



ADAP Advocacy Association

aaa+

Attn: Brandon M. Macsata, CEO

PO Box 15275

Washington, DC 20005

info@adapadvocacyassociation.org

www.adapadvocacyassociation.org

ADAP Advocacy Association Announces Recipients for 2011 Annual ADAP Leadership Awards; Leaders to receive Awards at 1st Annual Awards Dinner on July 6th

Awards to recognize leaders who are working to improve access to care and treatment

For Immediate Release

WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 29, 2011) – The [ADAP Advocacy Association](http://www.adapadvocacyassociation.org), also known as **aaa+**, today announced the recipients for its 2011 Annual ADAP Leadership Awards, which recognizes individual, community, government, media and corporate leaders who are working to improve access to care and treatment under the AIDS Drug Assistance Programs. The eight leadership awards will be presented during the **1st Annual ADAP Leadership Awards Dinner** being held on Wednesday, July 6th at 7:00 pm in Washington, DC. The dinner will be held in conjunction with its 4th Annual Conference, being held at the Westin Washington DC City Center on July 5-7th.

The 2010-2011 award recipients include:

- ADAP Champion of the Year: **Richard “Dab” Garner of Dab the AIDS Bear Project**
- ADAP Emerging Leader of the Year: **Jason King of AIDS Healthcare Foundation**
- ADAP Corporate Partner of the Year: **The Honorable Neil Romano of The Romano Group, LLC**
- ADAP Community Organization of the Year: **Stephen Gunsallus of Counseling Ministries Dot Org**
- ADAP Lawmaker of the Year: **The Honorable Alcee Hastings, M.C. (FL-23)**
- ADAP Social Media Campaign of the Year: **AIDS Activism 101 by Mark King of MyFabulousDisease**
- ADAP Grassroots Campaign of the Year: **Butch McKay of Positive Living Conference / ActivateU**
- ADAP Media Story of the Year: **HIV S.O.S. by Charles Blow of the New York Times**

“We’re honored to recognize an amazing slate of leaders, who for the last year have taken it upon themselves to raise awareness about the AIDS Drug Assistance Programs, as well as the crisis adversely impacting thousands of people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States being denied access to care and treatment in thirteen states,” said **Brandon M. Macsata**, CEO of the ADAP Advocacy Association about the 2010-2011 award recipients. “Their collective leadership, commitment and voice to the issue confronting the cash-strapped ADAPs nationwide demonstrates the power of perseverance. While there are clearly everyday leaders in our community fighting day in and day out to combat the ADAP crisis, we felt it was important to take a step back and reflect on some of the extraordinary accomplishments achieved over the last year by our recipients.”

Seven of the award recipients – including Mr. Garner, Mr. King, Mr. Romano, Mr. Gunsullas, Rep. Hastings, Mr. King and Mr. McKay – will be attending the 1st Annual ADAP Leadership Awards Dinner next week to accept the awards in person, with the exception of Mr. Blow who will be traveling.

About Richard “Dab” Garner: Dab was one of the first Americans diagnosed with HIV when it was still called GRID on 2/14/82. Now in his 30th year of living with HIV and AIDS, Dab is a long term survivor/activist/speaker/blogger and creator of Dab the AIDS Bear. He started giving teddy bears when his best friend was dying in quarantine in 1981 in San Francisco which ended up being called Dab the AIDS Bears. Dab became the godfather of one of the first children born with HIV named Candace in San Francisco in 1985. After losing her battle with HIV in 1989, Dab started doing holiday events for children with HIV called Teddy Bear Touchdowns after promising Candace as she was dying he would make other children with HIV know the love and compassion he had showed her. The events are now in their 22nd year and help hundreds of thousands of children with HIV and AIDS in 14 countries every year. In 2003, Dab started Dab the AIDS Bear Project in response to the start of ADAP waiting lists in the United States. Having had over 10,000 friends including 3 partners and his god-daughter lose their battle with AIDS before life saving anti-HIV medications become available in 1996, he works tirelessly to ensure adequate funding for Ryan White programs and access to anti-HIV medications for all Americans.

