Publicizing the Mpowerment Project

Objectives

To explain how to develop and implement a publicity plan that effectively reaches young gay/bisexual men and promotes the Project and its activities.

For the Mpowerment Project to be truly a communitywide HIV prevention program, as many young gay/bisexual men as possible must learn about the Project and its activities. Thus, effective publicity is an important Core Element to help the Project achieve its mission of reducing unsafe sex among young gay/bisexual men in the community.

The most effective publicity campaigns: 1) use multiple strategies, 2) have clear goals, 3) reach all segments of the target audience, 4) are timely and ongoing, and 5) place a Publicity Coordinator or volunteer(s) in charge of implementation. In order to publicize the Project successfully, it is important to select the most appropriate messages to send out and decide how best to convey them. We encourage being as creative and thorough as possible in publicizing the Project. The best suggestions will likely come from the Core Group and other volunteers who are most familiar with their own community.

What you’ll find in the Appendix to this module

Figure 10.1 Sample Logo Contest Announcement.
Figure 10.2 Sample Event Timeline.
Figure 10.3 Publicity Plan.
Figure 10.4 Sample Magazine Article written by a Project Coordinator in Dayton, Ohio.
Figure 10.5 Sample Newspaper Ads.
Goals of Publicity

The goals for the Mpowerment Project’s publicity campaign are to:

- Establish an awareness of the Project among young gay/bisexual men (Project promotion)

- Invite young men to become involved with the Project and its activities (Social Outreach Event promotion)

- Inform people who can refer young gay/bisexual men to the Project

- Provide a continual reminder of the norm for safer sex and knowing your HIV status within the young gay/bisexual men’s community (safer sex and HIV testing promotion)

- Convey messages that foster a greater sense of community among young gay/bisexual men (community-building)
Targeting Your Publicity

Define your audience

In Module 2 we discussed conducting a community assessment early in the development of the Project. That assessment should provide a good understanding of the young gay/bisexual men in the community, including:

- where they live
- what they like to do for fun
- where they get their information (publications, radio, TV, Internet, etc.)
- a description of the different groups of young gay/bisexual men
- where they hang out

It should also provide the Project with an overview of the organizations that young gay/bisexual men come in contact with and a picture of the larger diverse gay community. All of these factors are important as the Project determines the best way to publicize the program among:

- the different groups of young gay/bisexual men in the community
- people who come into contact with young gay/bisexual men and can refer them to the Project
- relevant community organizations that serve young gay/bisexual men
- gay community leaders who will support the Project

Ideally, the Project’s publicity efforts will inform every young gay/bisexual man in the community about the Project and what it offers. Hopefully the publicity efforts will also educate every organization that is involved with young gay/bisexual men about the Project and its activities so that they will be able to refer young men to the Project.
Diversify your publicity strategies

We strongly recommend that you diversify publicity methods so that you reach every segment of your community, and so that young men hear the messages about the program multiple times from various sources. If a young man hears from a friend that a fun Social Outreach Event is coming up, and then he sees an announcement for the event on a flyer, and then he reads about it in a gay newspaper or on someone’s Facebook page, he is much more likely to believe that it is worth checking out.

Use diverse methods to publicize your Project: word-of-mouth, online methods, and publicity in written media. Spread the message that something fun and exciting is happening in your community!

Strategies to use to publicize the Project:

- word-of-mouth with friends and acquaintances
- use of social networking sites, such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and other popular community level Internet sites
- use of video sites, such as YouTube
- distributing materials in the community (brochures, flyers, etc.)
- Social Outreach Events and community events
- written “hard” media (news stories, feature articles, announcements, editorials in newspapers)
- advertising
- old fashioned phone calls!
- referrals from local agencies
- networking
- texting or “blasting” a message via text (Twitter and/or bulletin posts on Facebook or MySpace Project accounts)
- sending out messages to men on an Mpowerment Project listserv
- announcements on a website

Using a variety of publicity strategies rather than only one or two methods is also more likely to attract a cross-section of young men that reflect the diversity within the local gay/bisexual men’s community. This relates to the Guiding Principle of diffusion of messages throughout the community. (see Module 1: Overview for more information on the Mpowerment Project’s Guiding Principles.)

For example, conducting outreach and displaying publicity materials in gay bars is an effective way to reach certain groups of young gay/bisexual men
Don’t advertise the Project through the mainstream community since men who are not fully “out” may be reluctant to participate, and so that the Project doesn’t capture the attention of people who are unsupportive of young gay/bisexual men.

in communities that have gay bars. Unfortunately, this approach may miss young men under 21 or other men who seldom or never go to bars. In many communities, only one night at a bar is focused on gay/bisexual men of color. If young men don’t happen to attend the bar on that particular night, they may not hear about the Project event. Relying too heavily on publicity in bars is also unlikely to successfully reach the diverse spectrum of young gay/bisexual men that the Project wants to attract, especially given the fact that an increasing number of young men meet online nowadays rather than in bars. The same is true for the use of a listserv to publicize events. Thus, while both bar outreach and the use of a listserv are still important publicity methods, you’ll also need to use a number of other approaches in order to reach all segments of the community.

Keep a low profile in the mainstream community

Publicizing the Project can be tricky. On the one hand, it’s helpful if the entire gay and gay-supportive community is informed about the Project. On the other hand, you don’t want to scare off young gay/bisexual men who are not fully “out” or are uncomfortable associating with an organization that is widely known in the mainstream community as serving young gay/bisexual men. For this reason, we do not recommend advertising the Project through the mainstream media, such as the local newspaper or mainstream radio and television stations. Of course this is a decision each community must make for itself, after taking into account such things as the political climate, availability of alternative media, attitudes of the local press, and a Project’s ability to mobilize key allies. In addition, keeping a low profile within the mainstream community helps to avoid capturing the attention of homophobic individuals who may view the Project as “promoting homosexuality” and so attempt to derail or destroy it.
Defining the Project Image

Even though we recommend developing many different types of materials for your Project (e.g., pamphlets, advertisements, flyers, posters) and using a wide variety of images and themes, it is important to create a consistent “look” to your Project’s materials. This is sometimes called “branding” in marketing work. Developing a Project logo is the first step in that process.

Create a Project logo

The Project logo is a graphic representation used to identify the Project on all outreach and publicity materials. A thoughtful, well-designed logo symbolizes the image and qualities associated with the Project. For example, the Mpowerment Project in Eugene, OR selected a logo that was designed by a Project Coordinator during the initial stages of the Project (pictured above, left). At that time, the gay community in Oregon was fighting a very bitter, emotionally charged state referendum to deny basic rights to gays and lesbians. The Eugene Core Group very much liked this logo, as we do, and decided to adopt it because it reflected the strength and power of the young gay/bisexual men’s community that the Project was seeking to build.

MPower in Albuquerque developed their own logo (pictured above, right). Their Core Group liked the boldness and simplicity of this design, which incorporated the symbolism of the sun’s energy and nurturing rays—often depicted in New Mexico by the Zia symbol—and the male symbol. It also invoked the qualities of Native American petroglyph rock paintings and the pop culture look of gay artist Keith Haring.

A second reason to have a logo is that it stimulates questions among those who see it and are curious about it, which then provides opportunities for men to discuss the goals of the Project and to invite other young gay/bisexual men to become involved.

Finally, when many different young men in the community wear items containing the Project logo (t-shirts, hats, lanyards, buttons, and so forth), it
becomes trendy and creates the impression that both it and the Project are popular and well-regarded. This popularity then makes young men more receptive to hearing messages about safer sex and HIV testing, and more interested in building a supportive young gay/bisexual men’s community.

Sharing the logos that Projects around the country have developed with your Core Group and other volunteers working on creating a design may help generate ideas appropriate for your community and Project (see the opening page of this module for a sampling of logos from around the country). Copies of logos can also be found on our website (www.mpowerment.org). When logged in to the “Member Area”, click on “Project Outreach Examples” in the toolbar at the top of the page.

