



**CENTER ON HALSTED CENTERPIECES**  
JANUARY 2008 EDITION

When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. asked "When will you be satisfied?" in his famous "I have a dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial, he was reminding his audience that African Americans still had much to achieve in the struggle for equality. He implored people of color to keep striving in spite of the danger and unimaginable adversity. Forty years later, Dr. King's question can be asked of our LGBT community.

Yes, we have made great strides in the last few decades, yet Dr. King's message of perseverance should remain our watchword. We must continue to strive for equality for all.



Please celebrate Dr. King's birthday and legacy by committing to making your voices heard-through volunteer work in your communities, at the ballot box and among your friends and colleagues-so that one day, all voices will be heard.

*A message from*

*Executive  
Director*

**Modesto Tico Valle**  
*Executive Director*

*Modesto  
Tico Valle*

**Youth Program**

When reflecting on the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for our Youth Program, I think it's important to understand that homophobia is not the only challenge shaping our young people's lives, especially when 80% of the young LGBTQ youth we serve are people of color. We in the LGBT community cannot separate the varieties of oppressions; we cannot highlight one "ism" and ignore another. To do so would only serve to reinforce those existing barriers that our youth experience, including lack of or poor education, violence, unemployment, homelessness and inadequate healthcare. Certainly it is our community's responsibility to respond to the lack of safe schools for LGBT students, hate crimes committed against them, and social isolation during their coming out period. But it is also our responsibility to speak the truth when it comes to racial profiling and the economic disadvantages experienced by our LGBT youth simply because of the color of their skin.

In the Youth Program at Center on Halsted, we seek to provide programs and services in response to these disparities. We offer case management, counseling, and vocational

and education support. But we also offer programs to educate our young people about African American history and the role models we have-some of whom have gone before us like Martin Luther King, Jr. and some of whom remain with us. Kevin Pleasant, a new mentor and the LGBTQ Services Coordinator for Lawrence Hall Youth Services, visited the Youth Program on January 15, King's birthday, to speak to Dr. King's legacy and the need for our young people to become activists. Saturday programming in February, Black History Month, will be spent exploring the lives of influential African Americans, including those in our own LGBT community. And in February and March, Mr. Pleasant will host a series of breakfasts for our young people with guest speakers from the African American LGBT community to introduce our youth to additional role models and careers.

To be true to Dr. King's legacy, we must acknowledge all forms of discrimination impacting our young people's lives AND we must give them reasons to dream.

### **Janine Denomme**

*Youth Program Director*

### **Mental Health Services**

*"I still hear people say that I should not be talking about the rights of lesbian and gay people and I should stick to the issue of racial justice. But I hasten to remind them that Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.' I appeal to everyone who believes in Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream to make room at the table of brother-and-sisterhood for lesbian and gay people." Coretta Scott King*

Mrs. King's remarks are a point of reflection for all of us on the importance of inclusion. It is a particularly relevant reflection considering the ways that the Mental Health Program attempts to meet the needs of our diverse constituency. Access to services is of critical importance and a programmatic objective every member of the team is committed to expanding.

Under the guidance of our Latino Services Coordinator, the department now boasts two full-time Spanish-speaking therapists. In turn, these staff members oversee the activities of almost a half-dozen interns, volunteers and contractual therapists who also provide services in Spanish. This capacity has helped us to launch our first Spanish-speaking group, a weekly support group for immigrants (regardless of their legal status). Services like this represent COH's commitment to social justice and creating a welcoming space for all members of our community. It is gratifying to note that almost 45% of all mental health consumers in 2007 were persons of color.

We continue to cultivate relationships with organizations that need our specialized services. These organizations include COH's community partners, such as Window City Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf. Mark Hagler, LCPC, is a contractual therapist fluent in American Sign Language and able to provide counseling services to LGBTQ individuals, couples and families impacted by deafness and hearing loss.

We collaborate with Thresholds, Inc. in offering support services to consumers with chronic, pervasive forms of mental illness, whose LGBTQ identities are largely ignored or even stigmatized in their primary care settings. We are in the process of collaborating with Anixter Center on similar services for adults with developmental disabilities, another

population denied its sexuality by the larger culture.

But access to care is only a starting point. Beyond that, we are committed to expanding our competencies in working with historically underserved populations. Beginning this month, the entire Mental Health team will participate in a monthly consultation forum with Theo Pintzuk, LCSW, and Laura Grimes, LCSW, internationally recognized experts in working with the transgender community. Through case presentation and discussion, our staff will develop the skills and attitudes necessary to serve clients of any gender identification in the affirming, ethical manner they deserve.

At COH, we strive to make room at the late Mrs. King's metaphorical table for every person who crosses our threshold. COH is more than a symbol: its staff, programs and services give expression every day to our lofty mission. Join us as we celebrate the diverse, complex and rich fabric of life that is Chicago's LGBTQ community.

**Jason T. McVicker, LCSW, RDDP**

*Director of Mental Health Services*

**State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline**

In celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Day and in our preparations for National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day on February 7, 2008, the counselors on the State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline are constantly guided by Dr. King's legacies of equality, inclusion and education. Ongoing Hotline counselor instruction includes the latest, accurate HIV and STD information, multicultural sensitivity training and stigma reduction through education.

The following statistics exemplify why we all must continue to fight with energy and unyielding focus to end the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS:

*Illinois African American HIV and AIDS Statistics*

As of October 2007, two of the populations at highest risk for newly acquired HIV infections are African American women and African American men who have sex with men (MSM).

