

WHITE HOUSE AIDS POLICY OFFICE FALLS SHORT

One year after the appointment of the first White House AIDS policy coordinator, AIDS Action Council and AIDS advocates across the country view the coordinator's office as yet another bureaucratic roadblock standing in the way of a coordinated federal response to the AIDS epidemic.

"The AIDS epidemic is growing more complex and intransigent. We need a White House coordinator that keeps AIDS in the center of the president's radar screen, not a public relations spokesperson who spends time giving speeches and making public appearances," says

Daniel T. Bros, AIDS Action executive director. "The Office of National AIDS Policy, headed by Krintine Gebbie, is not meeting the mission hoped for by thousands of AIDS advocates. Although we continue to share our concerns with members of the Clinton administration, no action has been taken to date. Unfortunately, AIDS is still an issue that the White House prefers to dance around instead of embracing as a top domestic

priority."

Among other things, the office has failed to:

- effectively advocate within the administration and on Capitol Hill for increased federal funding for HIV/AIDS programs;
- collaborate with federal departments and agencies to develop a comprehensive federal AIDS plan; and
- work with the president to promote leadership in fighting the AIDS epidemic.

"We would like to see the Office of the National AIDS Policy function simultaneously as a SWAT team and as a shuttle diplomacy group — responding swiftly to AIDS policy crises as well as building wider consensus within the federal bureaucracy on steps to be taken. Serious evaluation and reorganization of this office is badly needed."

Gebbie was formally appointed by President Bill Clinton on June 25, 1993, and began

work in Washington on August 1, 1993. The appointment of a White House AIDS policy coordinator was seen by the AIDS communities as the fulfillment of a Clinton campaign promise and one of many steps needed to bring urgent attention to the AIDS crisis. Over 20 federal agencies and departments maintain AIDS programs, but there is little coordination among them. In assessing the contribution of the AIDS policy office, AIDS Action

recalled the recommendations of two coalitions—National Organizations Responding to AIDS and Federal HIV/AIDS Agenda '93. Both coalitions made specific recommendations during the presidential transition about how the office might work.

AIDS Action welcomed the appointment of an experienced public health official with expertise in HIV/AIDS prevention. But the organization's disappointment and disaffection with the office are growing. Gebbie's office has been plagued by mis-cues and an ill-defined sense of mission. AIDS Action and many fellow advocates now feel that the office has actually become a stumbling block to the development and implementation of better policies.

AIDS Action Council, founded in 1984, is the only national organization devoted solely to lobbying the federal government on AIDS policy, legislation and funding. AIDS Action Council represents more than 1000 community-based AIDS service organizations throughout the United States.

HEALTH

AFRICAN-AMERICAN PHYSICIANS POISED TO TACKLE HEALTH CARE REFORM AND OTHER CRITICAL HEALTH ISSUES AT 1994 CONVENTION

Members of the National Medical Association (NMA), an organization representing more than 20,000 African-American physicians, will discuss and take action on health care reform and a wide range of critical health issues affecting the African-American community when it convenes its 99th annual convention in Orlando, Florida. The convention is scheduled to begin July 23rd and will end on July 28th. More than 3,000 African-American physicians and their families are expected to attend.

Congress on the various health care reform legislative proposals and discussion and debate in the medical community over the impact of managed care, this year's NMA Annual Convention will be one of the most issue-oriented and crucial in decision making in the 99-year history of the association," said NMA President Leonard E. Lawrence, M.D.

The NMA has been in the forefront of the fight for health care reform by organizing a health coalition of more than 70 African-American organizations

and by aggressively advocating health care reform legislation which addresses the concerns and needs of the African-American community.

Several nationally recognized physicians will address convention attendees. Prominent on the list of keynote speakers are U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, M.D.; American Medical Association President Robert E. McAfee, M.D.; and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director David Satcher, M.D. Other convention speakers scheduled to make

presentations are Marilyn Gaston, assistant U.S. Surgeon General; James R. Gavin, president of the American Diabetes Association; Harold Freeman, M.D., director of surgery at Harlem Hospital in New York City; Francis L. Hutchins, Jr., M.D., vice-chairman of the Department of Gynecology at the Graduate Hospital, PA; and Doris Brown, M.D., M.P.H., chairperson, Military Research Requirements and Applications, Armed Forces

Radiobiology Research Institute.