**A great logo sparks interest, is easily replicated on many kinds of materials, conveys strength, speaks to the local culture, and does not necessarily cause viewers to say, “that’s a gay logo” or a gay Project.**

**Hold a logo design contest**

When a logo was selected in the communities where we implemented the Mpowerment Project, the Core Group held a logo design competition among gay artists in the community. A letter announcing the contest and describing the logo specifications and entry procedures was sent to any artists the Core Group could identify, as well as to local art schools, university art departments, and gay-friendly design firms. *(See Figure 10.1. in the Appendix to this module for a copy of our Logo Design Contest Letter.)* We offered $100 to the winner. We suggest that after entries are submitted to the Project Coordinators, they be posted (without identifying the artists) for viewing in the Project space. The Core Group can then discuss the entries (again without disclosing the identities of the artists) and choose the winning logo.

Ten designs were submitted to the Project in Albuquerque. After a discussion of the pros and cons of each logo candidate, every Core Group member voted for their top two choices. A clear favorite emerged at this point in the process. If one had not, we would have test marketed the top submissions with young gay/bisexual men in the broader community to see what they think. Once the favorite logo was selected, the Core Group met with the artist and discussed some changes it wanted made. After revisions were completed and approved by the Core Group, the artist then produced a computer file of the logo in PDF format for use on all future Project materials.

For Projects beginning this process, it’s helpful to keep in mind that sometimes a logo has to be simplified somewhat so that it reproduces well on materials. Generally logos used on publicity or merchandise are kept small in size, so too many details will tend to get lost or look too “busy.”
Incorporate a tag line and map

Besides placing an appealing logo on all materials, it is also helpful to include with it a “tag line” or phrase that sums up the Project’s mission and/or describes its target group.

The tag line can be selected by the Core Group and volunteers in the same manner as the logo. Some examples of tag lines used by Projects are:

- If we don’t do it, who will?
- Welcome Home
- By and for young gay men.
- The premiere gay/bi men’s social group for [your city/town here]
- Men empowering other men
- Find a friend, a date, a lover.

Many Projects also choose to include a small map with the logo so that young men can find the Project space easily.

The look of publicity materials will and should change often so they don’t become boring. They should always be creative and eye-catching, contain appealing images, and include the Project’s logo and contact information.
Developing Publicity Materials

Like nearly all other endeavors in the Mpowerment Project, developing publicity materials is a group effort that should involve as many young gay/bisexual men as possible. Working on materials together helps young men learn new skills, develop a sense of ownership of the Project and the Project’s messages, and feel like they are contributing substantially to the community. The final results will also be better when a number of people have contributed their ideas. Materials developed by and for young gay/bisexual men are an important part of the empowerment process, another of the Project’s Guiding Principles. So, rather than relying on professionally produced materials, the Mpowerment Project uses inexpensive, home-grown materials such as flyers, posters, cards, stickers, magnets, and brochures to publicize the Project in the community.

In order to create high-quality and effective materials, there are some general points that are helpful to keep in mind. The following sections highlight some of these guidelines.

**Work as a team to create materials**

We have found that there are many talented young men among our Core Groups and Project volunteers who are able to develop materials. It is a good idea to have a materials team comprised of Coordinators, Core Group members, and volunteers who can help design, write, review, and produce publicity materials. Sit down together and begin to determine what sort of publicity is needed for the Project and its upcoming events. Make sure all questions and concerns are addressed early on. Being clear at the beginning saves time and money, prevents misunderstandings and hard feelings, and helps avoid mistakes.
Working as a team to come up with a good-looking publicity piece can be a challenging process. Common sense and courtesy can go a long way to making things work. Rather than saying, “I don’t like this ad” or “This isn’t what we wanted,” it is always more productive to start by sharing what you do like and then making concrete suggestions for ways to improve it, and modeling this for the group so that they also give positive and helpful feedback to whomever is creating the publicity piece. It is important that when the Core Group and volunteers work on and give feedback about materials, the individuals who create the materials are given a great deal of credit for their work, and whenever possible their ideas should be used.

**Get feedback early on**

Instead of asking volunteers to produce a publicity item on their own and then bring it to the publicity committee for approval, it is preferable for the volunteer or Coordinator to create a draft version of the item and then get feedback on it early in the planning process. The Core Group will only be able to provide such input if it sees early and intermediate drafts in time. Once that occurs, the material can then proceed to its final version.

Even “final” versions should be approved one last time by the Core Group. While this process is certainly more time consuming than having one person create publicity pieces independently, we have found that the time investment is well worth it. Not only does it empower volunteers as they give input, but it also produces higher quality materials that appeal to a broader range of young gay/bisexual men. We have seen cases where a volunteer brought what he thought was a final version to the Core Group for review and was told that it needed to be changed. Understandably this creates hurt feelings among volunteers. It is much better to get input along the way than to risk hurt feelings and frustration later and alienate volunteers.

**Be clear about the review process**

The process used to review publicity materials should be explicit from the beginning. The types of questions to ask when putting together a production process and schedule may include the following:

- Who is going to review and approve materials?
- Will all members of the group of reviewers be present at critical phases of material development?
- If not, do they waive the right to review it or should special efforts be made to revise the schedule so they can?
- What is a reasonable period of time to allow people to review a publicity item?
- Does an external program review panel need to review the item as well? If so, what are the procedures and guidelines and how long does the process take?
Have a clear purpose for the publicity piece

While all Mpowerment Project activities contribute to the overall goal of reaching young gay/bisexual men, publicity materials should usually have specific goals or purposes. For example, if the Project is just beginning, it is helpful to create a brochure that lets people know it exists and is open for business. In addition to providing an overview of the Project, the brochure can also briefly describe something about each program or type of activity that the Project offers. Young gay/bisexual men (and people who can refer young men to the Project) should be invited to check out the Project.

On the other hand, suppose the intent is to get the word out about an upcoming Social Outreach Event that the Project is sponsoring and to get young gay/bisexual men excited about it. In this case, the Project would benefit from a flyer to distribute at community venues. Additionally, producing smaller invitations can be helpful so that Core Group members and Project volunteers can distribute them to their friends and other young gay/bisexual men throughout the community. It can also be helpful to develop short text messages that Core Group members and volunteers can forward to friends. Invitations can also be e-mailed, posted to the Project’s social networking page, or posted to a special page on the Project’s website.

Design for your target audience

It is also important to determine who the Project is trying to reach with each piece of publicity. Suppose, for instance, that the event being planned is the official opening of the Project. Who does the Project want to attract to it? It might be important to reach people from several different groups: young gay/bisexual men, other service providers in the community, and potential funders. Or the Project may decide only to target the young gay/bisexual men themselves. Be clear who the target audience is, because this decision will shape a number of key things about the piece, including the messages it contains, the graphics used, its overall “look,” and how it will be distributed (see below).
Use diverse images

Diversity—whether in body type, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational background, or degree of being “out”—can be communicated explicitly and implicitly. Pay attention both to the explicit as well as the implicit messages the Project gives out when using words, images, or photographs. For example, if the Project’s target population is gay/bisexual men of all ethnic/racial groups, be sure to show men of all groups in the photos. But also make sure to show men who are diverse in other ways as well, so they don’t all come across as being college students, trendy dressers, etc.

Keep in mind the Project’s target population when selecting images for publicity materials. If the Project is ethnic-specific (e.g., for young black gay/bisexual men), then having photos of men exclusively of that ethnicity can be used to promote black pride as well as to promote the Project. We strongly recommend using any opportunity to instill pride in the Project’s target population, which is another of the Project’s Guiding Principles.

Match the images to the message

Think about how you want the target audience to respond—both intellectually and emotionally. For example, suppose the text in your publicity piece is about building community and having a safe place to be yourself, and the pictures that are used are of individual buff, shirtless men. While the pictures may be sexy to whoever decided to use them, they may alienate some segments of the audience. First, they may turn off young men who are not into the gym scene, and who may feel threatened by the perceived need to have big muscles or to be athletic. Additionally, while the Project is talking about building community, the photos used depict men alone. Clearly, the images are in conflict with the message of the text. Be sure to match your images to your message.

