

ARCW

AIDS RESOURCE CENTER OF WISCONSIN

Excellence in HIV Health Care

The 33rd Annual Make a Promise Gala to Honor Community Leaders In the Fight Against AIDS

One of those leaders is Dr. James Vergeront, Wisconsin's AIDS/HIV Program Director

Milwaukee—March 19, 2019—The AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW) annual fundraiser, the Make a Promise Gala, is celebrating its 33rd year on Saturday, March 30. This year's theme, Make A Promise, "Don't Stop Us Now," is inspired by legendary British rock band Queen. At the gala, community leaders in the fight against AIDS will be honored, including Dr. James Vergeront, the AIDS/HIV Program Director for the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Dr. Vergeront will receive the Career Achievement Award. Gerald J. Janis, Jr. and the Clean Needle Exchange Workers of Wisconsin will each receive the Leadership Award. The Gala begins at 5 p.m. at the Wisconsin Center, and also features a silent and live auction, dinner, and live entertainment from "America's Got Talent" Contestant Brain Justin Crum, followed by DJ Shawna.

MORE ON AWARD RECIPIENTS:



Dr. James Vergeront

Under Dr. James Vergeront steady leadership, Wisconsin has developed a nationally-renowned response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the state. Today, as a result of programs and policies he shepherded over his career, people with HIV live longer in Wisconsin than in most other states and Wisconsin has one of the lowest rates of new HIV infections in the nation. "Throughout the epidemic, we have based our policies and programs on solid science and have worked in strong collaboration with affected communities, healthcare providers and community-based organizations," said Dr. Vergeront. "As a result, HIV infection rates in Wisconsin have remained relatively low and persons infected with HIV have had access to high quality care."

During the early response to HIV, Dr. Vergeront ensured Wisconsin became the second state to put critical HIV surveillance systems in place that protected both patient confidentiality as well as the needs of public health. He was also instrumental in the development of a statewide network of HIV testing sites and AIDS Service Organizations, and led the creation of a partner notification system. Dr. Vergeront also ensured the Wisconsin AIDS Drug Assistance and Insurance Continuation Programs never implemented waiting lists or austerity measures, even during significant challenges that forced

other states to deny access to medications and insurance for people living with HIV. A dedicated public servant who deftly put the needs of Wisconsin residents above partisan politics, Dr. Vergeront was able to ensure HIV prevention, care and treatment programs were enhanced under Democratic and Republican administrations.

Dr. Vergeront, who is the only person to serve as the AIDS/HIV Program director over the history of the epidemic in Wisconsin, announced he will retire May 1, 2019.

"Jim has devoted his career to improving the health of the people of Wisconsin with a powerful focus on protecting them from the AIDS epidemic, which is still the worst public health crisis of our time," said Michael J. Gifford, ARCW President & Chief Executive Officer. "His tireless leadership and efforts have allowed tens of thousands of people to protect themselves from HIV and people with HIV throughout the state to regain and sustain their health, both allowing life to triumph over death.



Gerald J. Janis, Jr.

Gerald J. Janis, Jr. served on the ARCW Board of Directors for six years—most recently as Chair of the Board—providing governance in a time of great change and national expansion. His leadership on the Board was instrumental to three ARCW mergers with AIDS organizations in Wisconsin, Colorado and Missouri. Janis is a generous donor and champion of our HIV Medical Home model of care that benefits more than 8,000 clients and patients.



Clean Needle Exchange Workers of Wisconsin

This year marks the 25th Anniversary of the ARCW LifePoint clean needle exchange program. The program was the first of its kind in Wisconsin and the catalyst for the creation of others. Clean needle exchange has lowered the HIV infection rate in Wisconsin by 76 percent, and paved the way for drug treatment for many injection drug users who are at risk for HIV.

Make a Promise is an experience filled with fine dining, stellar entertainment, silent and live auctions and dancing. The Gala raises critical funds for HIV/AIDS healthcare, social services and prevention efforts. For more information visit <https://one.bidpal.net/makeapromise2019/welcome>.

AIDS RESOURCE CENTER OF WISCONSIN

The AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW) is a nationally-recognized and respected leader in the fight against AIDS. The organization is known for its high-quality, HIV patient outcomes. ARCW operates the only HIV Medical Home in America recognized by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The ARCW HIV Medical Home offers integrated health and social services, including medical, dental, mental health and pharmaceutical services, along with case management, food, legal and housing supportive services provided by a team of professionals dedicated to patient care. ARCW is also a leading provider of innovative and aggressive prevention services that help at-risk individuals remain HIV negative. The organization operates in three states, including Wisconsin, Colorado and Missouri, and has 12 locations. To learn more about ARCW, please visit www.arcw.org, and the organization's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.

