

As a person living with HIV/AIDS, I have been involved in the communities in the Greater Cincinnati Area for over 15 plus years, I have seen and worn many hats at various times. I am a sitting member of the Community Constituency Group (CCG) after being the Chair of the Community Advisory Board (CAB) for over 3 years of the AACTG (Adult AIDS Clinical Trials Group) under the N.I.H. and NIAID.

I first met Miss Mamie Harris when I had written an article about the CAB and Mamie Harris had written an article about IV-CHARIS in the Infectious Disease Clinic's monthly newsletter. So my way of recruitment was to invite other ASO's or CBO's into a CAB meeting to present what and who their organization is and does, which in turn got them to attend and understand what the CAB does with the AACTG. She impressed us much, and continues to be apart of that CAB Core group.

Since her starting at the AAHU, we connected on a personal level last year after the passing of her husband in April. We started to meet and discuss what she was learning and how it had affected me in my personal experience with my life as a person living with AIDS. I have seen her go from what I think was a small personal ministry within the church, to almost 6 years later being a major player and part of the HIV Community as a whole. There is hardly any ASO/CBO that does not know the name of IV-CHARIS or Mamie Harris. She has a unique and powerful way of presenting what she has been learning. Which to me, is not only a reflection of her personal character, but also speaks highly of the training and commitment that A.A.H.U. expects from those who have taken on this 2 year course.

Today I work with her and IV-CHARIS and help out as much as possible. To go with her into facilities and watch her educations, compared to many I have seen and even done, are to the point, in layman's language for the audience in which she is addressing, keeps your interest, and is always up-to-date factually. At community meetings of ASO's/CBO's, Ryan White All Titles, CRAIG and others her opinion is always requested and highly respected by her peers.

The number of facilities that she does education and testing, which I might add, none get testing without an educational class, except for 1 Health Department in which they are not funded for HIV testing, but have an STD Clinic. The numbers of testing are equal to if not exceed those of the 8 City Health Departments all together. With a year-end result of more positive results than the Health Departments total. Which says a lot about the area's of which she has targeted. In the past year I have even seen that grow to about 5 more facilities with a major step in collaborating with the Cincinnati Health Network and a medical team, to take testing to the backside of the racetracks, where there is a high prevalence of Hispanic/Latino's persons, and high-risk behaviors.

I cannot say enough about Mamie Harris professionally and personally. The passion she has for this devastating disease surpasses many of those who work in health care, and still do not respond to the call for help. I believe the knowledge that she has picked up in the last 2 years she has used to empower her staff to know what and how the disease progression and medications work within the cells and body. Has empowered her in the

community to stand up and speak with boldness, and confidence from speaking with facts and understanding about HIV/AIDS.

On a very personal note, I can't say enough of how she as reenergized me in not just my own fight, but to fight more and more for the community as a whole. As a person living with, it is very easy to get distracted and stay in your own little world, and forget about the message of "HIV is Preventable". She lifts me up on a daily basis. When working with her, through the way she runs her office and staff, to the way she carries herself through out the community. She let's me know, that everyday is a gift, and I am a gift to that day as well. To never give up, that we all can change a person, a community, a State, a Nation, one by one.

She is definitely an inspiration to those of us, living with HIV/AIDS, and to the community of Cincinnati and surrounding areas.

Sincerely,

*C. Mark Reed*