

ARRIVE ... The CYCLE Continues

On March 2nd, Exponents held the 143rd graduation for the ARRIVE program. The program, originally a National Institutes Drug and Alcohol (NIDA) research and demonstration project, was one of the first attempts in the US to stem the tide of new HIV infections and deaths occurring among people who inject drugs and smoke crack cocaine in New York City.

The 143rd ARRIVE graduation was like those that preceded it, a celebration of real accomplishment, an esteem building moment so important in the self-destructive life of drug addicted individuals. A graduate from Cycle 23, Gregory Pereira, delivered the Keynote address and spoke of attending and graduating from the program while still addicted, using a multitude of drugs and alcohol. He expressed gratitude for being allowed to participate and not being judged. Upon completion, he knew he was at a crossroads in his journey. He had the option of taking a job or

choosing to enter long-term treatment. Unlike many ARRIVE graduates who chose employment in the HIV/AIDS field, Gregory chose to enter drug treatment and has not looked back since. Mr. Pereira is a successful businessman in the Bronx and was an inspiration to all who heard him speak that evening.

ARRIVE is not rocket science. It utilizes the concept of community, employing staff and volunteers who had similar lived experiences as program participants. The evidence is clear and long established that health education; wellness, re-incarceration prevention and recovery services delivered by community members can be uniquely successful in effecting positive behavioral changes.

ARRIVE happens within a non-judgmental, safe environment, where respect for staff, fellow participants and the space where classes are held

are stressed. Most of ARRIVE's classes take place in smaller discussion groups or teams. Teams name themselves and at graduation are called to the podium to receive their Certificate of Completion by team and perform prepared skits for their fellow graduates and guests enjoyment. Completion of the ARRIVE program is a challenge but with 70% graduating, it has proven to be a manageable and rewarding experience for thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers.

Cycle 144 began on March 20th. We welcome active drug users, individuals living with HIV or AIDS and those in early recovery.

Howard Josepher, LCSW
President & CEO

Transgender Splendor: Tabytha Gonzalez

"Viewing addiction as self-medicating behavior, we see the underlying feelings of despair and hopelessness many in our country are experiencing today. Current treatment options are designed to either get people off drugs or put them on replacement medications like methadone or Suboxone and this only serves to address the symptoms and not the cause," says Howard Josepher, Exponents' President and Founder.

It saddens me that in this day and age in the field of addiction education, prevention, and treatment there is a scarcity of nonjudgmental, culturally sensitive treatment options. Individuals in need of treatment services are reluctant to enter traditional substance abuse programs where there are few choices in the type of treatment they can receive and the limited recovery paths available.

At Exponents, clients are welcomed and congratulated just for showing up. We understand that ambivalence and fear are directly related to addiction. Our focus is that our participants live healthier lives while they choose their path for change.

Exponents "boutique" treatment program serves clients from all over NYC with specialized therapeutic services to meet all treatment needs.

The development of an LGBTQ track focused on safety first, has proven to reach the most at risk

populations for addiction, mental illness and HIV infection.

Tabytha Gonzalez entered Exponents Outpatient Drug Treatment Program needing an environment where she could feel comfortable being who she is and working on rebuilding herself and her life after experiencing life altering challenges. She shares her story below.

Tabytha Gonzalez:

Being born addicted and growing up in a family where the abuse of alcohol and drugs were chosen by some, I had the firsthand experience of the casualties and destruction that drug use can do to family, friends and employment. I grew up trans-gendered and part of a community of oppressed people who face cultural and economic injustices and are directly impacted by violence and discrimination. I was exposed to a lot of social drug use and survival sex while directly impacted by the pressures of society. It became very hard to gain a stable life free from the unwanted choices made by myself and many others who face these same challenges. It's very hard for people of trans experience to access culturally sensitive treatment and care. Exponents' provided these services to



me and it was invaluable in my time of hardship.

Upon my arrival at Exponents, I was welcomed with an overwhelming care and concern for my genuine safety and continued desire to live a life free from the negative choices made earlier in life. As I have successfully completed my time at Exponents Drug Treatment; I have established connections with positive purpose driven people who have become a part of my immediate support network. Today I am a proud Office Manager of a nonprofit civil rights organization working on behalf of the transgender community.

My future plans in life are to continue to educate myself in areas of academic and career goals while living a life drug-free. I also would like to be a motivational speaker to the LGBT community, whose lives are directly impacted by discrimination, drugs and incarceration. I will continue to share, encourage and uplift those seeking help by being a light to them. Recovery is real and I'm a living example.

Melissa Rios-Malave, LMSW, CASAC
Sr. Clinical Director of Behavioral Health



"I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant."

—Martin Luther King, Jr. - from Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, Oslo, Norway, 1964.

"African American History Month - The Shortest Month of the Year- Not for Us!"

For the past 30 years, Exponents has stood on the firm belief that the goals of recovery and wellness are to improve the total quality of life of those in the process. Exponents utilized 'advocacy' and 'building community' as a necessary ingredients of a full, free and self-directed life. Therefore, we have consistently linked the mission of our agency to such social justice issues as leading the fight against racism, sexism, racialized mass incarceration and sub-standard health care.

So much of the foundational roots of behavioral health lies in the struggle of the Black community against racism and oppression. Self-help for African Americans was never a 'program', but a mandatory way of life, that found life in resistance and resilience. Community - translated, "The Black Community" was safe harbor against a system designed to destroy the Black family as well as the community. Even addiction and other health disorders have had greater impact on the black community than society in general.

