



## Meet a Board Member Darlene Robertson—LAAN Chair

Darlene Robertson is an active advocate and activist for the HIV community. She has been living with HIV for the past 28 years. Darlene currently resides in Region IV in a rural town called Port Barre, LA about eight miles from Opelousas, LA. She is the mother of three sons, grandmother to four, great grandmother to one and godmother to two. Her passions in life include her family, reading and playing word and FB games, and helping others, especially newcomers to HIV.



Darlene currently serves as the Chair for the Louisiana AIDS Advocacy Network, Inc. (LAAN). Before being the Chair for the last 2.5 years, she was the Advocate-at-Large with LAAN. Darlene has helped to coordinate the 2015-2017 Legislative Awareness Day (LAD) at the State Capitol. Darlene is also a new member of the Louisiana HIV Planning Group and an active client and board member with Acadiana CARES an AIDS Service Organization (ASO) in Lafayette. Darlene had the honor of traveling to Washington DC with other advocates from LAAN to meet with senators and representatives in Washington, D.C. to promote better laws, policies and services for the HIV community throughout the state in 2015-2017.

Darlene has spoken on panels, done HIV education and prevention presentations at schools, churches, police academies, colleges, nursing homes, or anywhere else where people wanted to learn more about HIV. Darlene has been in newspapers, on the radio and even on television providing education regarding HIV and sharing her story. She has been on advisory boards, state planning groups, a board member on five different AIDS service organization in Louisiana and Texas. Darlene is available to travel within the state to educate others about being an HIV advocate, getting tested, becoming a client with their local ASO and encouraging them to be on HIV medications to become virally suppressed in order to put an end to stigma and discrimination.

Darlene received an Unsung Hero in 1992 for all of her volunteer work in the Galveston, TX area. She was recently inducted into the Sister Love/2020 Leading Women Society for over 25 years of her public leadership in the HIV communities.

*“The Louisiana AIDS Advocacy Network, Inc. (LAAN) amplifies the voices of people living with HIV (PLWHIV) and their allies in Louisiana through advocacy. LAAN Advocates on behalf of all persons infected and affected by HIV in Louisiana. LAAN Strives to provide strategic leadership in HIV advocacy that is powerful, effective, committed and inclusive, done with integrity using factual information in order to galvanize the advocacy efforts of PLWHIV and to influence those who make policy decisions.*

*- LAAN Mission*



Speaker at LAD 2017

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Speaker at LAD 2017

## 2017 Biomedical HIV Prevention Summit

The National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) is conducting its second annual Biomedical HIV Prevention Summit December 4-5, 2017 in New Orleans, Louisiana. The summit's name has changed from the National HIV PrEP Summit to the Biomedical HIV Prevention Summit (The Summit). [NMAC](#) believes the new name allows us to think about the expanded integrated role that PrEP, PEP and [Treatment as Prevention](#) (TasP) play in building the pathways to ending the epidemic.

The Summit will have over 30 curated workshops covering topics such as TasP, PrEP, and PEP, the intersection of biomedical interventions and vaccinations, priority populations, program implementation, biomedical prevention and policy, training programs, community mobilization, and advocacy. More details about the workshops and speakers will become available as the conference approaches.

## Legislative Awareness Day (LAD)

Our annual Legislative Awareness Day (LAD) brings together People Living with HIV, their allies, and member organizations from around the state of Louisiana. This is an event where we mobilize for advocacy training, day of engagement at the state level, educating legislators about HIV and issues for those living with HIV in Louisiana.

### What a great time we had at this year's Legislative Awareness Day!!

The LAD Committee put together a lot of education on topics pertaining to HIV in which there were powerful questions asked of the speakers, great sharing of experiences in living with or being affected by HIV, knowledgeable speakers, interactions from those in attendance, and all around support for all the HIV community.

### This year's LAD was a great success

in spite of some obstacles we faced just days before the scheduled event and during the event itself. We normally go to the State Capitol and meet with State legislators. However this year, we learned that the legislative session would be over by 11:00am instead of the usual 4:00pm. Our agenda said we would be going to the Capitol around 2:00pm to meet with legislators that we had made appointments to meet with them later that afternoon; so, we had to make other plans. Instead of advocates and volunteers going to them as we do every year, we were able to get two Representatives agree to come to us. Representative Edmond Jordan came and explained the legislative process and has asked to be sent literature so that he may inform and help educate his fellow Legislators. He isn't fully on board as an HIV ally in the LA State Congress, but he is willing to learn all he can. He has requested that he continue to send current information as we get it. Representative C. Denise Marcell was unable to attend but she will be sent current HIV information as requested. The day was filled with educational topics on living with HIV, stigma, advocacy training and more. We had more time to hear from those in attendance that asked a lot of questions during the sessions planned for the day. The LAAN Board felt this was the best LAD to date.



