

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2, 2012

Contact: Scott Westbrook Simpson, 202.49234379, Scott@takerootmedia.com

### **March Campaign to Raise Awareness of HIV's Impact on Women**

Actress Vanessa Williams Joins Advocates for National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day on March 10th

WASHINGTON, D.C., -- On March 10th, advocates and officials across the country will be joined by actress Vanessa Williams to take a stand against HIV/AIDS during National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NWGHAAD).

Thirty years into the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the disease continues to wield massive influence over the lives of women.

- HIV/AIDS affects nearly 280,000 women in the United States.
- A woman is infected with HIV every 47 minutes.
- Research shows that women living with HIV often face gaps in access to care.

The public awareness campaign, designed to increase understanding of prevention and treatment efforts, features actress Vanessa Williams as the national spokesperson. Her role comes during the run-up to a national tour of her one-woman show "Feet on the Ceiling," featuring stories of sexual revelations for women, the pursuit of love, and the consequences of risky sexual behavior.

"I am honored and humbled to join my sisters in the Hollywood community in adding our voices to the fight against HIV/AIDS. We have all been touched by this awful disease. We are painfully aware that for women in general and particularly black women, every moment is a deciding moment," said Vanessa Williams, 2012 National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day spokesperson and board member of the Black AIDS Institute.

With events in more than 80 cities across the country, this year's campaign also includes the dissemination 10,000 posters providing information about HIV/AIDS in English, and another 5,000 will be produced in Spanish, a first for NWGHAAD.

The collaboration to produce NWGHAAD features an impressive number of participants, including Community Education Group, The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office on Women's Health, The Black AIDS Institute, the Kaiser Family Foundation's Greater Than AIDS campaign, and the National Latino AIDS Action Network.

"Women across the country are waking up to the fact that they cannot take their health for granted," said A. Toni Young, Executive Director of Community Education Group. "With that empowerment comes the strength to make healthy choices for one's self, family, and community. We're proud of this collaboration that informs, but also empowers women and girls to know that they are greater than AIDS, no matter what the statistics say."

"HIV isn't what it was 30 years ago. We have the power to end it," said Tina Hoff, Senior Vice President and Director, Health Communication and Media Partnerships, Kaiser Family Foundation, which provides strategic guidance and day-to-day management for Greater Than AIDS. "This campaign can leverage the resources of the public and private sector to connect those most in need with information and services."

#### **About NWGHAAD**

National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is an annual nationwide observance of HIV/AIDS' impact on women and girls. Each year, the Office on Women's Health works with organizations across the country to create opportunities for women and girls to learn about HIV prevention, the importance of HIV testing and how those living with HIV/AIDS can better manage the disease.

#### **About Community Education Group**

Founded in 1993 as the National Women and HIV/AIDS Project (NWAP), the Community Education Group (CEG) seeks to stop the spread of HIV and eliminate health disparities by training community health workers, and educating and testing the hard-to-reach population. CEG also regularly shares its expertise with other organizations through national networks and local capacity building efforts. Today, CEG operates eight mobile testing units in Wards 7 and 8 in the District of Columbia and conducts HIV counseling and testing while linking clients to care.

#### **About Greater Than AIDS**

Greater Than AIDS is a national media campaign that seeks to increase the public's knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS and reduce the stigma surrounding it. With the Kaiser Family Foundation providing the strategic direction and day-to-day management of the campaign and the Black AIDS Institute providing leadership and technical assistance, the campaign is particularly focused on the severe and disproportionate epidemic among Black Americans.

#### **About the Office on Women's Health**

Since 1991, The Office on Women's Health (OWH) has been improving the health of American women by advancing and coordinating a comprehensive women's health agenda throughout the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Both health care prevention and service delivery have been critical components of the OWH's work, and it has created programs and disseminated health information in an effort to develop and impact national health policy as it relates to women and girls.

#### **About the National Latino AIDS Action Network**

The National Latino AIDS Action Network (NLAAN) mobilizes, educates, and advocates on national, state and local levels to prevent HIV infection, increase access to care and treatment, and inform research efforts that address the needs of diverse Latino communities.

###

Scott Simpson  
202.492.4379