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## AIDS WALK PHILLY & AIDS RUN PHILLY TO RAISE FUNDS, AWARENESS 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Event Continues the Fight for HIV/AIDS in Philadelphia Region

PHILADELPHIA – September 7, 2011– For 25 years, AIDS Walk Philly has raised funds for HIV/AIDS service organizations in the Greater Philadelphia Region, and on **Sunday, October 16, 2011, the 25th Annual AIDS Walk Philly & AIDS Run Philly** presented by Merck continues the fight. One in five Americans infected with HIV don't know it. Philadelphians can make a difference in the fight against HIV and AIDS by participating in AIDS Walk Philly, which will bring together nearly 15,000 people to raise money for HIV prevention education, public awareness, and HIV care services here in the Greater Philadelphia region.



Walk and run beginning at the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Run along the certified 5K route on Martin Luther King Drive at 8am. Walk along the 12K route, beginning along Kelly Drive at 9am and returning on Martin Luther King Drive. Right in our own backyard, thirty thousand of our friends, family, and neighbors live with HIV, a condition for which they are often judged and misunderstood. In 15 years, the rate of infection has not decreased.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual AIDS Walk Philly will also be a time to reflect over the past 25 years of the fundraising event as well as 30 years that the epidemic has existed. **Robb Reichard, Executive Director of AIDS Fund**, explains that part of the mission of the Walk is to give Philadelphians a better understanding of current HIV/AIDS facts. "As a nation and as a city, these are statistics that we should find alarming. We want to educate the entire community about the epidemic and its current state, as well as offer perspective of how the disease has changed over the past 30 years."



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The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual AIDS Walk Philly presented by Merck is also sponsored by Wells Fargo, NBC10, Frito-Lay, PGN, City Paper, and Fairmount Park. In 1987, volunteers from Philadelphia's lesbian and gay community center decided to organize a walk-a-thon to support area AIDS agencies and raise public awareness about the disease. The Delaware Valley's first AIDS Walk had about 300 participants and raised \$33,000. Since then, thousands of fundraising walkers have gathered each year to participate in the region's largest annual HIV/AIDS public awareness and fundraising event. Over \$15 million has been raised for HIV/AIDS public awareness, prevention and care services for people living with HIV disease. The money raised at AIDS Walk Philly goes toward HIV prevention education, public awareness, and HIV care services right here in the greater Philadelphia region to 30 partner organizations.



The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual AIDS Walk Philly will be co-hosted by "Project Runway" Season 8 runner up, **Mondo Guerra**. Mondo is remembered most for speaking so openly and honestly about his own HIV-positive status. Along with AIDS Walk 2011 sponsor, Merck, Mondo is a partner in the AIDS education campaign, *Living Positive by Design*, through which he continues to speak at events sharing his story of life with HIV.

Mondo joins "Project Runway" alum Jack Mackenroth on *Living Positive by Design*, which encourages people with the disease to maintain a positive outlook on life while effectively working with their doctors to manage their disease. Professionally, Mondo continues to design collections for fashion weeks in many major U.S. cities, and is working to develop his own brand, while continuing to serve as a role model in the HIV community by speaking openly about his status.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual AIDS Walk Philly will again have 25 panels from the **AIDS Memorial Quilt** on display. A powerful tool for raising awareness about HIV/AIDS, the Quilt is the largest ongoing community arts project in the world. Each of the more than 44,000 colorful panels that make up the Quilt memorializes the life of a person lost to AIDS. **Free rapid HIV tests** will be provided on-site at AIDS Walk Philly. Find out your status in only 20 minutes.

Individuals can take action in the fight against AIDS by getting sponsors, making a donation, and joining with thousands of others on October 16 for AIDS Walk Philly & AIDS Run Philly. These efforts will support direct care services, prevention and education, counseling and testing, medical care, and public awareness efforts right here in this community. Register online and get additional information at [www.aidswalkphilly.org](http://www.aidswalkphilly.org) or call 215-731-WALK.

### **About AIDS Fund**

The AIDS Fund grant program supports 30 partner 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. Follow AIDS Fund on Facebook and Twitter: [www.facebook.com/AIDSWalkPhilly](http://www.facebook.com/AIDSWalkPhilly), [www.facebook.com/gaybingophilly](http://www.facebook.com/gaybingophilly), and [twitter.com/AIDSWalkPhilly](https://twitter.com/AIDSWalkPhilly).

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**EDITOR'S NOTE: High-resolution photos available upon request by emailing [cari@reliefcomm.com](mailto:cari@reliefcomm.com).**