

# news

## amfAR Report Exposes Global Failure to Address HIV Among MSM

HIV Among MSM 19 Times Higher Than General Population

amfAR has released the first comprehensive report detailing the failure of governments and global health institutions to address the disproportionate spread of HIV/AIDS among men who have sex with men (MSM).

Released on August 4 during the XVII International AIDS Conference, the report paints a picture of collective denial and inaction fueling a worldwide public health crisis. According to the report, the HIV/AIDS epidemic appears to be expanding significantly among MSM, but in many countries surveillance data remain scarce and funding for MSM-specific programs is inadequate or nonexistent. In addition, HIV services are rarely extended to MSM, and the human rights of these men are regularly threatened.

*(continued on page 6)*



*The First International March Against Homophobia was held in Mexico City during the XVII International AIDS Conference.*

## Co-Discoverers of HIV Win Nobel Prize

Professor Françoise Barré-Sinoussi and Professor Luc Montagnier received the 2008 Nobel Prize in Medicine for their 1983 discovery of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Both Professor Barré-Sinoussi and Professor Montagnier were recipients of amfAR research grants in the mid-1980s.

“The impact of the work of both Françoise Barré-Sinoussi and Luc Montagnier cannot be overstated,” said amfAR CEO Kevin Robert Frost. “In identifying the mysterious killer that we now know as HIV, these scientists opened the door to enormous scientific breakthroughs, and helped save countless lives.”

amfAR funded some of the earliest HIV research conducted by both Nobelists in the 1980s, work that was published in prestigious journals such as *Science*, *Nature*, *The Lancet*, and the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

“Our progress against AIDS to date is the result of brilliant work by scientists like Drs. Barré-Sinoussi and Montagnier,” Frost said. “And we believe that, through the work of dedicated scientists, the mysteries of HIV will continue to unravel and we will ultimately find a cure for AIDS.”

In its citation, the Nobel Assembly said Barré-Sinoussi’s and Montagnier’s 1983 discovery paved the way toward understanding how HIV interacts with host cells and evades the immune system. This led to the development of methods for testing patients and screening blood, which have proved invaluable in containing the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In addition, their work has aided scientists in developing several classes of lifesaving antiretroviral drugs, and provided knowledge that may lead to the discovery of new treatments, vaccines, and ultimately, a cure. ■

## From the CEO



The approach of the New Year brings both renewed hope and significant challenges.

Our concern, of course, is rooted in the uncertain economic outlook that confronts individuals and organizations across America, and its possible effects on funding for

HIV/AIDS programs both here and abroad.

Fortunately, amfAR is in a strong position to withstand the economic downturn. And with your help, we will continue to move forward vigorously with a range of important AIDS research initiatives.

Our hopefulness stems from the vitality of science and the potential of political change. The newly elected Obama administration has already staked out some thoughtful positions on AIDS. Through our advocacy efforts, we will work with the new administration on improving and expanding our nation's response to HIV/AIDS. Our first priority will be to urge the President-elect to quickly develop a comprehensive national AIDS strategy.

Recent research developments give us another good reason to be optimistic. An intriguing medical case, widely reported in the press, centers on a patient who appears to have been functionally cured of HIV/AIDS. The medical procedure involved

was complex, expensive, and impractical. Still, it suggests that it might actually be possible to eliminate HIV from a person's body. amfAR has already convened some of the world's best scientists to determine what can be ascertained from this case and how best to apply this new knowledge. Visit our new website—[www.amfar.org](http://www.amfar.org)—for updates on this and other important research stories.

On a somber note, we mourn the recent loss of Dr. Allan Rosenfield, a true champion of public health and hero in the fight against AIDS, who passed away in October after a heroic battle with Lou Gehrig's Disease. Dean of Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and a long-time amfAR board member, Allan's expert guidance and warm humanity will be sorely missed.

All of us at amfAR extend our best wishes for 2009. We look forward to working as partners with you in pursuit of our shared goal of a world without AIDS.

