



MEDIA ADVISORY

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LATINO COMMISSION ON AIDS LAUNCHES 25th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION WITH MISS UNIVERSE 2014 PAULINA VEGA AND MACY'S

New York – The Latino Commission on AIDS proudly kicked-off its 25th anniversary celebrations today at a media reception hosted by Macy's where Miss Universe 2014 Paulina Vega was inducted as the newest *Madrina* of the organization.

“Twenty-five years ago, there was a need for Latino advocacy, there was a need for leadership and there was a need to end the silence around AIDS in the Latino community,” said Guillermo Chacon, president of the Latino Commission on AIDS. “While we have come very far and are very proud to achieve this organizational milestone, we recognize that there is still a critical need for our work. We welcome with open arms Miss Universe 2014 Paulina Vega as *Madrina* of the Latino Commission on AIDS. We will work together to achieve a world without AIDS.”

In response to the critical, unmet need for HIV prevention and care for Latinos, a coalition of concerned Latino leaders founded the agency in 1990 in New York City to advocate for a government response. In 1994, the Commission hired Dennis de Leon, a tireless advocate and national leader of the Latino community, who worked hard to address the epidemic as its Executive Director until his passing in December 2009. Chacón, former Vice-President of the Commission and a national leader on Latinos and HIV/AIDS issues, was named President by the Board of Directors in November 2009 and continues to lead it.

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“I am humbled and honored to be named a Madrina of the Latino Commission on AIDS during its 25th anniversary year,” said Miss Universe 2014 Paulina Vega. “Since 2006, the Miss Universe Organization has stood side by side with the Commission to champion awareness, prevention, testing and access to care campaigns that reach Latino audiences here, across the U.S. and around the world. I will do everything I can to help continue these efforts.”

Over 220,000 Latinos in the U.S. and Puerto Rico are living with HIV/AIDS and as the fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S., Latinos constitute 16% of the U.S. population but account for over 21% of the AIDS cases. Since 1995, the Commission has steadily expanded its services and partnerships outside New York to more than 40 States and Puerto Rico, in order to mobilize an effective Latino community response to the health crisis created by HIV/AIDS. Dedicated to resolving the HIV crisis in the Latino community, where social stigma, poverty, language barriers, immigration status fears, and access to care, deter testing and increase the infection rate, the Commission realizes its mission by spearheading health advocacy for Latinos, promoting HIV education, developing model prevention programs for high-risk communities, and by building capacity in community organizations.

The Commission will commemorate its milestone year on May 15, 2015, at its annual *Cielo Latino* benefit gala at Cipriani Wall Street, where continuing the theme, “Designing a World Without AIDS” it promises a special night of fashion, entertainment, music and celebrities. Macy’s is the Presenting Sponsor for the Cielo Silent Auction and Delta Air Lines will be recognized with the Corporate Leadership Award. For more information on its 25th Anniversary event, visit: www.cielolatino.org or to donate go to bit.ly/CieloGala2015.

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About the Latino Commission on AIDS

The Latino Commission on AIDS (Commission) is a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1990 dedicated to meet the health challenges and addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS. The Commission is the leading organization coordinating National Hispanic Hepatitis Awareness Day (May 15), National Latino AIDS Awareness Day (October 15), Latinos and the Deep South, and other prevention, research, capacity building, and advocacy programs across the United States and its territories. The Latino Commission is the founder of the Hispanic Health Network, dedicated to eliminate health disparities in our communities.