- Of the 12,531 men living with HIV in Illinois, 44% are African American with 43% of those MSMs
- 13,300 men are living with AIDS in Illinois; 47% are African American with 44% of those MSMs
- Of the 3,987 females living with HIV in Illinois, 68% are African American with 42% of those reporting heterosexual sexual contact as the route of transmission
- 3,227 women are living with AIDS in Illinois; 69% are African American with 46% of those reporting heterosexual sexual contact as the route of transmission

Every day from 8am to 10pm our free and anonymous Hotline is accessible to all, and each caller will speak with a well-trained and compassionate counselor who can answer any questions regarding HIV/STD testing, transmission, risk reduction, or other HIV/STD related topic in a culturally sensitive and respectful way.

**Jill Dispenza**

*State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline Director*

800.243.2437 or 800.AIDS.AIDS

### **Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE)**

Dr. King was a vibrant part of the Gathering of Friends Intergenerational Brunch on January 12 when a number of elders, youth and volunteers came together to share a meal and get to know each other. After brunch, everyone participated in a discussion of Dr. King's legacy of civil rights and activism. The room became quiet as each person stood and shared an example of his or her own activism and dreams for equality for the LGBT community and humanity. From the everyday action of confronting someone who tells a gay joke to the larger decision to come out to family, friends and co-workers, examples of activism ranged from Marching on Washington and fighting with ACT-UP and Queer Nation to advocating for civil rights in Nigeria and being a Youth Program Ambassador. The experiences reflected the broad diversity of ages, races, orientations, and religious beliefs of people in the room.

Of the many ways to advocate for civil rights and justice, respectfully listening to another person is simple, powerful and meaningful. As one participant put it, her dream is "just that loving people be allowed to live as they wish."

### **Serena Worthington**

*SAGE Program Director*

### **Dr. David J. Lochman Cyber Center**

The dream of Martin Luther King, Jr. that everyone will be treated as equals is one that we all must continue to strive toward. On the path toward this great dream, it is important to be able to look at examples of progress to a better future. The Dr. David J. Lochman Cyber Center, like Center on Halsted, is one such example. On any given day, all 20 computers in the Cyber Center are used by a diverse and varied population. The users of the Cyber Center are comprised of all members of the community-people of all genders, orientations, ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds sit down side by side to explore the wonders of the Internet and computers. It is refreshing to see such a wide variety of people sharing that experience-especially when it becomes more personal; for example, when one user helps another or a conversation strikes up between users waiting in the lobby for the next available computer. The Cyber Center is just one small example of progress in building a more accepting and equal future.

### **Brian Minka**

*Computer Technology Center Manager*

### **Anti-Violence Project**

As a founding member of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, Center on Halsted's Anti-Violence Project addresses the pervasive problem of violence committed against and within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and HIV-affected communities through advocacy, crisis counseling, and education about prevention, safety and empowerment.-*Anti-Violence Project Mission Statement*

Too often, domestic violence, sexual assault, hate violence, police misconduct and discrimination are words and phrases that are realities in the lives of LGBT individuals.

All these forms of oppression violate an individual's human right to live free of violence. Statistically, these violations often occur more than once in the lifetime of an LGBT individual, prohibiting the person's right to be who they are and inhibiting their quality of life.

In recognition of the struggles for equality and social justice, the Anti-Violence Project (AVP) remembers and honors Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as an inspirational catalyst for change. Dr. King fought oppression nonviolently, and used outreach and education to create social change for all marginalized communities. AVP is built from an anti-oppression framework in recognition that violence against and within LGBT communities knows no boundaries. AVP's 24-hour crisis line offers culturally sensitive and affirming survivor support and crisis intervention to LGBT survivors of violence from the Chicago Metro area, statewide, and even in neighboring states that may not have recognizable, safe or existent LGBT affirming survivor support services.

If you or someone you know is the victim of LGBT discrimination, domestic violence, hate violence, pick-up crime, police misconduct or sexual assault please call the AVP 24-hour Crisis Line at 773-871-CARE (2273).

**Laura A. Velazquez**  
*Anti-Violence Project Manager*

### **Community, Cultural and Legal Programs**

This month Community, Cultural and Legal Programs celebrates Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. not only for his work in the Civil Rights Movement, but for the "pay it forward" reciprocity that so many people are now privileged to experience.

We highlight some of Dr. King's most notable quotes from his "I have a dream" speech and honor his dream by programming diverse community and cultural activities:

*"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.'"*

Lawyers in our legal clinic and seminar and lecture series continue to work with individuals who are fighting discrimination at work, harassment from neighbors, or deportation because of immigration laws.

*I have a dream . . . little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers . . .*

Our family play dates and activities are a testament to King's dream.

*I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. . .* Young men from our youth program and from Young Chicago Authors presented the works of gay literary icons James Baldwin and Essex Hemphill when we honored a new King of Poetry, Keith Green, at the Sixth Annual Kings of Poetry event on Wednesday, January 16.

*. . . With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood . . .*

We will celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. in concert on January 22 with the Lakeside

Pride Chamber Ensembles' *Friends! All Mankind Are Brothers . . . In Tribute: The Civil Strife of Peoples* and hear musicians from Bosnia, Palestine and South Africa and other countries plagued and ravaged by wars.

Our programming goal is to reflect the diversity and highlight the commonalities of all LGBTQ individuals who come to express their freedom at Center on Halsted.

**C.C. Carter**

*Community, Cultural and Legal Programs Director*

To support Center on Halsted programs and services, please visit our Web site at [www.centeronhalsted.org](http://www.centeronhalsted.org).

