

# DGAAN: DuPage Glocal AIDS Action Network

A Successful Advocacy Group

**co-chairs:**

S. Sheila Kinsey, OSF, D. Min., Ashley Woodiwiss, Ph.D., Sandra Joireman, Ph.D.

The DuPage Glocal AIDS Action Network (DGAAN) was formed with three purposes:

- 1) To build a strong advocate voice in the DuPage area and to expand that voice into local, national and international arenas.
- 2) To find ways to network successfully and build an enduring community
- 3) To strengthen the lifeline, offering strands of hope to stop the spread of AIDS glocally. The word "glocal," an amalgam of global and local, is to remind us that our efforts should be as far reaching as the HIV/AIDS pandemic itself.

The DGAAN network is an unusually diverse group of leaders from a variety of backgrounds, local and global advocates, who are focused on combating the crisis of HIV/AIDS, particularly in Africa.

## Why is this network so

**successful?** The network is co-chaired by three people: S. Sheila Kinsey, OSF, D. Min., from the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office of the Wheaton Franciscans, a Catholic organization, and Ashley Woodiwiss, Ph.D. and Sandra Joireman, Ph.D., of the Dept of Politics and International Relations at Wheaton College, an Evangelical organization. As the three co-chairs reflected about the experience, they shared a number of thoughts as to why this network is so successful.

**Inclusion:** DGAAN is unusual since it contains different people from different backgrounds, crossing boundaries, crossing lines. DGAAN

has members who are Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Baptist and Evangelical, Democrat and Republican, black and white, gay and straight, moms, students and executives, HIV positive and HIV negative. It is a broad network, not narrow, crossing social, religious and political barriers, forming bonds among groups and recognizing that their differences can compliment rather than conflict.



**Rep. Henry Hyde of Illinois  
and members of DGAAN**

*(February, 2003)*

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**Bono at Wheaton College during the Heart of America tour**  
*(December, 2002)*

**Taking Advantage of a Major Event.** The network was formed as a result of Bono, of the rock group, U2, stopping at Wheaton College for an evening appearance on the Heart of America Tour. Bono was very honest in stating, in a move both cynical and pragmatic, that he intended to use his celebrity status to draw attention to HIV/AIDS in Africa. Thus, he taught by example, that celebrities and events can be an opportunity to reach people who would not be reached otherwise. The Heart of America Tour event at Wheaton College was attended by 2000+ students and adults and focused on the crisis of HIV/AIDS in Africa. Without Bono's presence,

many of those people would not have attended. Prior to that evening's performance, seventy-five community leaders, from religious, educational and civic organizations, gathered to discuss the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa. VIP tickets were only given to people wanting to continue their involvement in the crisis and the list drew on people who were already committed to change. If you want something done, the best person to ask is a busy person. After this day's experience, a follow-up meeting was scheduled for ten days later at a relatively neutral site: a public school. Forty-five persons gathered, adults and college students, to see what could be done to keep the spirit of the event alive. Since that time meetings have been held regularly at either Wheaton College or the Wheaton Franciscan's campus.

**Capitalized on local commitments.** Although the event moved many people who became interested in the cause, many people were already involved in dealing with HIV/AIDS locally and in Africa. The Heart of America Tour put us in touch with one another and created an enthusiasm that generated a determination to find ways that we could move forward together. We kept a mailing list of the leaders for reference for future events.

**Star Power Association.** Mutual benefits resulted for both the grassroots and the national office. Both groups made a point to praise the efforts of the other. Association with a star opens the doors to media involvement rather easily. We have learned through national coaching, how to enter into these opportunities with skill.

**Political Gold Mine.** The network is situated in the political districts of some very influential congress people: 1) The Speaker of the House, Rep. Dennis Hastert; 2) Recognized Statesman, Rep. Henry Hyde; 3) Foreign Relations Committee, Rep. Judy Biggert; 4) Appropriations Committees, Rep. Mark Kirk and Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. and Senator Richard Durbin. Both Rep. Hyde and Sen. Durbin have authored AIDS legislation. Rep. Hyde's legislation is the authorized AIDS legislation. Mike Gerson, the

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chief speechwriter of Pres. Bush, is a graduate of Wheaton College and maintains ties with the College. The members of the network have effectively interacted with all of these key persons.

**Capable Leadership.** The co-chairs were already capable and experienced leaders who brought their experience and organizational skills, as well as a collaborative spirit, to the cause. They focused on establishing common ground that could accommodate various reasons for promoting advocacy: compassion, moral responsibility and economic concerns. The co-chairs intended to provide leadership without egos and sacrifices were made so that the group would benefit.

