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Gay City News Honors Amida Care CEO with LGBT Impact Award

New York, NY (March 4, 2016)— Doug Wirth, President and CEO of Amida Care, New York's largest Medicaid special needs health plan (SNP), was among those honored with an inaugural LGBT Community Impact Award from the Gay City News at a ceremony on March 3 in Brooklyn. Mr. Wirth has led Amida Care for 10 years and has been at the forefront of the fight against HIV/AIDS for decades. Amida Care is a not-for-profit health plan that specializes in providing comprehensive health coverage and coordinated care to New York City Medicaid and Medicare members with chronic conditions, including HIV and behavioral health disorders, and who are experiencing homelessness. Mr. Wirth served on Governor Andrew Cuomo's Task Force to End the AIDS Epidemic (EtE) in New York State by 2020, which produced the Blueprint to reduce the rate of new HIV infections in the state, and he continues to have a leading role in EtE coalition advocacy efforts.

"I am deeply honored that Gay City News has chosen to recognize me with an LGBT Impact Award along with other leaders and advocates who have contributed so much to the LGBTQ community," said Doug Wirth. "I'm thankful for the opportunity to lead an organization like Amida Care that improves the health and quality of life of people coping with multiple complex health conditions, including HIV/AIDS. Amida Care was founded to address the specialized health care needs of people living with HIV/AIDS, which has caused so much devastation in the LGBTQ community. We've come a long way, and I join with my fellow advocates in celebrating our victories, but we know there is still more work to do, especially considering the unacceptably high rates of new HIV infections among those who are disproportionately affected, such as young men of color who have sex with men and the transgender community. Together we must work to improve LGBTQ health and advance social justice and equality."

The Gay City News Impact Awards recognize and celebrate outstanding contributions to New York City's LGBT community. A portion of the proceeds from the ceremony will be donated to the Point Foundation National LGBTQ Scholarship Foundation. Other awardees include Carrie Davis, the chief program and policy officer at Manhattan's LGBT Community Center; Tom Duane, New York State Senator; Nancy Ploeger, President of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce; Christine Quinn, former speaker of the New York City Council; Melissa Sklarz, the first transgender person to be elected to public office in New York; Wendy Stark, Executive Director of Callen-Lorde Community Health Center; and Dr. Barbara Warren, Director for LGBT Programs and Policies at Mount Sinai Health System.

Prior to joining Amida Care, Mr. Wirth served as a Senior Health Policy Advisor to NYC Mayors David Dinkins and Rudolph Giuliani, which included chairing the HIV Mental Health and Strategic Planning/Evaluation Committees for the NYC Health & Human Services Ryan White Planning Council. Mr. Wirth also previously ran five homeless shelters in the Midwest, where he successfully co-located a meal/food pantry program, with a work-readiness project, as well as a satellite primary care clinic, outpatient substance use programs and mobile HIV testing— all of which inform and guide the mission, goals and operations of Amida Care. Under Mr. Wirth’s leadership, Amida Care has yielded significant improvements in health outcomes that have produced long-term health care cost savings, contributing to \$88 million in cost savings to NYS Medicaid: a viral suppression rate of 75% among its HIV-positive members; a 74% decrease in hospital admissions and readmissions; and a 35% reduction in overall medical expenses.

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