About Jason King: Jason King resides in Fort Lauderdale, FL where he serves a ‘Pharmacy Specialist’ for AIDS Healthcare Foundation. King started with AHF in June of 2010 and has quickly grown into a leading patient advocate by assisting with helping patients gain access to care, treatment and other resources. He has been instrumental coordinating various grassroots advocacy events in Florida over the last year.

About The Honorable Neil Romano & The Romano Group, LLC: Considered one of the nation’s leading authorities in the field of media and public advocacy, Neil Romano has dedicated his career to the marketing of ideas and messages to help save lives and promote public policy. He founded Romano & Associates Inc., which produced highly visible and effective public awareness programs, as well as America’s Strength, a not for profit organization which works to promote the importance of hiring individuals with disabilities. Romano’s extensive professional background includes tenure as director of communications for the White House Office of Drug Abuse Policy. In that role, he worked on campaigns such as “Just Say No” and “America Responds to AIDS.” In 2007, Romano was nominated by President George W. Bush to be the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy and was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate. As head of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), Romano advised the Secretary of Labor and worked with all DOL agencies to lead a comprehensive and coordinated national policy regarding the employment of people with disabilities in the United States. A noted producer / director, Romano's film, “Youth Homicide: A Public Health Crisis”, earned an Emmy Nomination for him in the category of Best Director. And his most recent film "America's Strength", which documents the inspiring stories of people with disabilities in main stream employment, was released nationally in the summer of 2010. His company, The Romano Group, LLC was designed to work with senior level executives in the business, government and non-profit arenas. Its primary objective is to develop socially responsible education programs, while helping organizations establishing brand, improve image and strengthen bottom line performance. The Romano Group provides consulting services to some of America’s largest and most recognizable corporations, from Major League Baseball to Walmart. In addition, The Romano Group produces broadcast quality products for all electronic media formats. Specializing in the area of public health and special populations, The Romano Group has earned hundreds of millions of dollars worth of impressions for its clients. Notably, The Romano Group produced two groundbreaking public service announcements for the ADAP Advocacy Association in 2010 - which was done well-below market value due to a generous in-kind donation from Neil Romano and his wife.

About Counseling Ministries Dot Org: Counseling Ministry Dot Org is a licensed mental health practice in South Carolina. Under the supervision of Stephen Gunsullas, counselors donate time and use their own transportation to visit people needing help, but can not otherwise leave their homes to visit an office and can not afford counseling. This includes AIDS patients.

About The Honorable Alcee Hastings, M.C.: The Honorable Alcee L. Hastings represents his native state of Florida by serving as Congressman for District 23, which includes parts of Broward, Palm Beach, Hendry, Martin, and St. Lucie Counties. Congressman Hastings was first elected in 1992 and is currently serving his 10th term in the Congress. Known to many as “Judge,” Alcee Hastings has distinguished himself as an attorney, civil rights activist, judge, and now Member of Congress. Appointed by President Jimmy Carter in 1979, he became the first African-American Federal Judge in the State of Florida, and served in that position for 10 years. Since his election to Congress as the first African-American from Florida since the post-Civil War period, Congressman Hastings has been an outspoken advocate for Floridians and our nation as a whole. Throughout his lifetime, Congressman Hastings has championed the rights of minorities, women, the elderly, children, and immigrants. In 2010, Congressman Hastings was only one of 82 House Members who endorsed a “Dear Colleague” letter circulated by his colleague Congresswoman Donna Christensen (D-V.I.) calling for emergency ADAP funding. That same year, he also delivered the only speech in the Well of the U.S. House of Representatives about the ongoing ADAP crisis. In 2011, Congressman Hastings authored an amendment to H.R.1, which would have appropriated an additional \$48 million to the cash-strapped ADAPs—it passed by voice vote.