Plan publicity with the budget in mind

Often the budget will drive the design, so it is important to know your budget from the start. If money is tight, find out what low-cost options are available in your community. For example, ask other nonprofit organizations where they have their printing done. Sometimes members of the Community Advisory Board will have ideas or connections that will help in doing publicity more inexpensively. Occasionally companies (or even government agencies) will donate use of their in-house print shops (or charge greatly reduced rates). In order to take advantage of these lower-cost opportunities, extra time may be needed to complete the job, since it may be run during non-peak hours or less busy periods. Leaving jobs for overnight printing may be cheaper than same-day orders. One-color printing is almost always a cheaper option than more elaborate color schemes. Or consider producing a smaller number of color copies that will be distributed selectively, and distribute black and white copies more broadly throughout the community. Also, smaller printed materials save money because more of them can fit on one page.
For newspaper ads, take advantage of nonprofit discounts and any free ads that are available for publicizing your event such as community calendars or free community service program ads. Sometimes gay and alternative newspapers will also run short news briefs about an event based on a well-written press release submitted by the Project.

When working with the media, be certain to find out about deadlines for submitting various types of material, and also when submitted material is likely to appear in print. Optimally you want to give people enough advance notice so they’ll be able to attend the event, but you also don’t want it too far in advance so that they may forget about it. For larger events you may want to send out a number of calendar announcements or press releases over a period of weeks. It’s also helpful for someone to monitor the media so you’ll know whether your community calendar listing actually got printed in a particular newspaper. If not, it’s worth checking with someone in the media to find out why, and how you can make sure it does the next time around.

Social networking sites offer a free way to distribute flyers electronically. Many Projects upload the jpg or gif image of their event flyer to their sites’ photo albums (Facebook, My Space, etc.). Projects also use the flyer as their site profile picture and use the picture in bulletin posts about the event. This way, all the members (“friends”) of their site see the flyer instantaneously.

Choose an appropriate tone and style

The tone and style used in publicity materials directly affect how people respond. For instance, it may make sense to produce sexy publicity materials when advertising a large Social Outreach Event with a dance party theme for young gay/bisexual men. However, when publicizing a small discussion group on young gay/bisexual men’s religious and spiritual issues, you’ll likely want to use different images. A flyer depicting several couples might be perfect for a forum on boyfriend issues, but in a different context, such as a sporting event, the same images might turn off single guys. So an invitation to a sporting event might more appropriately depict a group of young men playing the sport, or depict a cheerleading squad (if you want to inject a sense of humor into the publicity).

Plan the design and content carefully

Think through the details of the content and design of the piece. When publicizing an event it is critical to include the time, date, location, and a brief but clear explanation of what the event is. We have seen instances where this essential information was inadvertently left out. Also always include the Project’s address, telephone number, website, and MySpace and Facebook URL, if applicable.

In addition Projects typically include their tagline near the Project name in all publicity materials (for example, “by young men, for young men”). This helps convey the nature of the Project for people who may be unfamiliar
with it. By always including this key information, a publicity piece not only advertises the specific event, but it also serves to communicate what the Project is and how to become involved. An effective practice is to post a checklist of all of these essential items next to each of the Project’s computers as a way of reminding the publicity team to include all of them in each publicity piece they produce.

In designing a publicity piece, it will be necessary to decide on the number of colors to use, its size and dimensions, the quantity needed, and how to create materials so that they photocopy or print well. Photographs, for example, may reproduce poorly if the contrast is poor. Also think about how to get the best reproduction quality for your money. Typically it is a Project Coordinator who figures out these kinds of details, and relates them to the publicity team. If the Project Coordinator handling this is inexperienced, he should go to a copy center early on in the planning process to get their advice before completing a design. Seek out Project volunteers who are graphic designers, web designers, and artists; they may also be willing to offer advice.

Consider potential constraints on publicity materials

In creating publicity materials, there may be some constraints—requirements or guidelines—that need to be considered, depending on where you hope to publicize the event. These should be included in the publicity plan. For example, if you want to place a display ad or a calendar announcement in a local weekly gay paper, the publication has size or word number specifications that must be met. If the desire is to distribute materials through local businesses, they may have restrictions on content that are important to know about. For example, a gym owner may be willing to display flyers in his facility, provided they are not sexually explicit, whereas a gay bar owner may not care. In such cases, the solution may be to design two separate flyers, one that is “tamer,” and another that includes more sexually explicit material.

Depending on where your funding comes from, the Project may be required to submit materials to a local Program Review Panel. This constraint can raise some serious problems for your timeline unless plans are made well in advance, since some Program Review Panels only meet infrequently. Furthermore, some review panels may be more restrictive than others in terms of the content of text and images. Be sure to talk to your local or state health department for advice and guidelines on how to proceed.

As stated in Module 7: Formal Outreach—Social Outreach Events and Outreach Team, be careful not to waste precious resources on designing materials that are highly unlikely to receive approval—but at the same time, don’t be afraid to push the envelope. We have seen many Projects tone their materials down, but in fact never tested the waters to see if their Program Review Panel might approve some sexier approaches. In fact, many Program Review Panels will approve nearly all materials designed by and for gay/bisexual men because they understand that innovative, eye-catching, and explicit materials are often necessary to effectively prevent HIV and reduce rates of unprotected sex. It may be helpful to meet with the panel to describe
the intent around using different images so that they understand when and why certain images are used. Some agencies have even submitted multiple images for approval all at the same time, so that later on they could just pick from the images that had been approved, thereby eliminating problems associated with untimely turnaround.

Don’t self-censor your materials: many local Program Review Panels understand that explicit materials are necessary to reduce rates of unprotected sex, and if they don’t, try to educate them about the need.

Create a realistic timeline for developing materials

A material development timeline will be a helpful guide in producing each publicity piece from beginning to end. It is very helpful to work backwards from your final deadline to determine how much time is needed for the design and content, feedback, revisions, approval, and production necessary for each publicity piece. Then put together a detailed schedule that allows sufficient time for all of these steps. In general, the earlier the publicity is planned, the better. Know the deadlines for all publications’ advertisements. Saving past versions of ads in electronic format and updating them from event to event may be one way to save time. We also highly recommend building in some extra time to avoid last-minute crises. Nothing is more frustrating than discovering your printer has just run out of ink 15 minutes after all the office supply stores have closed on the day before an important community event. A sample timeline is provided as a guide in developing your own (see Figure 10.2. in the Appendix to this module).

Develop a publicity plan

Creating a publicity plan as soon as the Project begins can help to guide your long-term planning. An example of a publicity plan from the Austin Men’s Project (condensed for this Module) can be found at right (see Figure 10.3. in the Appendix to this module for a blank publicity plan form). As mentioned previously, Projects typically use a combination of publicity strategies to let people know about the Project or a specific activity.

Essentially, the publicity plan summarizes important information about all the community venues or locations, media outlets (including deadline information), and organizations where you’ll want to post information about the Project and its Social Outreach Events and activities. Additionally, the publicity plan provides a timeline for how often the Project mails information packets to distribution venues in the community, and when it sends out electronic announcements to the e-mail distribution list and posts information on the Project’s Facebook or MySpace pages. It should also list the Project’s action steps to encourage word-of-mouth publicity, including when to send out text messages. A publicity plan is not a static document, but rather changes constantly to reflect the Project’s needs and the current status of the community’s venues, media sources, organizations, and key individuals.
A publicity plan is not a static document, but rather changes constantly.

