

NEWS RELEASE



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Premier HIV/AIDS Agencies Agree to Merge New Organization Becomes Single Source for HIV/AIDS Care in Rochester and the Finger Lakes Communities

Rochester, New York ...Today AIDS Community Health Center and AIDS Rochester announced that their respective Boards of Directors unanimously voted to legally merge the individual corporations into one entity. The new organization will now become the single source for expertise on all aspects of HIV/AIDS care in Rochester and the Finger Lakes communities. The legal merger will be effective January 1, 2010 following approvals by the Department of Health and the Department of Education as well as the New York State Attorney General's Office (Monroe County). The two organizations will co-locate this fall in Monroe Square at 259 Monroe Avenue near the corner of Alexander Street.

“The merger will make it possible for us to accomplish two major goals,” says Jay Rudman, president of Community Health Network, dba AIDS Community Health Center. “First, we will be able to use our combined resources most effectively to prevent additional HIV infection and to make our services the best they can be for those already infected. And second, the merger will provide fiscal stability in today’s challenging economic environment, ensuring the viability of our services well into the future.”

Rudman has been recommended as the president of the new organization, which will be newly named by the time the Certificate of Merger is filed in January 2010. Paula Silvestrone, the executive director of AIDS Rochester for the past 20 years, will retire at that time. “It has been my privilege to spend so many years leading AIDS Rochester that has such a vital mission and dedicated staff who work tirelessly to combat such a devastating disease,” says Silvestrone. “I will step away knowing that

this new organization will be in excellent hands and will provide the best care in our community for people with HIV/AIDS.”

Both organizations were founded in the 1980s at a time when the deadly HIV virus was first identified. AIDS Rochester was established 26 years ago as part of the New York State Health Department’s network of Community Service Programs (CSPs). They started with one staff person and a one room office. Today, the agency has close to a \$4 million budget and 50 staff dedicated solely to a continuum of prevention services and social services for people living with HIV and their loved ones.

AIDS Community Health Center, formerly known as Community Health Network (CHN), was founded in 1989, by two infectious disease physicians, Dr. Steven Scheibel and Dr. William Valenti, as a community medical and diagnostic clinic for those who were infected with and dying from HIV/AIDS. When the doors opened in 1989, 76 patients came to receive care. Today, the agency’s expert clinical and social work staff serve more than 600 people, with significant increases in racially and ethnically diverse patients. The nearly \$4 million agency employs 60 staff.

“This community owes a great debt to both of these organizations for the dedicated service they provide in supporting people who live with HIV/AIDS, and in educating the community about how to prevent this disease,” says Peter Carpino, President of United Way of Greater Rochester. “Their decision to use United Way’s Synergy fund to examine and implement this merger will have both short- and long-term benefit for all those that use their much needed services.”

AIDS Community Health Center (ACHC) is a community-based, not-for-profit health care center that provides state-of-the-art HIV specialty care and primary care to people living with HIV and AIDS, regardless of their ability to pay.

AIDS Rochester’s (ARI) mission is to lead a compassionate community effort within the eight county Finger Lakes region, providing a continuum of programs and services including education, prevention, advocacy and support services for people affected by HIV/AIDS.

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