

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF MULTNOMAH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON**

PROCLAMATION NO. _____

Proclaiming June 5, 2014 as National HIV/AIDS Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day
in Multnomah County, Oregon

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners finds:

- a. Thirty three years ago, on June 5, 1981, the Federal Centers for Disease Control published a brief account of five young gay men, diagnosed with a rare form of pneumonia indicating severely compromised immune systems. This exploded into an immensely significant epidemic, and came to be known as HIV/AIDS.
- b. The long delayed and ineffective early institutional response in the early 1980s has been characterized by historians as an example of monumental injustice; and the grassroots response to that injustice has been described as a groundbreaking model for all community organizing to come.
- c. People in the communities most affected were called upon to be caretakers, undertakers, lobbyists, and activists, in a climate of not knowing what was happening, nor when--if ever--help would arrive. Many tended to the dying and buried the dead while they themselves were waiting to die.
- d. In some parts of the country public health authorities, including Multnomah County Health Department and the Oregon Health Division, utilized community organizing techniques to develop culturally competent responses to the epidemic, even while facing resistance and push back from people who were scared or judgmental. In other places there was nothing, or worse.
- e. Now some 30 years later, with new treatments, HIV/AIDS is increasingly seen, for those newly infected, as a manageable chronic disease; but those who have survived the darkest decades face new major life challenges: physically, emotionally and spiritually. Oregon Health Authority surveillance data show that 77% of Oregonians living with HIV/AIDS are over age 40, and 47% of Oregonians living with HIV/AIDS are over the age of 50 - many of which are long-term survivors.
- f. Depression, post traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), suicidal thoughts and tendencies, anxiety, lack of future orientation, and not being able to imagine growing older are some of the symptoms increasingly seen in long-term HIV/AIDS survivors, positive and negative, mostly men but some women. This has come to be known as **AIDS Survivor Syndrome**.
- g. Stigma also continues to cause additional stressors. A recent study of HIV stigma in older adults with HIV found that 96% reported experiencing HIV stigma itself, and

56% reported experiencing rejection from service providers, family, friends, church members and sexual partners. Inequities can still exist in institutional policies and systems. Although current medications are most often effective, not everybody has access to them or can afford them, even if they have health insurance.

- h. The Los Angeles Times reported that long-term HIV/AIDS Survivors are 13 times more likely to experience depression, and are more likely to commit suicide than people of the same age in the general population.
- i. A national grassroots movement, named **Let's Kick A.S.S. - AIDS Survivor Syndrome** is emerging to: (1) acknowledge the profound experiences and unique issues of long-term survivors, both HIV-positive and negative; (2) to challenge our community's institutions to acknowledge and address the symptoms of AIDS Survivor Syndrome; (3) to demand an end to disparities and discrimination; and (4) to tap into the strength, resilience and experiences of people who have learned how to survive against all odds.
- j. A Portland Metro/Multnomah County area chapter of this national movement is forming, named **Let's Kick A.S.S. – PDX**.
- k. Acknowledging the profound impact of the experiences and unique issues of long-term survivors, both HIV-positive and negative, men and women, is an important step in fostering a culturally competent and healthy community and reducing health disparities for diverse people of all ages.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Proclaim:

June 5, 2014 as National HIV /AIDS Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day in Multnomah County; call on County Departments and community institutions to work together to reduce health disparities, expand cultural competency, and tap into the strength, resilience and experiences of long-term HIV/AIDS survivors; and commit to supporting Let's Kick A.S.S. – PDX.

ADOPTED this 5th day of June, 2014.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

Marissa Madrigal, Acting Chair

SUBMITTED BY:
Emerald Walker, Chief of Staff, Chair's Office