### Publicity Plan for Upcoming Social Outreach Event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Date/Deadline</th>
<th>Who is Responsible?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Print Media</strong></td>
<td>Ad</td>
<td>Ambush (local weekly gay newspaper)</td>
<td>Jo-Jo Bobalinksi, Jo-Jo <a href="mailto:Bobalinksi@yahoo.com">Bobalinksi@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td>Bi-Monthly/Two weeks before publication</td>
<td>David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calendar of Events</strong></td>
<td>The Alternative (alternative weekly newspaper)</td>
<td>Hedi Lamar, <a href="mailto:Hedi.Lamar@comcast.com">Hedi.Lamar@comcast.com</a></td>
<td>Weekly/ Two weeks before publication</td>
<td>David</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ad</strong></td>
<td>The Texonian (university newspaper)</td>
<td>Alex Thomas, 412-444-555</td>
<td>Weekly/ Two weeks before publication</td>
<td>David</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social networking Sites</strong></td>
<td>Ad, upload photos of recent event</td>
<td>Facebook, My Space, Twitter, Myspace.com/ mpowermentprojects, Facebook.com/pages/mpowermentprojects</td>
<td>2-weeks beforehand, additional reminders 1 or 2 days beforehand</td>
<td>David</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word of Mouth</strong></td>
<td>small brochures</td>
<td>core group and various team meetings</td>
<td>everyone at these meetings</td>
<td>2-weeks before event</td>
<td>Jonathan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach Team to Promote Events</strong></td>
<td>outreach material</td>
<td>The In-Touch (bar)</td>
<td>bar manager: Alberto Rodriguez, 412-555-1212</td>
<td>1-week beforehand</td>
<td>Roberto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>same</strong></td>
<td>Martini’s (bar)</td>
<td>bar owner: Jonathan Williams, 412-123-4567</td>
<td>1-week beforehand</td>
<td>Roberto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>same</strong></td>
<td>The Stallion (bar)</td>
<td>bar manager: Max Jones, 412-123-4567</td>
<td>1-week beforehand</td>
<td>Roberto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>same</strong></td>
<td>Bench and Bar (bar)</td>
<td>bar manager: Paul Newman, 412-123-4567</td>
<td>1-week beforehand</td>
<td>Roberto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Announce event on Project website</strong></td>
<td>announcement of event and visuals</td>
<td>Project website</td>
<td>webmaster Lady Gaga, <a href="mailto:Lady.Gaga@aol.com">Lady.Gaga@aol.com</a></td>
<td>3-weeks beforehand</td>
<td>David</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Specific Publicity Strategies

Using print media

While the Mpowerment Project is not typically publicized through the mainstream media, the gay and alternative media may be important allies to your program. College newspapers can also reach a segment of the community’s young gay/bisexual men. They can be vehicles for securing free coverage of Mpowerment Project activities. Cultivate relationships with the media. The Project Coordinators should make it a point to develop relationships with the local alternative and gay media in order to get the type of coverage you need. The Coordinators should talk to them on the phone, send out press releases, and when the time seems right, invite them to visit the Project. (Don’t be surprised if the media finds out about the Project and wants to visit before you feel ready to receive them. Should this occur, the Project staff should simply explain that the Project is still in the beginning stages of developing the program. Indicate when a media visit would be welcomed, and that the reporter will be contacted at that time).

Think of newsworthy stories. The press needs news to print; they may also need human interest stories. The Project can help by alerting them to news stories or suggesting topics for feature articles. So, for example, while it may not be desirable for the media to be present at a Social Outreach Event, it might be helpful for them to cover a major event such as the opening of the Project space. Or the Coordinators may just want to walk reporters through their offices to familiarize them with the Project. The Project’s relationship with the press depends in part on how helpful the Project is at providing news—information about something that is timely and often time-limited—and at offering ideas for stories of interest to the paper’s readers.

Frequently it is helpful for the Project staff to write articles themselves. The gay, college, and alternative press sometimes find it challenging to come up with enough news stories for their publications, and only have a small number of reporters (who are usually overworked). Editors of these newspapers frequently appreciate it when Project members offer to write articles for them. (See Figure 10.4. in the Appendix to this module for a copy of a story written by a Coordinator in Dayton, Ohio.) Often, though, they will edit it in some way; you can ask if you can see it again before it goes to print to be sure that the Project is represented accurately. However, not all publications accept articles written by individuals not on staff or allow you to review a story before it goes to press). However, Project staff can certainly “pitch” an idea for an article to a publication’s editor, and provide the information necessary so someone else can write the article.

This approach offers the dual benefits of ensuring that your story makes it into the press, and that the program or the event is described as accurately as possible and in the way you want. For example, we have found that newspapers tend to want to stress the HIV prevention aspects of the Project, rather than the community-building and social aspects of it. Since we know that the Project will reach more men if it is perceived as having the latter emphasis, when publications accept your articles you are more likely to get this message across. For publications that won’t accept your articles, you still
may be able to convey this message if you explain to reporters ahead of time the Project’s rationale for focusing on the social and community-building aspects of the program.

Helping works both ways. It’s always important to keep in mind that while the Project is helping the press by writing articles or generating story ideas for them, they are also helping the Project by publicizing it and its events for free. Here are a few examples of ways that the press can help:

- run articles that introduce the Project to the gay community
- highlight upcoming Social Outreach Events through news briefs and calendar announcements
- provide contact information for the Project
- cover events that have already taken place
- portray the positive contributions of the Project through feature articles

Additional publicity will reap numerous benefits for the Project. It will attract more young gay/bisexual men to participate in the Project. It will bring the Project to the attention of potential Community Advisory Board members. It will also provide “objective” positive reviews of the Project and its activities, which can then be given to potential funders and those who can make referrals to the Project.

Consider including radio stations in the Publicity Plan. First consider if your target population listens to radio, and if so, if they listen to particular stations or programs. This can be something you would ask about during the community assessment. There might be alternative, community or university stations that the population listens to. Young gay/bisexual men of color might listen to particular stations. Broad just trying to focus on any “regular” station might not reach your population and could take more time to set up than its worth.

If you feel that radio might be an effective approach, then it is good to know that under Federal Communications Commission guidelines, radio stations are required to offer some free time to publicize community events. These 10-, 20-, or 30-second radio “spots” are called public service announcements (“PSAs”). Radio can be a very responsive medium where an event can be publicized with a relatively short lead-time. Generally two or three weeks advance notice is sufficient to get the message some air-time. Because radio stations can reach wide audiences, it may not be desirable to use them for feature stories on the Mpowerment Project unless, of course, the story airs on a gay radio program or talk show. However, it may be helpful to make use of the radio station’s weekly calendar of events and get the events announced on the air that way. A Core Group member of the Austin Men’s Project was the host of a gay-themed talk show at the local cooperative radio station. He invited Coordinators and Core Group members to be guests on his show on a regular basis, especially before large Social Outreach Events. This popular show provided an excellent opportunity to publicize the Project and its activities, and it attracted many new young gay/bisexual men to the Project.
Advertising the Project and upcoming events

Buying ad space in gay/alternative newspapers can be an effective tool to reach your target audience. Here are a few points to consider before buying advertising space.

**Determine your target publications**  Carefully consider if advertisements in particular publications will reach young gay/bisexual men. If the papers are not widely distributed or if they are only read by certain small segments of the population, then advertising in them may not be particularly cost effective. Conducting a brief, informal survey of the young gay/bisexual men in the area might be helpful to determine what publications they read if the community assessment did not provide this information. Many papers collect demographic information about their readers that may also be available.

Suppose, for example, only white men over 30 read the local gay paper. If so, the publicity plan needs to be diversified. In some communities, gay papers are predominantly distributed in bars, and may miss younger men. In these instances, an alternative paper such as a local free press or a university newspaper may be a better choice. We want to inject a word of caution, however. We have observed the situation where Coordinators state that, “no one under the age of 30 reads that newspaper,” or “no young Black (or Latino) men read that paper”—and once advertisements were placed in it, indeed many young men in the target group did read the paper. Here, as in other cases, it is important that the Coordinators do not make decisions merely based on their own perceptions of a situation.

It is also important to consider if print media should be used at all. Newspapers are going out of business, and many alternative and/or gay newspapers are folding. People aren’t reading magazines as much. So find out from young men that they are reading newspapers or magazines before spending the money to buy any ads.

