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**Formal, Festive, and Fabulous! (All For a Good Cause)
Twelfth Annual Black-Tie GayBINGO Called for Friday, April 1st**

PHILADELPHIA – March 7, 2011 – Bingo in Black-Tie? This is not your grandmother's bingo, and it's all in the name of a good cause. The **Twelfth Annual Black-Tie GayBINGO presented by PECO**, one of Philadelphia's most creative and off-beat annual events, will take place at 6:30 pm on Friday, April 1, 2011, at Philadelphia's elegant Crystal Tea Room. The renowned Bingo Verifying Divas (BVDs) dress in glam drag to entertain the crowd and ensure everyone has laughs and a great time while raising vital funds. AIDS Fund is proud to host their annual fundraiser and award the "**Favorite**



Straight Person of the Year" to **The Reverend Marlene "Mike" Haines** of the **Church of Saint Luke and The Epiphany**. In addition, the **Founders' Award** will be presented to the **Dukes of Destiny**, the renowned blues band that has played at every AIDS Walk Philly since the beginning 24 years ago. Finally, the **Ferrara Family Volunteer Awards** will be presented to **Joe Shenk** and **Howard Traivers**.

Photo by Jeff Fusco for AIDS Fund

The Reverend "Mike" Haines, the "**2010 Favorite Straight Person of the Year**," has given the opening prayer at the AIDS Walk Philly for the past six years. The Reverend recently retired from The Church of Saint Luke and The Epiphany, and she has been dedicated to the HIV/AIDS cause since the mid-1980s when she lost a friend to the disease. From 1997 through 2010, Mike was the assistant director of Saint Luke's Hospitality Center, a program which aims to serve people affected and infected with HIV and AIDS and which receives funds from AIDS Walk Philly and other fundraising efforts of AIDS Fund. Mike believes her opening prayer each year at AIDS Walk Philly is a way to give acknowledgement to the many faith relationships between people who were walking. One of Mike's favorite memories is that "regardless of the weather the walk goes on," which really showed to her the dedication and passion people have towards the cause. In addition, Mike recalled, she enjoys hearing

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the reading of the names of the people who have passed away. She feels as though it makes the Walk much more real and less abstract. Those were “real people with real families, real jobs, and real individuals who loved them,” The Reverend Mike said. AIDS Walk Philly touches an emotional place in her, and every year it reinforces the idea that she will “do this ‘till it’s over, until there is a cure, a vaccination—we’re there!”

Past recipients of the “Favorite Straight Person of the Year” are activist Anna Forbes, former Philadelphia Mayor John F. Street, former Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell, former Councilman Angel Ortiz, community leaders John Cella and Judith Eden, radio and television personality Bret Hamilton, longtime AIDS Walk Philly supporters Andrea Finkelstein Losben and Patricia Lavelle, and former executive director of the Family Planning Council Dorothy Mann.

The **Founders’ Award** is being presented to the **Dukes of Destiny**, the traditional soul band that has entertained at all 24 years of the AIDS Walk Philly’s existence. The Dukes first became involved in the Walk at the encouragement of their founder, Steve Brown, who used to work in media relations at Jefferson Hospital. Brown became concerned with the outbreak of AIDS and volunteered the band to perform at the first AIDS Walk Philly. The first Walk was one of the most memorable for band member John Colgan-Davis, as he recalls seeing students and parents from the private school where he works and everyone’s excitement which made it feel like a “true celebration.” In 2000, Steve Brown passed away from pancreatic cancer so the Dukes continue their participation to honor Steve as well as help raise funds for a good cause. Additionally, many of the band members have had several friends who have been diagnosed with HIV, so the Dukes feel as though it is a chance to give tribute to and remember those affected in the community. John Colgan-Davis believes that the band members are “making a statement that you have to openly face problems and not hide or pretend they do not exist.” The AIDS Fund Founders’ Award is given in honor and in memory of the individuals who founded the Philadelphia AIDS Walk and AIDS Fund, and to those who have made a significant contribution in the fight against HIV/AIDS in their community.

The Ferrara Family Volunteer Awards will be presented to **Joe Shenk** and **Howard Traivers**. **Joe Shenk** has been volunteering with AIDS Fund Philly for almost 9 years. Joe gives his time to the monthly GayBINGO events and also volunteers for AIDS Walk Philly each October. At GayBINGO, for past five years he has been in charge of will call and ticket sales. In previous years, he was an usher and sold 50/50 raffle tickets. Joe began volunteering with AIDS Fund to contribute and become more visible in the gay community as well as offer his help for something in which he believes very strongly. Joe truly enjoys his volunteer work and has made many friends over the last 10 years. “I love the fact that new people are constantly coming into my life and remain there for quite some time because I have been volunteering at the same events with the same organization for so long,” said Shenk.

Howard Traivers has been volunteering with AIDS Fund since 2007. He started with various tasks associated with AIDS Walk Philly, and now also helps with setup and breakdown as well as ushering at monthly GayBINGO events. Howard volunteers his time at a variety of non-profits and churches, but says his time with AIDS Fund is especially meaningful given that AIDS still has such a stigma in society. In addition, he finds time to occasionally help AIDS Fund in the office, including collecting and distributing toys for the annual Toy Drive for children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS. Robb Reichard, Executive Director of AIDS Fund says, "We can truly count on Howard to help AIDS Fund with any task. He donates a huge amount of his time, whenever we ask for a hand. He is incredibly reliable and kind, and is always willing to jump in and help."

This year's Black-Tie GayBINGO presented by PECO will feature dinner, six bingo games, a silent auction, and dancing. Tickets are \$150 per person. The Crystal Tea Room is in the Wanamaker Building, 100 Penn Square East, Philadelphia. For tickets, call 215-731-9255. Additional event sponsors are National Penn Bank, The Tavern Group (Tavern on Camac, terra restaurant, Uncle's Bar), El Dorado Rum, VU-Events, and Philadelphia Weekly.

In addition to the annual Black-Tie GayBINGO, **AIDS Fund's monthly GayBINGO events** raise vital funds for HIV/AIDS services. This fun event is open to anyone who enjoys campy humor. It's hosted by the BVDs (Bingo Verifying Divas), drag queens on in-line skates. Each night of Bingo has its own theme and set of special Bingo games. Cash prizes are awarded for each game. GayBINGO is held once a month on Saturday nights at the Gershman Y at Broad and Pine Streets in Philadelphia. Entrance is on Broad Street. All games begin at 7 pm. **This event has raised over \$2.5 million to date.** The remaining spring schedule is as follows: **April 16 – Nashville Nights GayBINGO!** – *"Man! I feel like a woman!" (Shania Twain)* **May 21 – Always a Bridesmaid GayBINGO!** – *...never a f***in' bride!* **June 11 – 15 Minutes of Fame GayBINGO!** – *Forget 15 minutes, we're celebrating 15 years of GayBINGO!* Reserved seating is \$25 and balcony seating is \$20.

The AIDS Fund grant program supports organizations in the Philadelphia Region that provide AIDS and HIV-related services, education, and prevention including increasing public awareness of HIV/AIDS issues. AIDS Fund is the producer of AIDS Walk Philly, GayBINGO, and other fundraising and awareness programs throughout the year. **The 25th Annual AIDS Walk Philly will take place on Sunday, October 16, 2011.** Follow AIDS Fund on Facebook and Twitter: www.facebook.com/AIDSWalkPhilly, www.facebook.com/gaybingophilly, and twitter.com/AIDSWalkPhilly.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: High-resolution photos available upon request by emailing cari@reliefcomm.com.