**Professionalism.** Both Wheaton College and the Wheaton Franciscans are established, respected institutions that bring a great deal of gravity to the project, as well as time-tested procedures and protocols, resources, connections and reputations.

**Emphasize Communication.** There was regular communication particularly amongst the three co-chairs. Emails were regularly sent out as reminders for meetings and as encouragement for legislative actions. Communication (follow-up calls and emails) and schedules were absolutely essential in keeping the focus. Everyone is busy, reminders and re-enforcers are good ways of staying on track.

**Strategies.** The strategies followed by the group resulted from the input from members of the group. Brain storming sessions provided for action steps and future directions. All group members were requested to provide honest feedback and their observations were respected. At the time of DGAAN's genesis, many issues were brewing: the possible war with Iraq, Bush's visit to Africa, and the bill authorizing money for the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa. The group devised agendas and arranged speakers to address these issues.

**Establish Trust.** The first follow-up meeting was held at a neutral site, a public school. We recognized that we had profound differences up front, differences that normally would preclude cooperation. We realized that we would be saying no to certain things and that we would establish ways that we could rely upon each other. The rewards of collaboration were worth a few adjustments.

**Networking Opportunities.** This unusual confluence of leaders allowed a truly inspired session of networking. Their diversity allowed for a wide exchange of ideas and contacts. The creation of DGAAN focused on the three goals provided for the integration of the network: advocating, networking and strengthening the lifeline of hope. Opportunities are also created to allow people to work locally, since they may not have the time or resources to work abroad.

**Respect.** Attention and respect are given to what each person has to offer. During the meetings, contributions are brief and to the point, allowing time for everyone to share their efforts. When the group gave input for direction or requested actions, the leaders found ways to accommodate their requests such as needed resources and speaker suggestions.

**Capability.** The leaders and members came with an accountability report of what they had done since their last meeting. The group affirmed these efforts. The report followed a simple and functional format: Name, Organization, What Did and Results. Members briefly wrote their reports on large post-it notes, which facilitated record-keeping and minute composition. Members described what actions they had taken, people they had talked to and what they planned to do in the near future.

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**Practicality.** We had the sense of what was useful for the group and we prioritized our advocacy efforts. The timing of our advocacy was also important. We determined whom the most meaningful people and groups to get involved would be and then sought them out.

**Establish Own Identity.** It's important to have a sense of our own identity and the contribution that we are able to make to the group. In this way we are able to exercise our own creativity in determining our goals.

**Affirmation and Recognition.** We applauded the efforts of the network members and the successes with our politicians. Group members are acknowledged in the meetings and minutes for their unique and valuable contributions. Often, politicians only hear

complaints and rarely hear any recognition of the work that they do. We have sent thank you notes and acknowledgements to politicians, recognizing their efforts on our behalf. We created a plaque and presented it to Representative Henry Hyde to honor his efforts in passing The United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003. It is imperative to recognize that the accomplishments of the group are only because of the efforts of the members and that these efforts should be honored.

**Courage.** There must be a willingness to make the connections with the politicians and community leaders, whether by e-mail, phone, faxes or visits.

**Diversity.** Group members come from many social, racial, religious, etc. backgrounds, offering their own insights and abilities. As HIV/AIDS does not discriminate on the basis of class, race, age, sex, everyone should have the opportunity to help.

**Education.** The members value ongoing education and have made requests for what they need. There have been sessions on advocacy, process of authorization, appropriations and developments of the legislative process.

**Local AIDS Activists.** Utilizing the experience of the local HIV/AIDS activists allows the network to be conscious of the HIV/AIDS issues and to learn from these activists. Working locally, also provides network members who so chose, to be involved with persons with HIV/AIDS since many persons will never make it to Africa. Our area churches are also sponsoring a number of persons here and abroad who have connections with Africa and HIV/AIDS. Involving people who are already willing to be involved increases the strength of the project. HIV/AIDS in America is tied to AIDS in Africa. HIV is the same disease, after all, and we are all human and vulnerable.



**Rep. Hyde accepts a plaque from S. Sheila Kinsey, OSF, D. Min., Ashley Woodiwiss, Ph.D. & Sandra Joireman, Ph.D.**  
*(August, 2003)*

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**Environment:** It is fundamental to have a hospitable environment that is conducive to sharing. The room arrangement needs to be welcoming and refreshments are helpful. Post directions to the meeting place. All equipment should work and someone present must be familiar with it. Bad preparation and delays detract from the professionalism of your presentation. A pleasant environment and a smooth-running program will confer importance to your work and honor it.