**Place ads where they’ll be seen**  The ads the Project purchases (or which are donated) must be seen by the young men the Project is trying to reach. Simply buying the space is not enough. It is usually preferable to specify the exact pages and location (if possible) where you’d like the ads to run. An expensive display ad may be less effective than an inexpensive ad in the personals section (e.g., “Men seeking Men” section, or something similar) if young gay/bisexual men do not read the pages where the display ads run. Again, asking the Core Group and other young gay/bisexual men can help make more informed decisions about ad placement. Particularly in the beginning, trial and error may occur before learning what works best. Try placing ads of different sizes and in a variety of locations. Then note if there seems to be any change in the number of phone calls that are received about the Project or the number of men who show up at events.
Flyers and ads can also be embedded on social networking sites. Use as many social networking sites as possible to get the word out about your Project and its activities. Encourage Core Group members and other participants to embed flyer images on their personal pages as a way to get the word out about an upcoming event or even more generally, about the Project itself. Both Facebook and MySpace offer ways of inviting ‘friends’ to events. Projects can ‘create an event’ and upload an event flyer and give details about time and location and Project contact information. Once the invite is sent, members can let the Project know if they ‘will be attending’, ‘maybe’ or ‘no, not attending’ by clicking a button. If someone selects that they will be attending, then their online friends are alerted to the news that their friend will be attending a Projects event.

Other Internet sites and approaches can also be used. For example, some Projects have experienced success at placing advertisements on the “Men seeking men” part of Craig’s List. Encouraging guys to text their friends about upcoming events, or at least reminding them about the events, can be helpful.

**Emphasize the Project’s or activity’s benefits**

The most effective ads do not just describe the Project, but instead, try to sell it to young gay/bisexual men by highlighting the benefits of becoming involved with the Project or attending an event. For example, an ad that describes the M-groups but says nothing else is likely to be less successful than one which states that by attending a group, young men can meet new friends, find community, feel better about themselves, or improve their relationships.

**Create a consistent look**

As described previously, it is helpful to create a consistent look for all the Project materials, including for the advertisements. This is the Project’s “brand.” In particular, the ads should have the Project tagline, logo, phone number, address, and URL of the Project’s website. And the ad should be eye-catching and interesting.

**Create materials that reflect the target population**

Perhaps most importantly, it is vital that young gay/bisexual men can see themselves in materials that the Project produces. If the publicity team decides to use photos of people in the publicity campaigns, it is essential that the photos reflect the full spectrum of young gay/bisexual men in the community. Men come in all colors, sizes, and shapes. Ads that do not reflect this reality will present a monolithic image to the community, and may alienate some segments of young gay/bisexual men. This can be a tricky issue, however. While some men may decry the use of images that portray only very attractive men, creating eye-catching materials will definitely attract the attention of young gay/bisexual men.

At least for some ads, it is helpful to use images of men who are part of the Project. Digital cameras are not that expensive these days, and nothing reflects the community as well as photos of the young men who are already a
It is vital that young gay/bisexual men can see themselves and their community in the materials that the Project produces.

part of Project. Consider what to do, however, if you want to reach a diverse group of young men—but your Project isn’t yet reaching this diversity. If this is the case, it may not be quite ready to do a photo shoot of your own guys until you bring in more diversity.

The Austin Men’s Project used gay, campus, and alternative papers in a variety of ways. For example, every week, Project Coordinators sent an e-mail to their contacts who produced the free community listings or calendar sections of the papers. They also cultivated relationships with local columnists and encouraged them to cover and publicize upcoming events. Project Coordinators and volunteers successfully negotiated free or reduced rates for display ads to publicize large Social Outreach Events and other Project activities. The Project decided not to spend large amounts of money on display ads because they realized that the free community listings and calendars were more effective in attracting participants to their activities. However, one advertising strategy that was highly successful was rotating a series of six amusing print ads on the back page of the local free press every week. (See Figure 10.5. in the Appendix to this module for examples of print ads.)

Posting materials

Create a comprehensive list of all the physical or virtual places where materials should be distributed, including flyers, brochures, posters, event calendars, stickers, and event invitations. A monthly listing of these places should be developed, with check-off lists to indicate that materials have been brought or sent to, or placed at these sites. Some places to consider include:

- gay bars
- coffeehouses
- record stores
- gay/alternative/adult book stores
- gyms and health clubs
- gay student unions and bulletin boards on a college or university campus
- HIV/STD testing clinics
- gay counseling centers
- alternative and Internet cafes
- laundromats in neighborhoods known to be frequented by young gay/bisexual men
- ice cream shops
- social networking sites including Facebook and MySpace
- other websites & chatrooms (to place electronic versions of flyers)

Of course wherever materials are distributed, make sure they are appropriate to the location so that the men who pick them up will feel comfortable reading them there.
We’ve seen Projects successfully get the word out by posting publicity materials at various locations on the first day of the month (or as soon as the monthly calendar is ready) and then supplementing those materials with event specific materials as soon as they are produced. Whenever possible, it is preferable for the Project Coordinators or volunteers to display or post the materials instead of relying on the staff of each venue to do it. The employees are often quite busy with their regular job duties and frequently don’t get around to putting up the materials, or place them in a spot where they are not easily seen.

Social networking and internet outreach

Virtual communities and online social networking sites are currently one of the most engaging components of an ongoing publicity campaign; many Projects around the country have had a great deal of success integrating these sites into their publicity campaigns. There are many compelling reasons for Mpowerment Projects to be visible on these sites, including the following:

- Social networking sites are an established communication medium, tapping into large networks of young gay men in most communities.
- They are free, easy to use, and allow Projects to have control over their online content.
- They are easy to maintain and can be updated instantaneously, communicating promotional messages to large networks of young men immediately.

A majority of Mpowerment Projects are using social networking sites to promote themselves. Many young people spend large amounts of time involved with their peers in these virtual communities. Since the sites and these technologies are ever-evolving, it is important that Project Coordinators keep current on the latest sites and technologies that young men are using to communicate with one another. Keep in mind that what may be a popular social networking site today can quickly be replaced by an even more popular site tomorrow.

Many young men maintain a profile on a social networking site. They use these sites to keep in touch with friends, give short and quick status updates, e-mail messages to each other, and upload their photos. In the same way, Projects can use social networking sites to establish a presence for online community-building. Since most sites are easy to navigate, Project staff can easily create and maintain a Project profile or fan page. Once you gather participants’ e-mail accounts (see Figure 5.2. in Module 5: Core Group for examples of interest sheets), staff can use the social networking site to invite them to become a “friend” or “fan” of their Project.

These social networking sites align themselves with many of the Guiding Principles of the Mpowerment model. They encourage positive influence and support between young men online. In addition, they help to expand supportive networks of young men in their area, and they affirm community-building
principles by inviting young men to attend the Core Group and other events.

We briefly describe each site below. Tutorials for each can be found at their specific websites by going to www.google.com and entering, for example, “Facebook tutorial.” The same can be done for the other social networking sites.

**General recommendations**

Here are some ideas for information that can be posted on sites:

- a description of the Project
- a calendar of upcoming events
- pictures of Project staff and volunteers (with their permission, of course)
- pictures of recent large and weekly events, themed outreach events, and the Project space
- online photo albums of past events and performances.
- embedding Project-made videos and presentations (one Project attributes their online video (which asked for music requests) to revitalizing their membership)
- a list of volunteer opportunities
- contact information (e.g., e-mail address and phone numbers) for more information about the Project and its activities
- safer sex information
- links to HIV testing sites and other information on AIDS and STDs
- links to a variety of support and informational services

Many Projects we talked to not only maintain an email list of interested men, but an ever-growing cache of “friends” on their social networking pages. These men can be sent weekly updates containing news and announcements of upcoming events. *(See Figure 7.3. in the Appendix to Module 7: Formal Outreach—Social Outreach Events and Outreach Team for examples of weekly updates from Albuquerque, NM and Austin, TX.)*

Social networking and other Internet sites that we will discuss include:

- Facebook
- MySpace
- Twitter
- YouTube

If your Project decides to host a website, Facebook, or MySpace site, please keep them current. We’ve seen some Project sites go without updates for a month or more. Not only will this diminish your online presence, but young men who seek out your Project online will become bored, or worse, feel
ignored if a site is not maintained. We suggest updating your Project site a minimum of every couple of days, if not more often.

Facebook is currently the king of social networking sites in the United States. To participate in Facebook, each new user must create a personal Facebook Profile. Facebook users may then choose to join one or more networks organized by city, workplace, school, and region. These networks help users connect with other members of the same network. Users can also connect with friends, giving them access to their friends’ profiles. The website is free to users.