Kevin Robert Frost  
Chief Executive Officer

## New Faces at amfAR



*Joshua Lamont, who previously served as vice president and director of corporate giving at Lehman Brothers and as communications director for GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is amfAR's new vice president for public information. In September, Annette Sohn, M.D., a highly regarded pediatrician and researcher with extensive experience treating HIV/AIDS among women and children in Southeast Asia, was appointed vice president and director of TREAT Asia. Also in September, Bradley Jensen, formerly director of finance and administration at the Global Alliance for TB Drug Development, became amfAR's new chief financial officer.*

### amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research

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amfAR meets the BBB Wise Giving Alliance's Standards for Charity Accountability



amfAR recognizes American Airlines for its generous support of amfAR's mission.

# U.S. Approves Massive Funding Hike for Global AIDS Programs

## PEPFAR Budget Swells to \$48 Billion

**W**idely acknowledged as one of the most effective foreign aid programs in U.S. history, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) was signed into law on July 30 with a budget of \$48 billion, \$20 billion more than President George W. Bush requested and triple what the program received during its first five years.

The PEPFAR legislation—passed by an overwhelming majority in both the House and the Senate despite being held up for three months by a small but vocal contingent in the Senate—will fund HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment in the world's poorest countries, particularly in Africa. In its new incarnation, PEPFAR loses a highly controversial clause requiring that at least one-third of prevention funds be used to promote abstinence until marriage, replaced with the requirement that Congress receive reports if less than half of HIV prevention funding is spent on abstinence and fidelity programs.

First implemented in 2003, PEPFAR initially provided \$15 billion over the course of five years for HIV/AIDS programs in developing countries, making it the largest international health initiative

ever funded by one nation to fight a single disease. By

March 31, 2008, the program had supported antiretroviral treatment for approximately 1.73 million people across the globe, and funded prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission services for nearly 12.7 million pregnant women.

Over the next five years, PEPFAR is expected to provide treatment for at least 3 million people and care for 12 million, including 5 million orphans and vulnerable children. Its prevention services are expected to avert up to 12 million new infections.

PEPFAR prioritizes resource-limited countries with high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates. The 15 current focus countries are Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, and Zambia.

amfAR will continue its advocacy work to ensure that PEPFAR policies are science-based and in support of removing certain provisions in the program, including the anti-prostitution pledge. ■



*amfAR Senior Policy and Medical Advisor Dr. Susan Blumenthal with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt at the White House for the PEPFAR signing.*

## U.S. Borders Opening to HIV-Positive Visitors?

**T**he reauthorization of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has paved the way to ending the ban on travel and immigration to the U.S. by HIV-positive foreigners.

Under the new PEPFAR legislation, HIV-positive foreign visitors and immigrants will no longer be barred from entering the U.S. Previously, U.S. immigration law prohibited foreigners with "any communicable disease of public health significance" from entering the country, but only HIV was named explicitly in the statute. Now, all that stands in the way of ending the travel restriction completely is for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to remove HIV from a list of diseases that render people ineligible to enter the U.S.

But this change may not occur until 2009; as an HHS spokesperson noted, revising the rule is a "time-consuming process." Meanwhile, in September, the Department of Homeland Security issued a new rule intended to streamline the visa process for HIV-positive foreign visitors, giving consular offices overseas the authority to grant temporary, non-immigrant visas. ■

## Facing Down AIDS in Asia

*Highlighting the devastation of Asia's HIV/AIDS epidemic, amfAR's policy office held a film screening and panel discussion on July 16 in Washington, D.C. Tom Lennon's Academy Award-winning Blood of the Yingzhou District, at left, was one of two documentaries shown at the event. The panel discussion is available via webcast at [www.kaisernet.org](http://www.kaisernet.org) (search AIDS in Asia).*



# amfAR Think Tanks: A Blueprint for Action Against HIV/AIDS

By Rowena Johnston, Ph.D., and Jeffrey Laurence, M.D.

amfAR gathered HIV experts at the end of September for three think tanks that tackled the complexities of circumcision, the possibility of a cure for AIDS, and the need for a cohesive effort to address international research issues.