### **Highlights of the DuPage Glocal AIDS Action Network Participants:**

- Communication with Pres. Bush's chief speechwriter, Michael Gerson.
- Visits with the elected officials/and or staffs: Rep. Dennis Hastert, Rep. Henry Hyde, Rep. Judy Biggert, Rep. Mark Kirk and Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr.; and Sen. Richard Durbin and Sen. Peter Fitzgerald.
- Opportunities for interviews with the local newspapers and a national media conference with Bono of U2.
- Intercollegiate meeting with students and community leaders to discuss the AIDS concerns locally and the crisis in Africa.
- Regular Participation of students involved in the Student Global AIDS Campaign.
- Hosting a seminar experience with the Jars of Clay Christian Rock Group
- Ongoing input and affirmation particularly from DATA (Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa) staff but also from the staff at Global AIDS Alliance and Jubilee USA.
- Hosting a meeting with the national staff of DATA.
- Focused advocacy efforts for AIDS legislation and the Millennium Challenge Account.
- Successful advocacy efforts for authorization of AIDS legislation with the presentation of a plaque to Rep. Henry Hyde for his leadership in passing the legislation.
- Sponsored Events: Princess Zulu and speaking engagements for Sr. Florence Muia, ASN
- Educational opportunities with staff from DATA, Results and DATA.
- Parish/congregations, colleges, teen group and grade school involvement.



**HIV/AIDS Quilt made by TLC, a teen group in DuPage county concerned about the African pandemic**

*(September, 2003)*

### **Steps for establishing an advocacy network from a major event:**

1. Reach out to a diverse population – Even though one event is scheduled for a specific group
2. Have a special leadership meeting with persons willing to commit themselves to the cause. Keep a record of the mailing list for the event, noting the reasons particular groups and individuals were invited
3. Before the event takes place, bring the

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- leadership (2 or 3) people together to discuss the possibilities of future meetings. Obtain a commitment from these leaders to schedule another meeting after the event.
4. Leaders begin to speak honestly about what it would mean for them to continue their involvement in combating the AIDS crisis in Africa.
  5. Hold the first meeting at a neutral site. Determine ways to share the hosting of meetings. This would include determining the places for meetings and the chairing of the meetings.
  6. Ask input from the participants for future directions of the meeting. Honor the input as much as possible. This helps to create the ownership of the network.
  7. Create a simple structure for the meetings and networking. This helps establish a routine for the meetings. Meetings should be organized: beginning and ending as timed. Make sure the appropriate handouts are available.
  8. Sharing your actions. Have members write their name, organization, what they did since the last meeting and the results of their actions. Have participants write on post-it notes and share briefly. This honors their participation and helps facilitate meeting notes.
  9. Clearly affirm the contributions of the individuals.
  10. Provide educational opportunities based on the needs of the group
  11. A simple meeting format would be:
    - Networking with accountability format for sharing actions (as in #8)
    - Education
    - Specific actions/next steps
  12. Keep regular communication between the co-chairs. Inform the participants of the date, time and location of the next meeting as soon as possible after the meeting adjourns. Inform DATA of your progress and forward them a copy of your minutes. "Keep the Date Cards" should be sent out about 6 weeks prior to the event. Notify people via e-mail and/or telephone one week before the event.
  13. Co-chairs are available between meetings as resource people and as contacts and participants in meetings for legislators.
  14. Emails on particular advocacy issues are sent out as needed.
  15. Visit your legislators/staff. When visiting with legislators strive to have a group representative of your constituents.
    - Determine the roles of each person. For example, who is to inspire with first hand experience and who is to address specific issues.
    - Be clear about the purpose of the meeting and keep single focused, not including other issues not related to the visit
    - Have a handout that clearly states what you want your legislator to do and include supporting information.
    - Always send a thank you note that includes what you thought happened with the visit or what you hoped would happen as a result of the meeting.
  16. When contacting your legislator by e-mail, letter or card follow this format:
    - Praise the legislator for the good s/he has done
    - Clearly state the problem you want to address
    - Offer a solution
    - Conclude by saying that you will pray for the legislator and their loved ones.
  17. Finding your nine (9) digit zip code. When contacting your congressperson, it is important to include your nine (9) digit zip code in all correspondence (including email) This information is essential because it indicates to the congress person that you are one of their constituents. You can call your local post office and ask for your zip code or find it on line at **www.usps.com**.

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