

ABOUT PACT AND PROJECT "FIRE"

PEOPLE OF ALL COLORS TOGETHER (PACT) OF GREATER NEWARK BEGAN IN 1990 AS A GROUP OF LESBIANS AND GAY MEN COMMITTED TO PROVIDING A FORUM FOR SHARING, DISCUSSING AND DEVELOPING A SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR OURSELVES, BY OURSELVES. FOLLOWING SEVERAL MEETINGS IT WAS DETERMINED THAT THE GROUP WOULD NO LONGER MEET UNTIL ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR OUR EFFORTS WAS ENGENDERED. IN 1993 SOME NEW, SOME OLD MEMBERS OF THE GROUP MET AND AGREED TO HAVE A HIV AIDS EDUCATION AND PREVENTION PROPOSAL WRITTEN THAT WOULD ADDRESS SOME OF THE CRITICAL NEEDS OF LESBIANS, GAY MEN AND BISEXUALS LIVING IN GREATER NEWARK. THAT PROPOSAL IS THE "FIRE" PROJECT.

PROJECT "FIRE" WAS NAMED AS A TRIBUTE TO LESBIANS AND GAY MEN OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE PERIOD WHO IN 1926 PUBLISHED THE FIRST MAGAZINE WITH STORIES OF OPEN HOMOSEXUAL LOVE BETWEEN BLACKS. THE MAGAZINE WAS NAMED "FIRE". THESE PIONEERS DARED TO SPEAK OPENLY AND PUBLICLY ABOUT HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS AT A TIME WHEN PUBLIC REJECTION WAS AT ITS HEIGHT. THOSE CONDITIONS EXIST TODAY IN GREATER NEWARK WHERE TOO MANY LESBIANS, GAY MEN AND BISEXUALS REMAIN CLOSETED FOR FEAR OF THEIR LIVES. IT IS ALSO A TIME WHEN HIV INFECTION RUNS RAMPANT IN THE COMMUNITY WITH FEW SERVICES AND LITTLE OUTREACH TO PEOPLE OF OTHER THAN HETEROSEXUAL ORIENTATION.

PROJECT "FIRE" IS A COMPREHENSIVE CONTINUUM OF TARGETED SERVICES DEALING WITH PREVENTION AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOCUSING ON AFRICAN AMERICAN, BLACK AND LATINO GAY, BISEXUAL MEN/WOMYN OF COLOR. PROJECT "FIRE" THROUGH ITS OUTREACH EFFORTS, WILL BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN OUR TARGETED GROUPS WHO ARE YET TO RECEIVE APPROPRIATE/RELEVANT INFORMATION ABOUT HIV/AIDS PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY AGENCIES WHERE SUCH SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE FOR EVERYONE ELSE.

SPECIFICALLY, PROJECT "FIRE" WILL CONSIST OF THREE MAJOR OUTREACH EFFORTS. "HOME HEALTH PARTIES" WILL COMPRISE OUTREACH IN A HOME OR APARTMENT SETTING WHERE "SAFER SEX" MESSAGES AND HIV PREVENTION CONCERNS WILL BE CLEARLY ADDRESSED IN A SMALL GROUP, INDIVIDUAL-ONE ON ONE BASIS. ANOTHER EFFORT WILL INCLUDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF "SAFER SEX" SKITS WITHIN "DRAG" SHOWS AS A MEANS FOR PROVIDING HIV PREVENTION INFORMATION IN BARS. THE THIRD AREA FOR OUR WORK WILL BE WITH A NUMBER OF "HOUSES" AND THEIR "BALLS" WHERE "SAFER SEX" AND HIV PREVENTION THEMES WILL BE INCLUDED IN ALL PRESENTATIONS. MUCH OF OUR WORK AND THESE EFFORTS WILL FOCUS ON YOUTH AND SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY WHERE HIV/AIDS INFORMATION IS NOT EASILY ACCESSIBLE.

NOTE: PROJECT "FIRE" IS A JOINT PROGRAM OF PACT AND THE NEWARK COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS, INC. A GRANT FOR OVER \$100,000.00 FROM THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WAS RECEIVED FOR OUR WORK. THIS EFFORT NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT, NOT JUST TO HELP OTHERS, BUT YOURSELF AS WELL.