The first think tank addressed the role of adult male circumcision in HIV prevention. In recent years, three trials conducted in Africa found that men who underwent circumcision experienced a reduction of up to 60 percent in their risk of acquiring HIV via penile-vaginal intercourse. But surgical complications, costs, and a dearth of local expertise in this surgery constitute critical potential impediments to the widespread roll-out of adult male circumcision.

Is there an alternative? Could a chemical applied to the foreskin mimic the protective effect of its removal? This think tank addressed alternatives to surgical circumcision.

What if infection has already occurred? It is unlikely that we will ever be able to treat our way out of this pandemic, but will AIDS ever be cured—the virus eliminated from the body and the immune system

restored? These issues were addressed during another think tank. A test tube of immune cells infected with HIV can be “cured” through gene therapy approaches. How might test-tube successes be replicated to reach all HIV-infected cells in an infected person? According to a report from a single patient in Berlin, this feat may already have been accomplished by using a bone marrow transplant involving stem cells obtained from a donor’s blood.

A 40-year-old HIV-positive man with leukemia received a transplant from a donor who had a genetic condition known as delta32-CCR5, a mutation that renders the person’s immune cells resistant to infection by most types of HIV. The transplant was a success, with the patient’s leukemia in complete remission. The patient has also remained off all his anti-HIV drugs for more than a year, yet there is no detectable HIV in his body. Has he been cured? Can this success be replicated in another patient? This think tank considered these and other related questions.

Social and behavioral research was also the focus of a think tank. Recognizing that

social and behavioral factors are inextricably woven into the responses of individuals, groups, and governments to the challenges posed by HIV, this meeting explored the need for a social/behavioral research collaboration. Every region of the world, and the various groups within those regions, experiences its own mix of stigma, mistrust, lack of awareness, and cultural, economic, and sociopolitical forces that influence the efficacy of prevention or treatment.

This think tank addressed key questions such as, to what extent are experiences in these different contexts similar or different? Will solutions that work in one region of the world, or in one population, be applicable across diverse regions or populations?

What will amfAR’s next steps be? How do we seize the moment to convert challenges into opportunities? Think tanks like these begin to shape answers and a blueprint for action. ■

*Dr. Laurence is amfAR’s senior scientific consultant. Dr. Johnston is amfAR’s vice president of research.*

## Optimizing HIV Treatment, Searching for a Cure

amfAR Awards \$1.4 Million in New Research Grants

amfAR awarded more than \$1.4 million in July for 12 research projects focused on attempts to eradicate HIV and on understanding some of the barriers to effective prevention and treatment.

“Advances made in HIV treatment have arguably been the great success story of AIDS research, and yet two limitations continue to dog our efforts,” said Dr. Rowena Johnston, amfAR’s vice president of research. “One is that not all people, even in the U.S., benefit equally from these treatment advances. And second, there is still no cure for HIV.”

Eight of the newly funded research projects involve biomedical studies of HIV persistence and potential strategies for eradication. Several researchers are studying the viral reservoirs where HIV persists beyond the reach of highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) with the aim of developing strategies to prevent or eliminate these reservoirs. Others are testing treatment strategies that may lead to the eradication of HIV. Dr. David Margolis of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, for example, is studying a class of compounds that, in the presence of HAART, can deplete the amount of latent virus in an infected person.

## amfAR at International AIDS Conference

amfAR had an active presence at the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City, August 3–8, garnering widespread attention for its special report on HIV among men who have sex with men (MSM) (*see page 1*) and drawing attention to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Asia and the Pacific with updates from its TREAT Asia initiative.

amfAR was a co-sponsor of a pre-conference event titled “The Invisible Men: Gay Men and Other MSM in the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic.” The event directed attention to the growing need to fund global HIV research on MSM and improve prevention, treatment, care, and support for this population. Speakers included MSM Initiative Director Jeffrey Stanton and Jack Arayawongchai, TREAT Asia’s MSM program coordinator.

In addition, Stanton was one of 30 speakers who addressed more than 10,000 people at the First International March Against Homophobia on August 2. The event was organized by the Global Forum on MSM & HIV and co-sponsored by UNAIDS, the International AIDS Society, and others.