**Facebook Groups**
Facebook allows members to create a group that other users can join. Groups are used for discussions and to post upcoming events. Groups are a way of enabling a number of people to come together online to share information and discuss specific subjects. There are also a number of privacy controls that a group can use. For example, it can be an open group, where everyone on Facebook can join. There is also the option of having a closed group where joining is by invitation only.

Facebook groups can be used by Mpowerment Projects to interact with men interested in Project news and upcoming events. A group is comprised of the following: the members who have joined, recent news, a discussion board, a wall for posting brief messages, photos, videos, and associated comments related to each of these sections.

**Facebook Pages**
Another option is to host a Facebook Page. A Facebook Page is different from a Facebook Profile. Hosting a Page has advantages over Groups and Profiles. One advantage is that a Page is not associated with any one individual. In a Facebook Group the person who created the group is listed as such, while a Facebook Page creator is anonymous. This can be important in case a Coordinator leaves, as the hosting duties can be seamlessly transferred to another Coordinator.

Owners of a Page can send updates to their Fans. Also, when Fans interact with a Page, stories linking to the Page are then sent to their friends via News Feed. As these users click through and interact with your Page, News Feed keeps spreading the messages word-of-mouth to a wider circle of friends.

Owners also have access to insights and analytic tools about their Fan base including: the number of unique Page views per day, how many new Fans have joined over time, and how many photos have been viewed. One of the most popular applications on Facebook is the Photos application. While you can upload pictures to a Facebook Group, Facebook Pages allow users to upload an unlimited number of photos to photo albums. Additionally Pages allow the use of albums. For example, photos can be divided into photo albums of Core Group meetings, an album showcasing the Project space, and albums of recent themed outreach events. This can give group members a sense of what they can expect when they attend events.
Another feature of the Photos applications is the ability to “tag” or label users in a photo. For instance, if a photo contains a user’s friend, then the user can tag the friend in the photo. This sends a notification to the friend that they have been tagged, and provides them a link to see the photo.

**Facebook Events**

Both Facebook Groups and Facebook Pages can create an event. Facebook events are a way for members to let friends know about upcoming events in their community and to organize social gatherings. Events require a name, network, host name, event type, start and end time, and location. The Group members or Pages fans become the guest list of friends who are invited. Events can be open or closed. When setting up an event the user can choose to allow friends to upload photos, videos, and other items. Members of a group can then RSVP to the event online by clicking on three options: Attending, Maybe Attending, or Not Attending. This can give a Project a general estimate of how many to expect. This feature also lets other members know who will be and will not be attending.

MPower OC in Orange County, California used a Facebook event to promote “Snowball—A Free Gay Snow Trip.” Here is how their event read to members of their Facebook group:

```
Host: Mpower OC (Orange County’s Premiere Gay Men’s Social Group)
Type: Trips – Daytrip
Network: Global
Date: Sunday, March 1. 2009-03-02
Time: 8:00am – 6:30pm
Location: Mpower Warehouse
Street: 1234 Harbor Blvd.
City/Town: Bankrupt, CA
Phone: 123-456-7890
Description
Join the OC’s Premiere Gay/Bi men’s Social Group for a FREE day @ the Snow. We include everything!!! Transportation, food, tubing park admission, inner tube rentals, and a scenic lift ride. Space is limited to the first 50 people that RSVP and sign up. To RSVP and sign up for this event attendees must contact Anthony @ 123-456-7890. Sign-ups will be held @ the Mpower Warehouse during normal operating hours until Thursday, February 26th.

For all interested persons in our upcoming snow trip, the following are a few reminders about this event:
-- This is for 18-29-year-old gay/bi men ONLY.
-- You must come to the Mpower warehouse to RSVP and complete event waiver
-- Cut off to RSVP for the event will be Thurs., Feb. 26th, or earlier, based on popularity of the event.
-- Space is limited to the first 52 people that sign the waiver. (Please realize that this is first come, first served.)
-- No personal snow equipment is required or ALLOWED. (All equipment for the event activities will be provided.)
-- A list of recommended attire and personal items will be provided during the RSVP process.
```
Mpowerment Olympia in Washington state used a Facebook event to promote a unique skating experience called the “Friends of Dorothy Skate.” This is how their Facebook event read:

**Event Info:** Friends of Dorothy Skate  
**Host:** Mpowerment Olympia  
**Type:** Party  
**Network:** Global  
**Date:** Saturday, February 28, 2009  
**Time:** 5:00pm – 9:00pm  
**Location:** Skateland  
**Street:** 2275 12th Ave.  
**Town:** Olympia, WA  
**Phone:** 123-456-4789  
**Email:** olympiamensproject@gmail.com  

**Description:**  
Follow the yellow brick road somewhere over the Rainbow to Skateland and skate with Dorothy and her fabulous queer friends!! Roller Skate above the chimney tops, where bluebirds fly and where the tin man and the scarecrow are lovers. Discover the Land of Oz in Olympia where the dreams you dare to dream really do come true!  

Arrive in your favorite Oz character costume or any other costume you feel like wearing. Although costumes are not required, they’re always encouraged.  

Saturday February 28, 2009  
From 5:00pm-7:00pm!!!  
$1.50 admission (includes roller skate skates) / $4.00 for roller blades  

MySpace is a social networking website with an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music, and videos. One significant difference between Facebook and MySpace is the level of customization. MySpace allows users to decorate their profiles using HyperText Markup Language (HTML) and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), while Facebook only allows plain text. This allows Projects to add and customize design elements such as photos, graphics, colors, and fonts. Once a Project creates a profile page, they can invite other profiles to become “friends.”

An important feature of Myspace is the ability to browse profiles. Using advanced browsing features a Project can seek out men by age range, city and orientation (both gay and bisexual). Once a browse is performed the men found can be invited to be a ‘friend’ of your Project. Not only do they become aware of a Project in their area, it also increases your Projects friends list.
Here is a list of some Mpowerment Projects currently using MySpace.

By glancing at a few of these sites, you will quickly get ideas of what to put on your site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Myspace URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INMIX!</td>
<td>Spokane, WA</td>
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<td>EP Outings</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>B More Mpowerment</td>
<td>Baltimore, MD</td>
<td><a href="http://www.myspace.com/mpowermentbmore">www.myspace.com/mpowermentbmore</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mpowerment Olympia</td>
<td>Olympia, WA</td>
<td><a href="http://www.myspace.com/mpowerolympia">www.myspace.com/mpowerolympia</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mpowerment</td>
<td>Missoula, MT</td>
<td><a href="http://www.myspace.com/queercoremt">www.myspace.com/queercoremt</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYA Boys Mpowerment</td>
<td>Oakland, CA</td>
<td><a href="http://www.myspace.com/nyaboy09">www.myspace.com/nyaboy09</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**MySpace Bulletins**

Bulletins are messages that are posted to a “bulletin board” and that can be viewed by everyone on a MySpace user’s friends list. Bulletins can be useful for contacting everyone on a friends list without resorting to messaging users individually. Projects use bulletins to advertise upcoming events. Bulletins are automatically deleted after ten days.

Here are a few examples of MySpace bulletins used by Projects.

---

**MySpace Bulletin, Example 1**

*From:* M Cube, St. Louis, MO  
*Subject:* This week at M Cube

The Core -  
We got a lot of great plans made last night. Thanks to all who attended, both new faces and veterans!  
TNC - (Tuesday Night Crew)  
TONIGHT, Tuesday, 6:30pm to 10:30pm at The Spot (4444 Laclede Ave, 1st floor). Ages 13-24. TNC is a weekly gathering of black gay and bi young men and their friends. This group is dedicated to community-building and healthy sexual development for all its participants. Dinner and soft drinks provided. First timers welcome—just show up.  
FIERCE: Knockin’ Pins -  
Thursday, 7:30pm to 9:30pm at Tropicana Lanes. Ages 18-29. Meet up with the guys for a night of bowling! Admission is on us but please RSVP for this event by contacting A.J. or Danny at 123-456-7894 or MCubed@gmail.com. Tropicana Lanes is located at 45 Manly Rd (63117).  
See the attached flyer by Drew Dinges because it’s uber cute!

