



AMIDA CARE

MEMBER NEWSLETTER
2019 - VOL.2



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Note from Doug

On Sunday, June 30, our Amida Care float will again roll past the Stonewall National Monument, as we take part in the 2019 LGBTQ Pride March in Manhattan. We invite you to march with us, so please check our website for details, at www.amidacareny.org.

Excitement is building for LGBTQ Pride Month in June, as we make plans to join the whole world in celebrating the milestone 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. This historic 1969 uprising happened right here in our city – now honored as the birthplace of the global LGBTQ rights movement.

We're also thrilled to report on some incredible successes we've achieved recently in improving the health and quality of life of our transgender members.

Since late 2017, when Special Needs Plans (SNPs) like ours were given permission to serve transgender people regardless of HIV status:

- Amida Care has helped 65% of our transgender members get access to one or more Gender Affirming Surgery procedures; and
- 25% of our HIV-negative transgender members are now taking PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), which greatly lowers the risk of getting HIV when taken daily.

These successes strengthen our hope that Amida Care will soon be able to enroll HIV-negative New Yorkers who want enhanced sexual health services or feel like they're at higher risk for HIV. Meanwhile, of course, we continue our advocacy to protect Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act from funding cuts and harmful policy changes.

As always, your health and ability to live your best life are the heart of our mission!



Abrazos,

Doug Wirth

Doug Wirth,
President and CEO





THIS JUST IN:

AT RISK

ADDRESSING SEXUAL HEALTH & HIV PREVENTION

Amida Care's latest community magazine, **AT RISK: Addressing Sexual Health & HIV Prevention for Those Who Need It the Most**, is now available on our website at www.amidacareny.org or as a print publication to pick up on your next visit to a health care provider. You are also welcome to get a copy at our member walk-in center in Manhattan.

As our new magazine reports, recent data shows those hardest hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic are young, gay, and bisexual Black men and Latinos, Black women and Latinas, and people of transgender experience. Yet, these communities lack equal access to sexual health services and health care. As Amida Care members and all New Yorkers look ahead to the deadline for our state's End the Epidemic by 2020 initiative, it's important to know more about these issues.



Save Lives! Donate Your Unused HIV Meds

Unused HIV medications save lives worldwide. Do you have extra, unexpired meds? These include antiretrovirals or other medicines that benefit people living with HIV and other conditions, such as hepatitis C, diabetes, or elevated cholesterol. You can **DONATE** them instead of throwing them away.

To keep your unneeded meds from going to waste, bring them to GMHC's location in Manhattan: 307 West 38th Street. Their drop box is in the 5th floor waiting room, outside the Walgreens office.







Amida Care Members Help Uncover Multimillion-Dollar MEDICAID FRAUD

Thanks to coordinated efforts by our members and staff in Amida Care's Pharmacy and Compliance Departments, we recently cooperated with a government investigation that led to the conviction of a New York pharmacist for Medicaid fraud. She was giving members cash instead of dispensing their HIV medications.

These suspicious activities first came to light when several Amida Care members phoned our pharmacy staff to report problems filling their prescriptions. Staff then informed our Compliance Department, who referred this information to the New York Office of the Medicaid Inspector General.

Based on Amida Care's tip, the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit of the New York State Attorney conducted several undercover operations targeting the pharmacist. This sting operation led to the pharmacist's conviction in February 2019. She now faces up to six years in prison and must repay over \$3 million for her role in the HIV drug fraud scheme. The pharmacies she owned have all been shut down.

Amida Care acknowledges and thanks our members who called us to report these suspicious activities, which led to the discovery of this multimillion-dollar Medicaid fraud scheme. We take very seriously our duty to ensure that our members receive life-saving medications and that health care dollars are properly directed to caring for and serving you. Thank you for partnering with us! Fraud is costly to us all and also results in bad health outcomes. Here are some examples of possible fraud to watch out for:

-  Did anyone offer you money to fill your prescription at a particular pharmacy?
-  Did anyone offer you money to **not** pick up your prescribed medications?
-  Did anyone offer to "buy" your medications from you?
-  Did you receive medication after the expiration date on the label?

**We are all stronger when
we work together!**

Remember, fighting fraud is everyone's responsibility, and we can all make a difference. To report a compliance concern, you can:

- Call the **Amida Care Compliance Hotline at 888-394-2285, TTY: 711**. You can leave your name or remain anonymous!
- Email our Compliance Department at: compliance@amidacareny.org
- Write to us at: **Amida Care, Attention: Compliance, 14 Penn Plaza, 2nd floor, New York, NY 10122**



HEALTH REPORT

TAKE CARE: GET SCREENED FOR STIs

The Department of Health recommends a screening at least once a year.

If you are having sex, it makes sense to get regular sexual health checkups. In fact, for many New Yorkers, the Department of Health recommends a screening at least once a year. Such screenings can be especially important for people with multiple sexual partners; those who are starting new relationships; or those involved in open relationships.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs, sometimes called STDs) come in many forms. A recent report showed that these infections are on the rise in NYC. Chlamydia is our city's most common STI, **and cases increased by 6 percent to nearly 67,000 annually from 2015 to 2016** (the most recent year for which data is available).

