

# NORTHWEST newsbriefs

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The vaccinations come in a two-part (hepatitis B) and three-part (hepatitis A) series. Men can receive the first shot of either or both series this month; the rest can be received by visiting a Safeway or Fred Meyer pharmacy or one of the county health departments.

Hepatitis A and B are especially contagious among queer men and can lead to serious health problems, even death. However, unlike HIV and most other STDs, both are completely preventable with vaccination. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends all gay and bi men be vaccinated against them.

## WORSHIP SERVICE ADDRESSES HIV/AIDS AMONG BLACKS

A worship service to break the silence about HIV/AIDS in the African American community will take place 4 p.m. March 7 at Bethel A.M.E. Church, 5828 N.E. Eighth Ave. The event is being organized by Albina Ministerial Alliance, Cascade AIDS Project and Balm in Gilead Inc.

"'Breaking the silence' in the title of the service is from faith community leaders giving the clarion call to the faith community that it's time to raise the bar on our knowledge, discussions and actions regarding HIV/AIDS in our community," explains Mardica Hicks, a consultant hired by CAP to do outreach with the African American community. "It's time to talk openly and honestly, from a well-



Linda J. Harris (left), president of the Portland chapter of The Links Inc., and Cascade AIDS Project consultant Mardica Hicks are organizing a worship service to break the silence about HIV/AIDS in the African American community

informed yet faith-based perspective, and to actively work to reverse our community's infection rates."

Recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate black women constitute the largest number of new AIDS cases among females, black children account for 50 percent of new AIDS cases, and black senior citizens represent more than 50 percent of HIV cases among people older than 55.

According to Hicks, Balm in Gilead began mobilizing the faith leaders of the African American community in 1989 to aggressively battle against AIDS. "Several leaders of the African American faith community in Portland—Rev. Dr. LeRoy Haynes, Bishop Grace Osborne, Rev. Aaron Hamlin and others—have been involved with the Balm and its Black Church Week of Prayer for Healing for quite a few years," she says.

This year's keynote speaker will be Vanessa Gaston, Urban League of Portland president and CEO.

For information contact the Rev. LeRoy Haynes at 503-287-0261 or Bishop Grace Osborne at 503-281-5850.

## HOUSE REINTRODUCES HIV TREATMENT ACT

The U.S. House of Representatives reintroduced legislation Feb. 26 that would allow states the option of providing Medicaid funds to low-income HIV-positive people who have not yet developed full-blown AIDS. U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., is a lead sponsor of the Senate version, which was introduced in the spring of 2003.

The Early Treatment for HIV Act has 20 Republican and 51 Democratic co-sponsors in the House. U.S. Rep. Jim Leach, R-Iowa, and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., are the bill's lead sponsors.

"We applaud the bipartisan group of representatives who introduced this important legislation," said Cheryl Jacques, Human Rights Campaign president. "Right now, states don't even have the option of providing health care with their Medicaid dollars to low-income individuals with HIV. Instead, they have to wait until those citizens develop the serious illnesses associated with full-blown AIDS. Having access to treatment would not only help these citizens, but would also save the state money in the long run. It's time to untie the hands of the states in this regard."

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