Representative Edmond Jordan  
LAD 2017

## Affordable Care Act Open Enrollment Period for 2018

**Q:** What are the Affordable Care Act enrollment periods and when can I enroll outside of the [open enrollment period](#)?

**A:** Open enrollment for 2018 will begin on November 1, 2017, and end on December 15, 2017 in all states that use HealthCare.gov. This applies both on and off-exchange. State-run exchanges have been encouraged to follow the same schedule, although HHS acknowledged that state-run exchanges might run into technical difficulties since the open enrollment schedule was changed late in the game, in April 2017.

Enroll at [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov)



Speaker at LAD 2017

## For the First Time, The CDC Admitted That HIV Can't Be Transmitted If You're Undetectable

Nearly half of all HIV-positive people in the U.S. have undetectable viral loads. (U=U; Undetectable = Untransmittable)

The Centers for Disease Control has finally admitted what activists and medical experts have been saying for years: People whose HIV loads are undetectable can't transmit the virus.

It might seem like a given, but [as HIV Plus reports](#), it's the first time the august body has made the claim.

In a memo released Wednesday, National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, the CDC stated that "when [antiretroviral treatment] results in viral suppression, defined as less than 200 copies/ml or undetectable levels, it prevents sexual HIV transmission." "Across three different studies, including thousands of couples and many thousand acts of sex without a condom or pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)," it continues, "no HIV transmissions to an HIV-negative partner were observed when the HIV-positive person was virally suppressed. This means that people who take ART daily as prescribed and achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load have effectively no risk of sexually transmitting the virus to an HIV-negative partner."

Nearly half of all people with HIV in the U.S. are undetectable, thanks to receiving proper treatment with anti-viral medication.

Bruce Richman, executive director of UequalsU.org and the Prevention Access Campaign, tells HIVPlus the statement can't be overestimated. "The CDC's new and unequivocal language is a result of [the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services'] unprecedented review of transmission risk messaging across departments which will be rolling out core messaging in the coming weeks and months."

On a less upbeat note, the memo also pointed out that gay and bisexual men are disproportionately affected by the virus, with more than 26,000 being diagnosed with HIV in 2015 alone. That's two-thirds of all new cases in the U.S.

And Republican threats to the Affordable Care Act; Planned Parenthood; and funding for HIV awareness, treatment and education make our gains even more precarious. "If Congress repeals the ACA without simultaneously replacing it with programs that ensure comprehensive health coverage for the same if not more individuals... people with HIV and others would lose access to the care and treatment that they rely on to remain healthy," [says Carl Schmid of the AIDS Institute](#). "People with HIV, who depend on a daily drug regimen, cannot risk losing access to their health coverage, not even for a single day."

October  
15

National  
Latinx AIDS  
Awareness  
Day  
#NLAAD

December  
1  
Worlds  
AIDS Day  
#WAD

UPCOMING HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAYS

# SAC Takes Grassroots Organizing to Next Level with LEAD Academy

The Southern AIDS Coalition (SAC), is committed to building an organized, influential, and sustainable voice among those of us who are disproportionately impacted by HIV in the South. Earlier this year, we launched our LEAD (Leadership Education and Advocacy Development) Academy, a program that includes more than 20 hours of intensive training designed to prepare gay and bisexual men of color and women of color for leadership roles within their communities.

**For more information contact SAC at:**  
**Southern AIDS Coalition**  
**P.O. Box 550249**  
**Birmingham, Alabama 35255**  
**(888) 745-2975**  
[admin@southernaidscoalition.org](mailto:admin@southernaidscoalition.org)

LAAN lifts the voices of PLWHIV and their allies in Louisiana through advocacy.



## HIV, Stigma, and Health Study

Help us understand how stigma affects people living with HIV

**Go to:**

[Tinyurl.com/hivstigmastudy](http://Tinyurl.com/hivstigmastudy)

## Contact Us

For more information about our efforts and to stay up to date on events

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Visit us on the web at  
[www.la-an.org](http://www.la-an.org)

## LAAN has a License Plate

LAAN is excited to announce that LAAN now has its own LA License Plates and they plates are finally available for you to purchase.

The Louisiana AIDS Advocacy Network, Inc. (LAAN) applied for a Special Prestige License Plates in 2014 under TITLE 47 Revenue and Taxation, RS 47:463.182 - Special prestige license plates; Louisiana AIDS Advocacy Network (LAAN), Universal Citation: LA Rev Stat § 47:463.182 and was granted permission under §463.182 to secure a special prestige license plates; Louisiana AIDS Advocacy Network.

It has been a long process to collect funds to cover the initial fees, designing of the plates, and getting them into production over the last three years; but, they are now available for you to purchase.

## Get yours by visiting

<http://expresslane.org>. Look for "Vehicle Services" Then click "Special Plates"

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