At least two STIs, chlamydia and gonorrhea, can be dormant (present without any symptoms) in various parts of the body. This is why you can feel healthy and not know that you have an STI — and could transmit it to your sexual partners. The only way to know for sure is to get tested.

Gonorrhea and chlamydia infections can be found in the mouth, the anus, and the urethra (which is inside either the penis or the vagina). Screening these body parts is recommended, so at your next visit, ask your primary care provider (PCP) which ones are right for you.





Amida Care honors the memory of Humberto Cruz

Amida Care joins partners across our communities to celebrate the life and mourn the passing of our beloved friend and colleague **Humberto Cruz**, a visionary leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS in New York State and nationwide.

A consummate public health professional, Humberto directed the New York State Department of Health's AIDS Institute for five years and represented the Institute on the NYS DOH Planning Council. In more than two decades of trailblazing service there, he:

- helped integrate HIV/AIDS treatment into primary care and developed a comprehensive continuum of care for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA);
- worked to raise Medicaid rates and devise innovative client-centered programs, including managed care and SNPs, to improve health outcomes for PLWHA;

- mobilized stakeholders across NYS, as HIV funding rose and fell, to effectively battle the epidemic; and
- expanded the Institute's mission to include hepatitis and other sexually transmitted infections, and to focus on epidemiology for a broader understanding of the epidemic.

At the national level, Humberto joined the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS in 2010, providing recommendations on national and global issues and contributing to development of the first-ever US National HIV/AIDS Strategy. He also helped found and served as an executive member of the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors.

The recipient of many prestigious awards, Humberto and the AIDS Institute were honored by Amida Care with an Excellence in Innovation Award in 2015,

for supporting NYS's development of the HIV Special Needs Plan (SNP) health care model, which led to the formation of Amida Care's SNP, today the largest Medicaid SNP in NYS.

At a profoundly human level, Humberto was among a chosen few experts in his field who truly understood the burdens of stigma. He grasped the plight of immigrants, people of color, LGBTQ people, and those living in marginalized communities who are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. Humberto was endowed with a rare talent for embracing a range of perspectives and for knowing how to connect with and reach people.

With sadness at the loss of our extraordinary friend and colleague and deep appreciation for his many gifts and contributions, let's honor Humberto's memory by rededicating ourselves to the work of ending the epidemic.

Humberto Cruz,

a visionary leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS in New York State and nationwide.





Spring Fling!

A record number (more than 325) of Amida Care members gathered to mingle, have fun, eat, and dance the night away at our 2019 Spring Affair Life Celebration at Manhattan's Hotel Pennsylvania on March 29.

The good times were enlivened by yummy refreshments and songs spun by renowned NYC DJ Hamilton Byrd. Highlights of the evening included showstopping drag performances – including an appearance by the legendary Harmonica Sunbeam. Among her many claims to fame, the glorious Ms. Sunbeam is known for working with Big Apple Circus and taking part in Drag Queen Story Hour for kids at the New York Public Library.





Gay City^{NEWS}
cordially invites you to the
2019
IMPACT
AWARDS

Presented by
MetroPlus
Health Plan

Awards Gala and Networking Event
Honoring those who have made an impact in
the LGBTQ community in New York City.

Thursday March 28, 2019
5pm-9pm
The Ravel Hotel, Grand Ballroom,
Long Island City, NYC

Honoring
Regnarian Jenkins
Amida Care

TICKETS
[www.gaycitynews.com/
GCN2019IMPACT](http://www.gaycitynews.com/GCN2019IMPACT)

Sponsored By:
AMIDACARE **east midtown** **TD Bank**
AMIDACARE is a not-for-profit organization. east midtown is a not-for-profit organization. TD Bank is a not-for-profit organization.

A portion of the evening's proceeds will be donated to a not-for-profit organization benefiting the LGBTQ community.

Regnarian Jenkins Receives *2019* Impact Award

Congratulations to REGNARIAN JENKINS, an Amida Care Community Ambassador, for winning a 2019 IMPACT Award from Gay City News, the nation's largest-circulation LGBTQ print newspaper.

The honor, presented at a March 28 gala, recognized Regnarian and more than 30 others for work that has made an impact in the LGBTQ community across New York City. This special event acknowledged the honorees for their "achievements, talent, strength, vision, and heart."

"Responsible 100" Award to Amida Care's Doug Wirth

Our President and CEO Doug Wirth was presented with a "Responsible 100 Award" from *City & State New York* magazine late last year. This award honors New York's most socially responsible thought leaders in many fields who are setting "new standards for excellence, dedication, and leadership to improve communities and make transformative change."

Commenting on this award, Doug noted that the help Amida Care provides New Yorkers living with or at higher risk for HIV to access the care they need "prevents new HIV transmissions and gets us closer to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic in New York."



www.AMIDACARENY.org

