

ACRIA Center at GMHC Presents
HIV & AGING CONFERENCE

acria
Center

GMHC

END AIDS. LIVE LIFE.

VIBRANT
RESILIENT
& SEXY

ACRIA@GMHC.ORG
208 W 13 St. New York, NY 10011

JUNE 6
2025

Program Agenda

10:00 - 10:30 Welcome & CEO Remarks

Preliminary Findings from Community/Participant Exercise

10:30 - 11:30 Keynote Speaker: Dr. Halkitis
The Co-occurring Health Challenges of Aging with HIV: How Can we Help Older PLWH Manage their Health to be Vibrant, Resilient & Sexy

11:30 - 12:20 Lunch

12:20 - 1:40 Thriving Not Just Surviving: Resiliency Panel

1:40 - 2:00 Tabling and Networking

2:00 - 3:00 Aging with Passion: Thriving Sexual Health and Well-Being for Older Adults (Room 301)

Sex Toy Safety 101 (Room 302)

3:15 - 3:45 The SAGE Center for Sexual Wellness & Aging (CSWA)

Closing Remarks



Speaker Bios

Our Keynote Speaker:

Perry N. Halkitis, PhD, MS, MPH

Perry N. Halkitis is an infectious disease epidemiologist, applied statistician, and public health psychologist. He conducts this work through his research, teaching, and activism.

Dr. Halkitis is currently Dean, Hunterdon Professor of Public Health & Health Equity, and Distinguished Professor of Biostatistics & Epidemiology at the Rutgers School of Public Health. He is also the founder and Director of the Center for Health, Identity, Behavior & Prevention Studies (CHIBPS). He holds the status of Professor Emeritus at the College of Global Public Health at New York University. He is an elected fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine, the Society of Behavioral Medicine, the American Epidemiological Society, the National Academy of Practice, the American Psychological Association, the European Academy of Translational Medicine, the College of Physicians of Philadelphia.

Dr. Halkitis has authored six books and 300 peer-reviewed academic articles. He has been the Editor in Chief of Behavioral Medicine since 2013 and is the Founding Editor in Chief of Annals of LGBTQ Public and Population Health. Dr. Halkitis also actively disseminates knowledge to mainstream media, appearing frequently on television, radio, print, and podcasts.

Dr. Halkitis has received numerous awards from both professional and community-based organizations.

In 2023, in recognition of his lifelong contributions to scholarship, education, community engagement, and activism, the Perry N. Halkitis Endowed Chair in LGBTQ+ Public Health was established with a \$5 million gift. The Halkitis Chair will ensure that LGBTQ+ health remains central to the work of the Rutgers School of Public Health for years to come.



Annie Merrill

Annie Merrill (she/her) is a queer sex educator with a Master of Education in Human Sexuality from Widener University. She is the founder of Sex Ed Seeds, a sexuality education business based in Philadelphia, PA, offering in-person and remote workshops at conferences, schools, and other organizations around the country. Her experience working in the sex toy industry sparked an interest in developing curriculum around pleasure, anatomy, consent & communication, and beyond.

She also currently works as a sexuality and behavioral specialist at KenCrest Services for adults across Southeastern Pennsylvania who are neurodivergent and/or have intellectual and developmental disabilities, providing personalized sex ed to clients. You can check out more of her work on Instagram, [@sexedseeds](https://www.instagram.com/sexedseeds), and at [sexedseeds.com](https://www.sexedseeds.com).



Denise Drayton

Denise Drayton is a passionate HIV advocate, educator, and long-term survivor who has worked in the field of HIV/AIDS for over 30 years. She began her work at Exponents Inc. in New York City, where she helped develop the PWA Leadership Training Institute and served as Director of Education and Prevention for the ARRIVE Program. Denise has also worked at ACRIA/GMHC as a Peer Educator and at Senior Planet promoting digital literacy for older adults.

She currently serves as a Senior Program Associate at Ribbon – A Center of Excellence – supporting HIV and aging initiatives. Denise is a member of the NMAC 50+ Strong & Healthy Scholars, the Gilead Peer Advocate Network, and Co-Chairs the National HIV & Aging Advocacy Network Women of Color Rise Up Committee.

