIDS.

The National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) believes in the value of social networks to provide support for people living with HIV. By breaking the silence about HIV/AIDS in our communities, we can begin to look at the virus with new lenses that encourage comprehensive strategies for combating the disease and envision people living with HIV as simply...people.

Founded in 1983, NAPWA-US is the first coalition of people living with HIV/AIDS in the world as well as the oldest AIDS organization in the United States. NAPWA is

the trusted, independent voice of the over one million people living with HIV/AIDS in America.

For more information about the new numbers, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/incidence.htm>. To schedule interviews about NAPWA's voice regarding this issue, please contact Takirra Winfield, Director of Media Affairs, at 240-247-1025, TWinfield@napwa.org. Also, visit www.napwa.org for more information about the agency.

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