Speaking at the pre-conference event on MSM, Dr. Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS, paid tribute to amfAR’s MSM Initiative, praising the Foundation for “pioneering this supporting community action on men who have sex with men, and against homophobia.” He also expressed his gratitude to



*Dr. Adeeba Kamarulzaman, chair of the TREAT Asia steering committee, spoke out strongly in support of harm reduction programs in a plenary address at the International AIDS Conference.*

amfAR for supporting his own early research on heterosexual transmission of HIV.

Dr. Adeeba Kamarulzaman, chair of the TREAT Asia steering committee, delivered a plenary address on harm reduction, and TREAT Asia’s director of research, Jeffery Smith, reported on the progress of a collaborative program to build capacity for the monitoring and surveillance of HIV drug resistance in developing countries in Asia and Africa.

TREAT Asia also presented research data from the TREAT Asia HIV Observational Database in two poster sessions. A third poster described the activities and progress of a program to standardize HIV genotypic resistance testing. In addition, representatives of the TREAT Asia-affiliated Purple Sky Network presented

two posters detailing aspects of their work with MSM and with peer outreach. ■

### MSM Grantee Wins Prestigious Red Ribbon Award

The Center for Popular Education and Human Rights, Ghana, an amfAR MSM Initiative grantee, was among only five organizations awarded the United Nations Development Programme’s prestigious Red Ribbon Award for outstanding leadership in responding to HIV/AIDS. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon presented the group with the award and \$20,000 at an August 7 ceremony during the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City. The Center was selected from more than 550 organizations nominated for this award, which is presented every other year. They were honored for their pioneering work among men who have sex with men (MSM), which includes innovative HIV treatment and mental health services, and a drop-in clinic. amfAR’s MSM Initiative grant allows the group to train HIV prevention peer educators, and to create informational materials to promote safe sex among MSM in greater Accra. ■



*Anita Confidence Cobbinah (left), assistant women’s director, and Mac-Darling Cobbinah (right), executive national director of the Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights, Ghana, receiving the Red Ribbon Award. (Photo CEPEHRG)*

The four social and behavioral studies funded by amfAR focus on factors that affect a person’s decision to follow the advice of healthcare professionals. Dr. Scott Rhodes of Wake Forest University Health Sciences will examine beliefs, attitudes, and other factors that influence Latinos’ decisions to access or avoid science-based HIV treatment and prevention services. The study aims to shape new strategies to reduce the rapidly rising HIV infection rate among Latinos.

Other social and behavioral projects include two studies in South Africa: an examination of the beliefs and attitudes surrounding male circumcision, recently shown to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV by around 50 percent, and an investigation of false HIV beliefs and misinformation among South African men who have sex with men. ■

# Syringe Exchange Transforms Lives in Harlem

Two trailers sit in the shadow of the commuter train tracks, which rise above street level in New York City's East Harlem. On a sunny Tuesday morning, most of the people who stop at this mobile syringe exchange site stay only minutes, to exchange used syringes for clean ones or to pick up safe injecting supplies, condoms, and literature. These brief interactions are part of a much larger trend: the dramatic reduction of HIV infections among injection drug users (IDUs) in New York, as well as lasting, visible change within communities like East Harlem.

amfAR has played an integral role in syringe exchange in New York since before it was legal, funding early studies showing the benefits of harm reduction, and providing seed funding for the first legal syringe exchange programs in New York City. Since 1992, amfAR has been distributing supplies to all the state's programs, with funding from the state department of health. In many states, the debate about syringe exchange rages on, but in New York, the practice has been shown to be an unqualified success. ■

To read the full story, visit [www.amfar.org](http://www.amfar.org).



Volunteer Ron Thomson (far left) conducts outreach activities in East Harlem. A syringe exchange staffer (left) administers a rapid oral HIV test to a client.

## Syringe Exchange: The Facts

- HIV prevalence among IDUs in New York City dropped from 50 percent in 1990–1992 to 15 percent in 1999–2002.
- During the same period, the number of syringes exchanged per year in the city increased from 250,000 to 3 million.
- The projected lifetime cost of treating just one person with HIV in the U.S. is \$400,000–\$600,000.
- The highest-funded syringe exchange program in New York State, which receives less than \$300,000 per year, pays for itself by preventing just one new infection a year.