About AIDS Activism 101 – Steps to end the ADAP crisis by Mark King: “AIDS Activism 101 – Steps to end the ADAP crisis” is a video blog produced by Mark King, blogger for MyFabulousDisease.com. King actively promotes the work of the ADAP Advocacy Association through blogging on his site, and posting items about how to get involved and help the cause. After attending the 2011 Emergency ADAP Crisis Summit in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, he created blog video "Steps to end the ADAP Crisis" which highlighted the efforts of community activists and gave practical advice on how to contact elected officials. The video highlighted the efforts of more than a dozen community activists, and showed how to advocate politically.

About Positive Living Conference & ActivateU hosted by Butch McKay & OASIS: Positive Living was born out of a dream Butch McKay had after attending the AIDS Manasota Conference in Bradenton, Florida in 1992. Butch was frustrated that there weren't any educational seminars on HIV/AIDS in the northern part of Florida. There was certainly a need so he set about making plans to start a similar conference for the Florida panhandle. It took five years before Positive Living became a reality in 1997 under McKay's leadership and support of the agency he runs, OASIS. While it began as a local conference it quickly grew to be have a more regional appeal. Positive Living 14, the most recent conference, drew 435 participants from 20 states, the District of Columbia, and Uganda. It is one of the last consumer focused conferences in the country. In 2010 ActivateU Advocacy Academy was added as full day pre-conference to Positive Living to train grassroots advocates. ActivateU is also a traveling program covering northern Florida funded by AIDS United. In the past year over 1000 unduplicated advocates have attended ActivateU to learn best practices of advocacy. Many traveled to ADAP and Ryan White hearing around the state recently to speak out against lowering the Federal Poverty Level eligibility requirements. For most this was the first time to ever stand before a crowd and not only disclose, but speak passionately about their concerns regarding possible changes and the impact it would hold for them personally. Advocacy makes a difference!

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About Charles Blow & HIV S.O.S.: Charles Blow is The New York Times's visual Op-Ed columnist. His column appears on Saturdays. Mr. Blow joined The New York Times in 1994 as a graphics editor and quickly became the paper's graphics director, a position he held for nine years. In that role, he led The Times to a best of show award from the Society of News Design for the Times's information graphics coverage of 9/11, the first time the award had been given for graphics coverage. He also led the paper to its first two best in show awards from the Malofiej International Infographics Summit for work that included coverage of the Iraq war. Mr. Blow went on to become the paper's Design Director for News before leaving in 2006 to become the Art Director of National Geographic Magazine. Before coming to The Times, Mr. Blow had been a graphic artist at The Detroit News. Mr. Blow graduated magna cum laude from Grambling State University in Louisiana, where he received a B.A. in mass communications. He lives in Brooklyn with his three children. On May 13, 2011, Blow authored an Op-Ed in the New York Times entitled, HIV S.O.S. His Op-Ed demonstrated the importance of 'treatment as prevention' and why ADAPs (and providing life-saving medications to PLWHAs) is critical in holding down costs and preventing new infections. The fact that it appeared in the NYT raised the "bar" for media reporting on the issue, which up until this point has been largely by weekly newspapers, LGBT newspapers and HIV-specific publications.

As of June 23rd, there were 8,506 individuals in 13 states on ADAP waiting lists, including Alabama with 49 individuals; Arkansas with 46 individuals; Florida with 3,581 individuals; Georgia with 1,611 individuals; Idaho with 20 individuals; Louisiana with 807 individuals; Montana with 28 individuals; North Carolina with 285 individuals; Ohio with 473 individuals; South Carolina with 790 individuals; Utah with 24 individuals; Virginia with 787 individuals; and Wyoming with 5 individuals.

To learn more about the 2011 Annual ADAP Leadership Awards, 2011 Annual Conference, ADAP waiting lists, or the ADAP Advocacy Association, please contact Brandon M. Macsata by phone at (305) 519-4256 or email at info@adapadvocacyassociation.org.

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