A person of faith, Denise is proud to represent older adults living with HIV and uses her voice to educate, empower, and uplift her community.



Antoinette (Toni) Barkley

Mother of 4 adult children and grandmother of 2, has chosen to enjoy her life to the fullest.

Diagnosed in 1997, has lived through many different stages of being HIV Positive and thrived through it all. From being depressed and uneducated about it, feeling like a Guinea pig with taking so many different medications and living with the lowest stage of self-esteem to being introduced to a way of life of honesty, open-mindedness and honesty.

Accomplishments have been made like living relatively happy, joyous and free. Having the encouragement needed to keep going and sustaining life as it is. I have chosen not to say that I live with HIV, but that HIV lives with me.



Patricia Shelton

Patricia Shelton is a HIV+ Woman who wears many hats. She's a Mother of three, A Peer Educator, Advocate, Speaker, Consultant & Certified Acupuncturist. She has been interviewed by BBC TV, CBS TV Health Watch, and several newspapers, The NY Times, Long Island Newsday, Associate Press article. She was asked to speak at a United Nations Memorial Service for HIV & AIDS. She has been on the Board of AIDS Medicine and Miracles. In September of this year a documentary she was interviewed three years ago, title "Seen But Not Heard: AIDS & The Untold War Against Black Women" by Cyrille Phipps. The film was shown at several Black Film Festivals during the summer as well as NYC universities and at the United Nations. For Worlds AIDS Day, Mrs. Shelton will participate in several celebrations through NYC. One will be of a faith-based nature, Riverside Church World AIDS Day, demonstrating & educating Women on Female condoms. The second will be organizing a walk at her present place of employment to awaken the community's awareness of the AIDS virus and of remembrance of those we lost. She has received several awards Presently work at Settlement Health Inc. In East Harlem NYC, as a Peer Educator she enjoys educating and reaching out to the community, especially young girls and ladies and those who are 50 and over, populations she understands, identify with and willing to help.



Mayfield Phillips

Mayfield Phillips is a 43-year survivor with HIV. His resilience stems from surviving a six-week coma and 13 brain surgeries to treat hydrocephalus in the 30 months prior to acquiring the virus. Originally from Northern Virginia, in 2007 he organized a DC-area coalition to address LGBTQ+ intimate partner violence, later serving on the local host committee for the AIDS2012 international conference. He has earned two mid-life graduate degrees: a Master of Science in management information systems from George Washington University and a Master of Public Health majoring in epidemiology from the University of Maryland with research on depression and demoralization syndrome among individuals living with HIV.



Robert E. Penn

Employee/Writer/Filmmaker Robert E. Penn worked at profit and non-profit organizations, including Gay Men's Health Crisis as Assistant Director of Education-Prevention, during his nine-to-five career. Robert's writing has appeared in periodicals and anthologies including *The Journal of Portfolio Management*, *Essence*, *Freedom in this Village* (edited by E. Lynn Harris), *For Colored Boys Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Still Not Enough* (edited by Keith Boykin), *Black Gay Genius* (edited by Steven G. Fullwood and Charles Stephens), and *Other Countries* Volumes II and III (edited by B. Michael Hunter and G. Winston James, respectively). He is the author of *The Gay Men's Wellness Guide*. As a 21st-century artist, he mixed original and public domain footage to produce "stunning digital film," according to Boston Herald critic Theodore Bale. Robert has volunteered at GMAD, *Other Countries*, GMHC, and Evidence Dance Company. He had been living with HIV/AIDS since 1982.



