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Amida Care and AIDS Service Center of NYC Celebrate Graduation From Workforce Initiative Network Program in Peer Education and Health Outreach

New York, NY (March 22, 2016)—Members of the latest class of Amida Care’s Workforce Initiative Network and the AIDS Service Center of New York City’s Peer Training Institute’s collaborative program gathered yesterday at the AIDS Service Center of New York City in midtown to celebrate their graduation from the program. Amida Care—New York’s largest special needs health plan (SNP) for people with chronic conditions such as HIV/AIDS—launched the Workforce Initiative Network (WIN) program in collaboration with Housing Works and the AIDS Center of New York City to empower people living with HIV/AIDS to position themselves as successful job candidates, and ultimately take ownership of their health as well as to inspire others to make healthy choices. Fifteen graduates, including nine Amida Care members, completed the latest WIN training program on Monday.

“Being perinatally diagnosed as HIV-positive, adopted, and transgender, I could not find acceptance around me,” said Monique Mackey, a graduate of the WIN program and an Amida Care member. “Today I can say that I am a better person because of this program, and I can pursue my life’s mission to help others until they’re able to help themselves.”

The six-week class, which is offered four times a year, is designed to help Amida Care members develop marketable skills that they can use to get a job. Members of the WIN program are trained to use their life experience for jobs in health navigation and outreach. These trained peer educators deliver community education and health coaching to hundreds of New Yorkers every year, helping those who are HIV-positive engage in treatment, those who have not been tested and do not yet know their status get tested for HIV, or those who may be at greater risk of becoming infected learn about prevention tools like pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

“I’m fiercely proud of and often awed by our graduates,” said Sharen Duke, Executive Director of the AIDS Service Center of New York City. “By working with Amida Care to develop knowledge and create a health force through programs like this, we will end the AIDS epidemic in New York State.”

“I’m beyond proud of our graduates,” said Halli Olsen, Manager of Outreach Programs at Amida Care. “Through our program with the AIDS Center of New York City, every graduate has expressed above all how much they’ve grown personally, and that is beautiful.”

Employment is one of the most important social determinants of health, because without a job—and the financial security and health insurance that comes with it—access and attention to health care is severely limited. Governor Cuomo’s [Blueprint to End the AIDS Epidemic in New York State by 2020](#) singles out employment as a critical factor to maintaining health and provides extensive recommendations on how job creation can help minimize new HIV infections. By fostering openness and encouraging dialogue around HIV prevention and treatment while creating living-wage jobs, programs like this could have a tremendous positive effect on health and ultimately help to prevent new HIV infections.