We celebrate African American History Month at Exponents 365 days a year. We do it by rolling up our sleeves and providing compassionate human services. We do it by speaking truth to power. And we do it by instilling unbounded hope in this political time of fear.

Joseph Turner,
Vice President, The Center

International Women's Day Celebrates Phenomenal Woman

International Women's Day (March 8) was a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. March was Women's History Month — a time to focus not just on the past, but on the challenges women continue to face. The day also marked a call to action for accelerating gender parity.

Women's Day has been occurring for well over a century - and continues to grow from strength to strength.

Creed, religion, age, sexual orientation, the family she was born into, or the colour of her skin do not matter.

A Phenomenal Woman

"A phenomenal woman is purposeful and passionate. She is driven by her thoughts and makes her thoughts a reality.

She is strong yet weak; she struggles with her own identity from time to time, but she understands that is all part of the game.

The story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist nor to any one organization but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights. Thus International Women's Day is all about unity, celebration, reflection, advocacy and action - whatever that looks like globally at a local level. But one thing is for sure, International

A phenomenal woman has imperfections. She is phenomenal for what she does with her imperfections; she is phenomenal because she is true to herself.

She is true to her voice and to her inner self. She is resourceful and honest. She is brutal at times, forcing her way into the world's reality."

by Loretta A. Cella,
founder of The Passion Foundation.

A phenomenal woman can be any shape or size.



New Look - New Attitude!

Howard Josepher, Exponents' President & CEO showing off the new look of Exponents' Mobile Testing Van.



One by One...The Barriers Fell

A Center Success Story

If I were to give you a snapshot of who I am now, some would say, "She's too old, she's a woman and she's an ex-addict". That's who you say I am; now let me tell you who I really am.

I am Cynthia Williams, a 74-year-old African American female, born and raised in New York (Manhattan). I currently reside in Brooklyn. My life's journey has been one of survival against the highest odds – addiction, health, racism and sexism-and guess what, I am still standing.

By the grace of God, I have 24 years and 8 months clean of substance use. During my recovery years, I was introduced to Exponents and I attended and completed the AR-RIVE program (Cycle 44), in 1992. But my journey with Exponents did not stop there.

In 2013, I graduated from Exponents CASAC program and, you know what, my journey didn't even stop there. I entered Hunter College graduate and received my Masters in Vocational Counseling in 2016. I truly believe that all that happened in my life prepared for me to come back home to Exponents and that's why my journey did not even stop there. I was hired as a Vocational Coordinator with the Exponents Center – the place where it all began.

So I encourage all who are in the middle of your life's journey, remember that where you are now is not where you will always be.



Cynthia Williams,
Vocational Coordinator, The Center

Success Spoken Here!



Exponents Center for Personal & Professional Development

Exponents' Is On The Move!



HIV Testing Counselor Rupert Rodriguez and assistant Danny Tucker with Drug Treatment Counselor Noel Ayala at Hunts Point in the Bronx conducting evening screening and HIV Testing outreach.

Juan Jordan, Director of Recovery & Support Services, Sade Ellis, HIV Testing Counselor with Bronx President Ruben Diaz Jr. at the Bronx Task Force 2nd Annual Health Fair.

Funders & Supporters

US Health Resources Services Administration, HIV Care Services

US Center for Disease Control (CDC)

NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS)

New York State Office of Mental Health

US Department of Health & Human Services (SAMHSA)

US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs

NYS Department of Health, AIDS Institute

The Council of the City of New York

Judith L. Chiara Charitable Fund

Various Individual Donors

To Our Generous Supporters

Thank you for helping us bring hope to those in need. Because of you our work will continue.

Devron Bonds: A Man of Courage & Faith

Devron Bonds, or Smiley as he is affectionately known, is a truly remarkable young man. A native of Mississippi, Smiley migrated to New York four years ago to pursue his dream of becoming a chef. He found his way to Exponents in 2014 through a former partner, and has been an active, verbal participant in several of our programs including Men's Supportive Services, the Judith Loeb Chiara Recovery & Wellness Center (Recovering Annex), ARRIVE and more recently our ASPIRE program for young gay & bisexual men and transgender women of color. Smiley remarks that while he loves all Exponents' programs, Recovering Annex is his personal favorite. He credits the program for helping him reduce and eventually eliminate his addiction to marijuana (he's been marijuana-free for almost seven months).

Since coming to New York, Smiley has discovered a new passion. He has written and self-published two books of poetry; *Life & Times of a College Drop-Out* (2014) and

The People's Hope (2016). He hasn't given up on his passion to become a chef either. He auditioned for Master Chef (2015 & 2106) and will once again in March. All pretty amazing accomplishments on their own, but when you factor that Smiley is living with Huntington's disease, an inherited disease that causes the progressive breakdown (degeneration) of nerve cells in the brain as well as HIV.

Smiley says that two of his favorite things about Exponents are 'the awesome staff' and the development/nurturing of his 'Annex Squad', a term he uses to describe the bond that he has created with three additional members of the program. They hang out here at the agency but are always finding new and exciting, drug-free events in the community to attend. The thing that he loves most about Exponents is the fact that 'there's always hope here'.

We ended the interview with a request for a quote that Smiley feels sums up his life; his response,

"Today, I am the dream fused with the hope of impossible possibilities for tomorrow."



Devron "Smiley" Bonds

Donald Powell, Mhs
Sr. Director of Policy & Development

OUR MISSION

We are a nonprofit organization located in the heart of New York City compassionately dedicated to serving those impacted by HIV/AIDS, substance use, incarceration and behavioral health challenges. We deliver these services through a client-centered, strength-based approach which greatly improves health outcomes and promotes overall wellness in our communities.