

AIDS United

January 6, 2011

AIDS United would like to invite you to **a strategic meeting of community and philanthropic leaders** to discuss critical trends in the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Puerto Rico and ways in which local and national philanthropic communities can collaboratively respond in partnership with AIDS United (*formerly National AIDS Fund and AIDS Action*). Without local and national participation, Puerto Rico as a territory, may lose the opportunity for significant, long-term support. AIDS United staff is in the process of organizing a site visit and planning meeting to Puerto Rico for interested funders and business leaders. **The dates of this trip are Wednesday, February 9th to Thursday, February 10th**, and will include site visits to organizations in rural and urban settings as well as a meeting on future strategies for grantmaking in Puerto Rico (*see agenda below*).

The AIDS epidemic is having a devastating impact on the communities and families of Puerto Rico.

- **Puerto Rico has an HIV death rate higher than any U.S. state or territory**, a rate nearly 4 times the national rate;
- Puerto Rico **ranked 4th in AIDS case rates** among all states and territories in 2007;
- In 2007, the number of new reported HIV infections (1,450) rivaled the infection rates of much more populous states like New Jersey and North Carolina, states with 2 and 3 times the number of residents.
- Puerto Rico has **the largest proportion (49%) of its cumulative AIDS cases attributed to injection drug use** among all U.S. states and territories, and the fourth largest proportion among U.S. states and territories (25.3%) attributed to heterosexual contact.

As a U.S. territory, Puerto Rico has a unique relationship with the United States. While in theory, the government and citizens of Puerto Rico benefit from the resources and systems of the United States, in other ways they are shortchanged. Nowhere is this clearer than with the realities of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Puerto Rico. While Puerto Rico has faced some of the worst HIV/AIDS statistics in the United States, the Puerto Rican and federal governments have struggled to respond adequately. The private sector and civil society have also paid little attention to the persistent crisis in Puerto Rico, resulting in few resources flowing to organizations to address the growing impact. In short, Puerto Ricans living with and at risk for HIV/AIDS have fallen through the cracks.

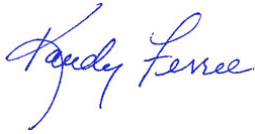
AIDS United is prepared to make significant investments to help engage philanthropy in Puerto Rico and to strengthen community-based programs, but this collaboration is about building "Community Partnerships," and, therefore, local/national funders must be at the table. Puerto Rico is an urgent priority. A private funding collaborative in Puerto Rico will be as critical as ever to maintain and expand services to the Puerto Rican community.

In addition to private philanthropic leaders, we anticipate the attendance of major industries, including Pharmaceutical/Biotech companies, with a corporate presence in Puerto Rico. As leaders in this sector and for those with business in Puerto Rico, we strongly believe that you cannot afford to ignore the challenges and the opportunities to invest in HIV prevention and care in Puerto Rico.

AIDS United has a bilingual lead staff person dedicated to this program. Stephanie Cruse, Program Officer, is managing the portfolio, so please feel free to be in touch with her about the trip or any other matters

related to Puerto Rico. We sincerely hope you can join us on to discuss the state of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Puerto Rico and how we can respond collectively. **Please RSVP by January 21st** to Stephanie Cruse at scruse@aidsunited.org or (202) 408-4848 ext. 227. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Respectfully,



Kandy Ferree, President & CEO
AIDS United
(a merger of the National AIDS Fund and AIDS Action)

Proposed Trip Itinerary (More details to follow upon RSVP)

- **Tuesday, February 8th** - Arrive in San Juan in time for Wednesday morning site visits
- **Wednesday, February 9th** - Site visits to rural organizations
- **Thursday, February 10th**
 - Morning – Meeting on grantmaking strategies in Puerto Rico
 - Afternoon – Optional site visit to organization in San Juan
 - Afternoon/evening – Depart San Juan