---

**MySpace Bulletin, Example 2**

*From:* Project Ache, Puerto Rico  
*Subject:* Atención HOMBRES del OESTE

Las oficinas de Ache del Oeste ya están buscando contactos para comenzar a dar servicios. Todos los Hombres que estén en el área de Mayaguez y zona Oeste por favor déjennos su info de contacto por este medio o al email adoldcg@gmail.com. Su número de teléfono o email será usado de manera totalmente confidencial para dejarnos saber de los servicios y futuras actividades. Por favor aclarar en el email si debemos comunicarnos con ustedes de una manera discreta (emails o teléfonos compartidos) para su comodidad y facilitarnos así el trabajo. Cuidense, los esperamos.  
**Horario de Aché del Oeste:** Por ahora de 10:00 am a 6:00 pm. El horario se revisará cuando se comiencen los servicios.  
**Teléfonos:** 123-456-7894  
**Correos electrónicos:** Luis Daniel Cruz González Coordinador uvuvu@gmail.com  
Abdiel Echevarria Cabán tsghy@gmail.com
Twitter is a social networking and micro-blogging service that allows users to send and read other users’ updates, known as tweets. These are text-based posts of up to 140 characters in length. Updates are displayed on the user’s profile page and delivered to other users who have signed up to receive them. These updates are sent to members’ cell phones, iPhones, and Facebook accounts. This means that a large number of participants can be contacted at once very quickly. Normal text charges do apply for messages. Some young men will have unlimited texting capabilities, while others may be on a limited phone-texting plan, so it’s best that members sign themselves up for the free Twitter online service if they prefer not to incur cell phone charges. It’s also a good idea to think when and how often messages will be sent out by the Project. You might start off slowly with one or two messages a week and see what the response is.

Here are some sample tweets that we imagine Projects could use.

Promotional Tweets can advertise Project events:

Volunteer Tweets can remind members and volunteers about upcoming volunteer opportunities:

YouTube is a video sharing website where users can upload, view, and share video clips. YouTube offers technology to display a wide variety of Project-generated video content, including movie clips, keynote presentations, TV clips, and music videos, as well as amateur content such as video blogging and short original videos.

Once the video is uploaded, the site produces a URL link to the video as well as the ability to “embed” the content on Project social networking sites and websites using HTML. Unregistered users can watch the videos, while registered users are permitted to upload an unlimited number of videos. Accounts of registered users are called “channels.”

Projects can interview Coordinators and participants and have them share what the Project means to them. Projects can also take video of their last large event or themed outreach, creating a video scrapbook of events.

The Mu Crew in Dayton, Ohio made a video showcasing a recent Outreach
Team performance held at a local bar. It offered a slick, well-choreographed dance performance with men in their Crew t-shirts dancing and singing. It was high-energy, uplifting, and was a lot of fun for all the participants involved. Once a film like this is posted, members of the Outreach Team will want to show off their performances to their friends.

**Word-of-Mouth**

Word of mouth is certainly the least expensive and most productive means of publicizing the Mpowerment Project. Finding ways to encourage Core Group members, volunteers, and other young gay/bisexual men in the community to talk about the Project and its upcoming events is one key to the publicity plan’s success. We suggest bringing up this topic at every Core Group meeting, to remind and motivate members to chat about the Project with their friends and acquaintances by posting reminders of upcoming events using their individual social networking sites. Regardless of how many times a young man sees a Project’s website, event listings on Facebook or MySpace pages, or a flyer in the community, a word-of-mouth invitation is almost always the most important reason a young man attends a Project activity for the first time.

It may also be helpful to designate specific nights, meetings, or events as “bring-a-friend” activities. Additionally, once the Project develops promotional materials such as t-shirts, hats, lanyards, buttons, etc., encourage Project participants to wear them as much as possible. These serve as “walking billboards” for the Project and help convey the image that it is a popular, dynamic force in the community. Ideally, wearing these accessories may also trigger inquiries and conversations about the Project with people who see men wearing them.

**Event and Project Promotion at Community Events**

Community events can provide great opportunities to promote the Mpowerment Project. Various Projects have participated in gay-themed events including local gay pride festivals, coming out days, and gay pride parades, and staffed booths at gay pride festivals. Sometimes at these events the Project can set up a booth about its activities, and distribute promotional materials. Special promotional materials can be developed in keeping with the theme of the event. But in addition, some fun, creative approaches can be used to draw attention to the Project.

For example, the Men’s Program in Brattleboro, VT had a “Men Seeking Handstands” event in a public square when a farmer’s market was taking place. Members of the community were encouraged to do a handstand in honor of the gay/bisexual men in their lives. About 70 handstands were done in an afternoon, including some by mothers, brothers, sisters, and fathers. Pictures were taken of and given to each person who performed a handstand. It was a creative way to draw attention to the Project as well as to generate good will in the community for all the gay “brothers” in their midst.

**Event and Project Promotion Outreach**

As discussed in Module 7: Formal Outreach—Social Outreach Events and Outreach Team, the Outreach Team can also conduct fun, engaging, and
The Outreach Team can also conduct fun, engaging, and interactive performances at bars and other community events to promote the Project.

Interactive performances at bars and other community venues and events to publicize each large Social Outreach Event. Sometimes the costumes are just fun in and of themselves (for example, when promoting the Project). At other times the costumes relate to the theme of an upcoming event. Some Project Coordinators shy away from conducting themed outreach, in which men go to bars and community locations wearing costumes around a theme. However, we have observed that in many Projects, after the Coordinators tried it themselves, they found that costumed outreach was an effective recruitment tool.

For example, the Coordinator of the Guateke Project in San Juan, Puerto Rico felt that they were losing steam with their Project outreach. As a consequence, they were finding it difficult to recruit enough men for M-groups since too few new men were attending the Project. They had been relying on conducting outreach at the bars by wearing jeans and a t-shirt with the Project logo, but they were starting to feel a little stagnant. So the Coordinator held a couple of pep talks with the Core Group. He believed that themed outreach was the best hope for getting the word out, reinvigorating the group, and meeting their M-group recruitment goals. As an experiment, he convinced them to conduct an outreach event dressed in a camouflage costume, with the understanding that afterward they would reflect on the response from bar patrons and the effect it had on recruitment to M-groups. Core Group members found, to their surprise, that they were well received by the bar patrons and were able to more easily recruit for M-groups and meet their programmatic objectives. From that point on, they strove to create new and interesting visual themes for their outreach because they truly believed that it worked.