In addition to health care reform and managed care, workshop topics will address the issues of second-hand smoke, violence, women's health and AIDS in the African-American community.

Several other sessions will be devoted to skin, breast, cervical and prostate cancer, the new face of tuberculosis and the impact of diabetes in the African-American community.

REGISTER TO VOTE

HEALTH JAMBOREE FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS HELD

A Kentucky pediatrician with an initial goal of promoting home radon testing has organized the nation's first annual health jamboree aimed specifically at African Americans and encompassing such diverse interests as family counseling and sickle-cell research.

On June 27th in Louisville, more than 60 exhibitors offered free health screening, radon test kits, smoke detectors, inoculations and vaccinations, advice on drug abuse, education on domestic violence and a host of other services. More than 1,000 people were in attendance, said Dr. Beverly Gaines, the organizer.

"Too often medical services for minorities are fractured or ignored," said Dr. Gaines, an active member of the National Medical Association (NMA), one of the Jamboree's sponsors. The NMA represents 16,000 African-American and minority health professionals.

"We're trying to show African Americans and others," she said, "that by taking a holistic approach, they can routinely maintain their well-being and improve their quality of life."

Dr. Gaines said that she hoped others in the United States would copy the Jamboree.

"The response has been so great and so quick," she said, "that I can't help wondering whether African-American communities across the country couldn't organize similar fairs."

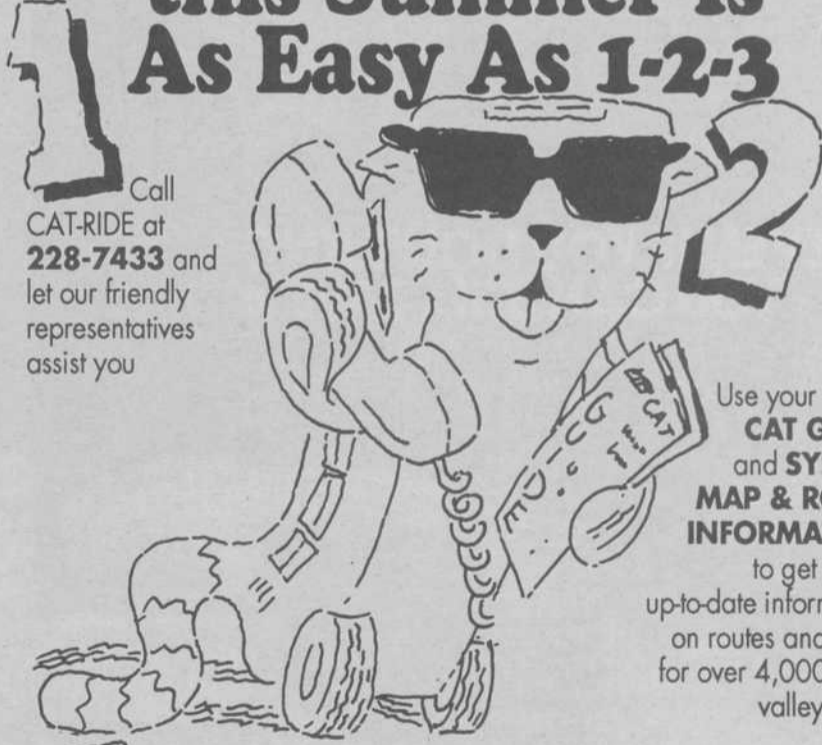
Other sponsors of this year's Jamboree included the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, the Central Area of The Links, Inc., the Jefferson County (Kty.) Health Department and the City of Louisville.

The NMA has entered into a partnership with the EPA's Office of Radiation and Indoor Air to help promote radon testing and remediation steps in homes found to have high levels of the colorless, odorless radioactive gas. Radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer and, according to EPA estimates, causes about 14,000 lung-cancer deaths in the U.S. each year.

Radon can become a health risk after building up to dangerous levels indoors. More information about radon is available by calling 1-800-662-6563. The NMA's added interest in radon results from people of color suffering disproportionately from lung cancer because they smoke in greater percentages than the general population.

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