## MSM (continued from page 1)

Titled *MSM, HIV, and the Road to Universal Access—How Far Have We Come?*, the amfAR report documents an HIV infection rate among MSM in low- and middle-income countries that is 19 times higher than the general population. In the U.S., a new report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that HIV infections among MSM have risen 75 percent over the last 15 years.

The amfAR report, generated by the Foundation's MSM Initiative, studied 128 country reports submitted to the UN this year and found that nearly half of the countries (44 percent) failed to offer any data whatsoever on MSM. Despite a unanimous commitment made in 2001 by all UN member countries to scale up HIV/AIDS programs towards universal access by 2010, 71 percent of countries said they did not have any information on the percentage of MSM reached by HIV prevention programs.

“World leaders are finally saying the right things, but they need to follow their words with actions,” said amfAR CEO Kevin Frost. “The failure of the the world's global health bodies to devote significant resources toward reducing HIV rates

among MSM is indefensible. These organizations have policies on women, drug users, migration—but not one of them has a comprehensive policy on MSM.”

Criminalization of male-male sexual activity is a major driver of the epidemic among MSM in many countries, according to the amfAR report. Seven out of the 10 countries with the highest reported prevalence among MSM criminalize homosexuality. Globally, 86 countries criminalize male-male sexual activity, and in seven countries, male-male sexual activity is punishable by death.

“amfAR's MSM report paints a tragic picture of denial, indifference, and inaction that has taken a tremendous toll on the lives of men who have sex with men,” said Jeffrey Stanton, director of the MSM Initiative.

The MSM report was well received by conference participants and the press. “I would rank the special report among the best documents on AIDS country intelligence I have seen,” said Luiz Loures of the UNAIDS secretariat. Many prominent international news outlets from around the world covered the report, including the *Washington Post*, *Financial Times*, *Prensa Latina*, *Montreal Gazette*, *Toronto Globe & Mail*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *La Jornada* (Mexico), *El Mundo* (Spain), *Times of India*, AP, Reuters, and BBC World Radio. ■

## Honoring With Pride

Held on June 9 in New York, Honoring With Pride raised \$250,000 for amfAR's programs.

**Special thanks: Morgans Hotel Group and the Hudson Hotel, SKYY Vodka, Anheuser-Busch, T. Edward Wines, and Morrell Wine.**



*Jerry Mitchell, Julie Davids, and Chris Salgado, president of Kiehl's Since 1851, received Awards of Courage.*

*Multi-platinum recording artist Taylor Dayne performed songs from her new album, Satisfied, and hits such as "Tell It to My Heart."*



*amfAR Chairman of the Board Kenneth Cole, Taylor Dayne, host Mario Cantone and amfAR Founding Chairman Dr. Mathilde Krim.*



*The "Broadway Walk On" lot auctioned off by Tony Award-winning actress Marissa Jaret Winokur (left) brought the highest bid of the evening.*

amfAR supporters raised a glass at Manhattan's High Bar on September 17 for amfAR Around Town: Socializing With a Conscience, a new series for young philanthropists.

## amfAR Around Town

**Special thanks: The High Bar, Cape North Vodka, and Pipeline Brands. In collaboration with the Tribeca Film Festival.**



*Guests included Erika Chasin, Jeff Barrera, and amfAR Director of Development Eric Muscatell.*

*David Earls, Nancy Schafer of the Tribeca Film Festival, and Monica Valenti of Product (RED).*



*Actress Jill Powell with Karen Harnesk.*

## Broadway Comes to Bucks County

The fourth annual Bucks County Cabaret, held at Cradle Valley Farm in Solebury, Pennsylvania, on September 21, raised more than \$80,000 for amfAR.

