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For immediate release

ARCW Announces 2016 AIDS Leadership Award Winners

MILWAUKEE... ARCW will recognize three dedicated partners who are ensuring Wisconsin remains a national leader in the fight against AIDS. The award recipients will be honored at the 30th annual Make A Promise Dinner and Gala at the Wisconsin Center on April 9, 2016.

This year ARCW is honoring Wisconsin State Representative John Nygren for his courageous leadership addressing the heroin epidemic, opiate overdose and his long-term commitment to supporting care and treatment for people with HIV; BMO Harris Bank for its generous philanthropy in support of ARCW programs; and UW Health for its historic and on-going work specializing in providing health care to people living with HIV across the state.

"Our 2016 award recipients exemplify the important role that everyone shares as we work collectively toward a world without AIDS," Michael Gifford, ARCW President and Chief Executive Officer, said. "They are all leaders who took action in their respective areas of expertise to provide invaluable assistance in the fight against AIDS and we are grateful for their partnership with us."

Wisconsin State Representative John Nygren has been a key ally in the Wisconsin Assembly since his election to state office in 2006. As the co-chair of the Joint Committee on Finance, Representative Nygren has been instrumental in building broad, bi-partisan support for the Mike Johnson grant which ensures access to health care and social services for people with HIV, regardless of their ability to pay. He is also the architect of Wisconsin's response to the ongoing heroin and opiate epidemic, championing enlightened public health policy that is increasing access to drug treatment, naloxone and helping Wisconsin save lives from needless overdoses.

"Representative Nygren is one of Wisconsin's leading political voices who has been responsible for building and keeping a coalition of legislators from both houses, both parties and from across the state who are committed to fighting AIDS and the opiate epidemic," Gifford said. "We are lucky in Wisconsin to have leaders like Representative Nygren whose thoughtful approach to solving problems is making concrete changes in the lives of the people we serve."

"I am honored to have been selected to receive the 2016 Leadership Award from ARCW," Representative Nygren said. "Many times, heroin addiction begins with an addiction to prescription medications. The transition from legal drugs to heroin is very dangerous and includes the risk for people to contract HIV and hepatitis C. The bills we've passed as part of the HOPE Agenda will not be the silver bullet that fixes our state's heroin and opioid problem, but they're important steps in the right direction. If these changes save just one life from HIV, HCV, addiction or overdose, they're worth it."

BMO Harris Bank's commitment to ARCW is now in its 18th year, making them one of the longest-serving corporate supporters in the organization's history.

"We are extraordinarily grateful to our long-time corporate partner, BMO Harris Bank for their significant philanthropic commitment to the ARCW mission," Gifford said. "Their support for ARCW has ensured continued access to the health care and services people with HIV/AIDS need to live long, healthy lives."

“BMO Harris is a proud supporter of the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin, an organization committed to the fight against AIDS and HIV prevention in our local community,” said Jud Snyder, President of BMO Harris Equipment Finance Company. “We are humbled to receive the 2016 Philanthropist of the Year award and look forward to our continued partnership.”

For more than 30 years, UW Health has demonstrated its tireless dedication to serving patients living with HIV/AIDS with outstanding health care, dignity and respect. Recently, UW Health expanded its partnership with ARCW to create Madison’s first community-based HIV medical home, increasing access to quality primary and specialty health care for people living with HIV/AIDS in south central Wisconsin.

“Our partnership with UW Health is the single most important development for the ARCW Medical Center since we merged with AIDS Network last February,” Gifford stated. “While we have collaborated with UW Health going back to the beginning of the AIDS epidemic in Wisconsin, our new partnership marks the beginning of a stronger, deeper and more meaningful relationship that will build upon our successes and provide HIV patients in south central Wisconsin with new and exciting ways to receive their health care. Their leadership and vision to make the ARCW Medical Center in Madison a reality is transformative.”

James M Sosman MD, Medical Director of the UW HIV/AIDS Comprehensive Care Center, and Professor of Medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health will be accepting the award on behalf of UW Health. “I am honored to accept the ARCW Leadership award on behalf of our large team of clinicians, faculty, staff and administrators at UW Health who work to provide the best care for HIV patients in our community. The ever changing healthcare landscape creates significant challenges for our patients and clinicians. The UW Health partnership with ARCW provides an additional option for HIV healthcare, and helps promote a more integrated approach to state-wide prevention and care.”

About Make A Promise

Make A Promise is the annual formal gala and auction fundraiser supporting ARCW, having raised more than \$4.3 million over its storied history. The event attracts 1,000 community and business leaders, philanthropists and friends of ARCW for an evening of fine cuisine, stellar entertainment, premier silent and live auctions, awards and dancing - all while raising critical funds for the fight against AIDS. This year’s Make A Promise theme is ‘The Greatest Promise on Earth’ taking inspiration from nouveau cirque flair in a way that only Make A Promise can.

About the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin

The AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin is home to the ARCW Medical Center - Wisconsin's largest and fastest growing HIV health care system. Through its integrated medical, dental and mental health clinics along with its pharmacy and dedicated social services that include food pantries, a legal program, and social work case management, more than 3,300 HIV patients in Wisconsin gain the health care and social services they need for long-term survival with HIV disease from ARCW.

ARCW is also a leading provider of innovative and aggressive prevention services to help at-risk individuals stay free of HIV.

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