Durell Knights

Durell Knights has been employed at GMHC for 23+ years. He began his career at GMHC in 1998 as a volunteer in the HIV Prevention Department. He was eventually hired as the Peer Educator of S.U.C.E. (Substance Use Counseling and Education) in 2001, working with other gay men who may have faced similar life's challenges, and obstacles as he had. In 2004 he was hired full time as a Group Facilitator of the CDC funded EBI Many Men, Many Voices; a psycho educational group for at-risk MSM of color at GMHC, and served in that position for fourteen years. Durell has been very instrumental in the fight against HIV/AIDS, and has played an involved role in changing social perception about the stigma of HIV/AIDS especially among minorities within New York City. Durell lives by example and in his years at GMHC he has fought for gay rights and has taken it upon himself to mentor countless gay youth. Most recently he worked in the mental health department at GMHC, where he worked in the harm reduction program, and provided services to both men and women with a history of substance use. He is currently the coordinator of the LTS-Hub and provides services to those who are over the age of 50, living with HIV.

The SAGE Center for Sexual Wellness & Aging (CSWA)

Join staff from SAGE, the nation's largest and oldest organization dedicated to supporting LGBTQ+ older adults, about the SAGE Center for Sexual Wellness and Aging. You will hear about SAGE's programming to support LGBTQ+ elders in their exploration sexual health, pleasure and intimacy as they age and learn about the ways in which you can develop LGBTQ+ affirming sexual wellness workshops for your older adult constituents.

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Dr. Stephen Karpiak

Stephen E. Karpiak Ph.D. began his research career at Columbia University Medical School where he had appointments in Neurology and Psychiatry. During his almost 25 years at Columbia, he conducted NIH and NSF funded research in Neuroscience on the immunological etiology of seizure and behavioral disorders and achieved national and international recognition for his research on how the brain adapts and repairs after injury and stroke.

At ACRIA, Karpiak supervised clinical trials for new anti-HIV drugs and created and launched in 2005 Research on Older Adults with HIV (ROAH), a significant and comprehensive research study on the marginalized and emerging HIV aging population in the USA. His research has caused a shift in assessment of priorities of the care of this growing aging population.

Dr. Stephen Karpiak, an irreplaceable pioneer in the HIV and aging field, died on Oct. 16. 2021. He was 74.

Honoring Dr. Stephen Karpiak

“The late, brilliant, charismatic, yet humble Dr. Stephen Karpiak pioneered the Study of older adults living and aging with HIV. Older Women Embracing Life (OWEL) began working with Dr. Karpiak shortly after ROAH (Research on Older Adults with HIV) was published. He spoke annually at The Graying of HIV Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. We miss him and his work immensely.” - Melanie Reese

“My dear friend and mentor Dr. Steve, as I called him, helped me and my late partner understand what it was like having the HIV virus and living a productive life. We were one of the first heterosexual couples who were in HIV over 50 study. Steve realized my potential and chose me to be interviewed by the New York Times newspaper. From there I was interviewed by BBC television in London, England and other New York newspapers along with radio stations. Steve was my mentor, teacher, confidant and dear friend. I miss him every day.” - Patricia Shelton

Honoring Dr. Stephen Karpiak

“Dr. Steven Karpiak was a rare light — someone who truly saw us, valued us, and fought for us. As a pioneer in the aging with HIV movement, he didn’t just advocate from a distance — he stood beside us, listened deeply, and reminded us that our lives matter, at every age. His legacy is not only in the research and policy he helped shape, but in the countless hearts he uplifted along the way. I am grateful to have witnessed his brilliance and his unwavering love for our community.” - Denise Drayton

“Dr. Stephen Karpiak was a very kind compassionate colleague. Every time I had any questions, he would always take time to answer, he would do research and show me the evidence-based information. He was Empathetic, kindhearted and he loved sharing the information with colleagues and clients alike.” - Lillibeth Gonzalez

Honoring Dr. Stephen Karpiak

“Dr. Stephen Karpiak or Dr. Stephen as I called him was a groundbreaking force for Older Adults Living with HIV and unlike no other, I met on this date. His kindness, ease of talking with him and his enormous brain that housed information and research all geared to sounding the alarm on Aging with HIV is the conference legacy. Every time I grind my coffee beans in the coffee grinder; he gave me simply because of my love of real coffee and the fact he was not using his is just a sample of how loving and real despite all his accolades. I miss him and his love of gadgets. Thank you, Dr. Stephen, I will continue to say your name.”

- Victoria Graves-Cade

Evaluation Link



See whats next!