**Special thanks: Candace Jones and Stephen Phillips of Cradle Valley Farm, Cheyenne Jackson, Seth Rudetsky, and Peter Cassell of T. Edward Wines.**



*Cocktails were served poolside.*

*Hosts Stephen Phillips and Candace Jones with Broadway star Cheyenne Jackson.*



*Jackson, who sang selections from his past shows including Altar Boys and Xanadu, appeared with event co-chairs (left to right) Dave Topel, David McShane, Scott Bass, and Ken Schaefer.*



Friday, December 12

**Cinema Against AIDS Dubai**

The second annual Cinema Against AIDS Dubai will be held in conjunction with the Dubai International Film Festival, the event's presenting sponsor. This year's black-tie and national dress event features cocktails, dinner, dancing, entertainment, and a live auction. Contact David Yu at (212) 806-1615 for more information.

December 27-January 8

**Trek amfAR in Asia**

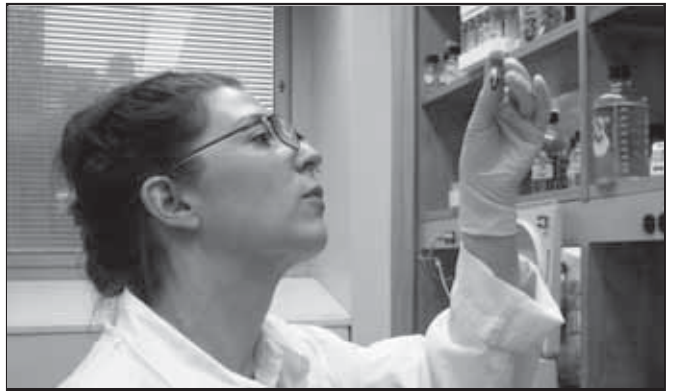
amfAR's fourth annual physical challenge, Trek amfAR in Asia, takes intrepid hikers on a 12-day trek along Northern Thailand's Old Elephant Trail, as well as to several TREAT Asia sites in Bangkok and Chiang Mai to learn firsthand about Asia's fight against AIDS. Since its inception, treks to China, Vietnam, and Namibia have raised nearly \$1 million to support the Foundation's global initiatives. Contact Cassandra Dawes at (212) 806-1753 for more information.

February 12, 2009

**amfAR New York Gala**

The annual amfAR New York Gala, a black-tie benefit at Cipriani 42nd Street, will pay special tribute to designer Donna Karan and legendary performer Liza Minnelli. The event, held on the eve of New York Fashion Week, features cocktails, dinner, a live auction, and an awards ceremony. Contact Kate Fitzsimons at (212) 806-1612 for information and to reserve your seat now.

For more information, visit [www.amfar.org](http://www.amfar.org)



**Fight AIDS Every Day!**

In May, soon after being awarded one of amfAR's Mathilde Krim Fellowships, Dr. Nolwenn Jouvenet captured the first video footage of the birth of HIV. This landmark research could open up new ways to attack HIV.

**YOU too can fight AIDS every day—**

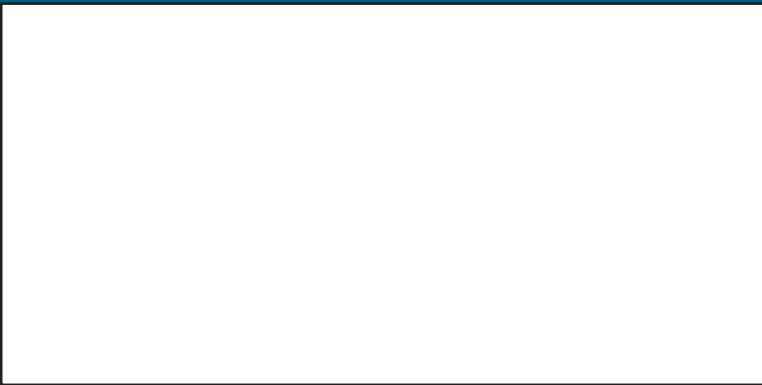
by simply joining the **Friends of amfAR** monthly giving program.

Monthly giving is one of the most efficient ways you can support our work. A pledge of just \$25 a month—less than \$1 a day—becomes a substantial annual investment that sustains amfAR's cutting-edge research initiatives.

**Become a Friend of amfAR today.**

Call **800-39-amfAR** or visit [www.amfar.org/foa](http://www.amfar.org/foa).

Thank you for your support!



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