

For Immediate Release
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AIDS Legal Council of Chicago to Present the 2007 Advocates of the Year Awards

Chicago – The **AIDS Legal Council of Chicago** and members of the **2007 Advocates of the Year Selection Committee** will present the 13th Annual Advocates of the Year Awards on Thursday, March 22nd at the Museum of Contemporary Art. The only Chicago award for excellence in HIV/AIDS service where honorees are both nominated and selected by peers in the HIV/AIDS service community, the Awards pay tribute to men and women working locally to bring treatment, housing, care and other vital services to individuals living with HIV.

Upon reviewing nominations last October, the Selection Committee announced the following honorees for the 2007 Awards:

Dr. Beverly Sha

Rush University Medical Center

Beverly E. Sha, MD, a graduate of Johns Hopkins Medical School, has devoted her entire career to the clinical care of patients with HIV and research in the field of HIV. She is currently the principal investigator at Rush University Medical Center for the AIDS Clinical Trials Group grant and the Women's Interagency HIV Study.

John Peller

AIDS Foundation of Chicago

As the Director of State Affairs for the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, John Peller has been at the forefront of advocacy for Illinoisans living with HIV and AIDS. His work with local and state policymakers has led to increased funding for the state's drug assistance program, the defeat of legislation mandating HIV testing among prisoners and passage of the historic African-American AIDS Response Act in 2005. John also shepherded the creation and legislative approval of the Medicare wrap bill which has helped hundreds of HIV-positive Medicare beneficiaries.

Sidney A. Thomas, MSW

Ambulatory & Community Health Network of Cook County

One of the most respected advocates for the health needs of African-Americans with HIV, Sidney Thomas has played a critical role in bringing HIV/AIDS services to men and women of color. He helped establish the first black AIDS service agency in Chicago, the Kupona Network, and the Project Brotherhood/Black Men's

Clinic at the Woodlawn Health Center. He helped obtain Minority AIDS initiative funding for Chicago's West Side and played a leading role in the formation of SSHARC, the South Suburban HIV/AIDS Regional Coalition.

Ida Byther-Smith

Jo-Ray House

Ida Byther-Smith has been a true inspiration, transforming her personal struggle with HIV into a source of strength to educate and give hope to thousands living with HIV and AIDS. As a volunteer, activist and public speaker, Ida has been deeply involved with numerous community organizations. Ida founded Jo-Ray House in 2003, a transitional housing agency for individuals who are HIV-positive and have a history of incarceration or substance abuse.

Dance for Life

Since 1992, Dance for Life has been promoting the art of dance in Chicago while raising awareness and funds for HIV/AIDS care, prevention and education. Among the largest performance-based AIDS fundraising events in the Midwest, Dance for Life has raised more than \$2.5 million over 15 years, helping numerous local agencies provide services to those in greatest need. The Dance for Life Fund also provides urgent assistance grants to members of Chicago's dance community affected by HIV.

Additionally, the AIDS Legal Council of Chicago selected The Chicago Bar Foundation to receive its 2007 Leadership Award. The Advocates of the Year Awards will begin at 5:30 pm on the 2nd floor of the Museum of Contemporary Art located at 220 E. Chicago Avenue. Individual tickets are \$100 each. For additional information, please contact Ricardo Cifuentes, Director of Development at (312) 427-8990.