Projects that are successful at themed outreach usually have an engaged and outgoing Outreach Coordinator who makes it "safe" for other volunteers to become more outgoing. They also seek out and mentor young men who are more theatrical, like to attract attention, and are flamboyant. The most successful themed outreaches play on sexy and erotic themes.
Here are examples of some successful themed outreach events:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project/Location</th>
<th>Themed Event</th>
<th>Bar Zap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACHE, Puerto Rico</td>
<td>Sexy Cowboys</td>
<td>Men wore cowboy hats, bandanas, flannel shirts, jeans with holes, lassos, and cowboy boots. Safer sex messages referenced Brokeback Mountain and other cowboy folklore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin Men's Project, Austin, TX</td>
<td>Futurama: the Future of Safer Sex</td>
<td>Time travelers came back in time to share the future of safer sex. The team had futuristic silver clothing, spiked hair, and everything neon and “glow-in-the-dark” including ray guns and body paint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin Men's Project, Austin, TX</td>
<td>Bedazzled Armed Forces</td>
<td>Promoting a large military themed event “Basic Training”—members went to an army supply store and bedazzled everything they bought—they military fatigues and added glitter! They were the refashioned army of love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin Men's Project, Austin, TX</td>
<td>Camp Counselors</td>
<td>Promoted a large event: CAMP AMP, which was a picnic in a park full of camp activities. Members wore khaki shorts, bandanas, whistles, and a counselor hat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM Project, Lafayette, LA</td>
<td>Playful Bunnies</td>
<td>Men wore pastel colored t-shirts, bunny ears, bow-ties, and little bunny tails. They distributed plastic Easter eggs by basket, each containing condoms and lube, a Project invite, and safer sex messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM Project, Lafayette, LA</td>
<td>Fairies</td>
<td>Members dressed in feathered wings, red minishorts, and body paint. They passed out mini-blow bubbles and blow pops with fun messages that promoted safer sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPower Albuquerque, NM</td>
<td>Hot Firemen</td>
<td>Volunteers borrowed actual firemen clothing and equipment. They conducted a safer sex safety drill with everyone in the bar. Safer sex packets included redhots and red-hot jawbreakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPower, Albuquerque, NM</td>
<td>Sexy Sailors</td>
<td>Men wore white sailor caps with blue scarves, white t-shirts, and dark jeans. Guys handed out messages with safer sex jargon that referenced sailor and military culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPower OC, Orange County, CA</td>
<td>Greek and Roman Mythology of Safer Sex—Pride festival float</td>
<td>Men dressed as Roman soldiers, and a slew of mythological characters including Apollo, Aries, Mercury, and Athena. Roman guards and centurions were also in attendance. The float was decorated as a simple Greek temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPower OC, Orange County, CA</td>
<td>Baseball players</td>
<td>Men wore jerseys, cleats, baseball caps, and baseball bats. They talked with baseball jargon, and the safer sex messages were full of baseball references. Everybody made it to third base.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride Mission, Santa Barbara, CA</td>
<td>Condomaniacs</td>
<td>Each Outreach Team member dressed as a different condom to promote safer sex. “Sheik” dressed as an Arabian, “Ramses” in an Egyptian costume, “Crown” as a King, ” etc. Each condom man went around the bar asking patrons to identify which condom he represented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.E.C. Boys, Detroit, MI</td>
<td>“Power of Prevention” Large event promotion.</td>
<td>Promoting the large event “Power of Prevention,” members dressed as popular super heroes including Wonder Woman, Batman, Robin, Spiderman, Wolverine, Posion Ivy, Catwoman, the Flash, Silver Surfer, and Harlequin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectrum, Pensacola, FL</td>
<td>Mailmen</td>
<td>USPS outreach. Members dressed as mailmen and delivered safer sex letters to patrons. They also made sure everyone’s “package” was safe that night.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The telephone
As simple as it seems, the telephone is a critical tool for communicating with your target audiences. More mileage can be gotten out of it by adding an answering machine or voice mail so callers can leave messages. One advantage of the telephone is that it is available to everyone.

We encourage agencies to dedicate a phone line to their Mpowerment Projects, especially if the Project is housed in an agency space. Young men will be turned off by a Project if they have to go through an agency operator who answers the phone, “Thank you for calling AIDS Services, may we help you?” A Project that has its own phone number is likely to be viewed as an independent Project and not associated as an HIV/AIDS service provider.

Consider creating a versatile voice mail system with multiple mailboxes that can provide announcements about upcoming activities, take messages, and allow callers to leave messages for specific staff members (both Coordinators and key volunteers).

Record greetings that are clear, friendly, and inviting. One example of a telephone greeting appears below. For many men, their first contact with the Project may be when they hear the greeting on the answering machine or voice mail system. Whether the Project makes a good first impression or not often depends on it. We suggest asking several people to listen to the greeting and provide feedback. Does it inspire a caller to leave their phone number (a big risk for some) or to call back at another time? Saying that phone calls will be returned discreetly sometimes also helps. Here is a sample telephone greeting from The Austin Men’s Project:

“Hello, and thank you for calling the Austin Men’s Project. AMP is young gay/bi and curious guys working together to build a strong and supportive community. If you would like to leave a message for David Sweeney, Outreach Coordinator, press one now. If you would like to leave a message for John Carter, Events Coordinator, press two now. If you would like to hear more about upcoming events, press three. All return calls will be made discreetly.”

Referrals
During your community assessment (see Module 2: Community Assessment), be sure to ask young gay/bisexual men where they receive services and where they go to socialize and meet other young gay/bisexual men. These organizations may serve many men from your target population. In fact, they may also employ potential participants or have them in their volunteer base. Either way, they are crucial vehicles for getting the word out about the Mpowerment Project. In doing so, they can help attract young gay/bisexual men to events and interest them in becoming more involved as Community Advisory Board members, staff, or volunteers.

We recommend that that all community organizations that have contact with young gay/bisexual men be informed about the Mpowerment Project and provide them with the information they need to refer young men to the Project. Ask them to add the Mpowerment Project to their referral
lists and make Project materials available in their offices. In addition, Mpowerment Project staff can maintain an up-to-date list of agencies that Project participants may wish to contact. Solid linkages to other relevant organizations can be made when Project Coordinators personally meet with their leaders to describe the Project in detail. Referrals should go in both directions: from the Mpowerment Project to local community agencies, and from the agencies to the Project.

Make special efforts to gain the support of relevant agencies, since these can increase the likelihood of receiving referrals from them. For example, if many men receive HIV testing from the local health department, then a good first step is to make sure the clinic has Project flyers, brochures, and announcements for upcoming Project events. We recommend that you have a system in place to replenish their supply of publicity materials. Organizations often forget to request more materials when they run out. A second step might be trying to conduct an in-service session with the staff and volunteers of these agencies. That way, they can put a face and name to your Project. This can increase the likelihood that they will remember to distribute your materials to clients when appropriate, and to display them in waiting areas. Introductory letters and follow-up phone calls to these agencies can be remarkably effective. Most service providers will want to know whether an organization provides services that are of high quality, free or affordable, culturally appropriate, and confidential. Only then are they likely to refer potential participants to your Project, and to do so in a way that increases the likelihood they will actually contact the Project.

The Austin Men’s Project compiled a list of supportive community agencies and mental health professionals and mailed them packets containing their monthly calendar and current promotional materials. The benefit of mailing these materials is that time didn’t need to be spent bringing them to a venue. However, it may be important to visit the space occasionally and see if these materials were hung up. If not, ask why.
Networking

Networking simply means talking to people about the Mpowerment Project and getting leads on whom else you should contact. It is a particularly important method for reaching potential Community Advisory Board members and for gaining access to funders to present your case. As you network, develop a list of contacts with their addresses and phone numbers, the potential role they might play in the Mpowerment Project, and any other relevant information. Talk to people you meet socially as well as those you make contact with in establishing a referral system. Having a strong network of support for the Project will help ensure its longevity.

Treat the people in your network well. Keep them informed about the Project, either through a newsletter or by sending out concise emails and letters periodically. Occasionally you may also want to hold events with the express purpose of updating people in your network. These “Friends of the Project” events need not be elaborate, and can be hosted either by Project staff or the Community Advisory Board. Their main purpose is to maintain among members of your network a sense of involvement in the Project by updating them on what is happening and conveying your own enthusiasm for what you feel is being accomplished.

For example, the Austin Men’s Project (AMP) developed a mutually beneficial relationship with their Lesbian, Bisexual, and Gay Student Association at the University of Texas (LBGSA). AMP representatives attended their weekly meetings and all of their events to publicize the Project and upcoming Social Outreach Events and other activities. While few members of LBGSA joined the Core Group, many of them regularly attended AMP events.
Win $100 Logo Design Contest

**What:** MPower, a group of young gay/bisexual men (ages 18-29) in Albuquerque working together to build community and promote safer sex, is holding a logo design contest and will award $100 to the winning designer.

**Logo:** The logo will serve as the visual symbol of the Project and will appear on all printed materials including promotional pamphlets, posters, flyers, stationery, t-shirts, etc. The logo should be in black and white, should be capable of being reproduced clearly using a copier, and should look good if reduced in size to two inches. We’d like the logo to be an appealing image that would attract young gay/bisexual men to become involved in Project activities and that would create a positive image of the Project within the Albuquerque gay/bisexual community. The contest is open to everyone, and there’s no limit on the number of designs you can submit. The more exciting, trendy, clever, seductive, sex-positive, community spirited, and eye-catching the logo, the better!

**MPower:** MPower conducts a variety of peer outreach activities in Albuquerque, New Mexico—at bars, gay community events and organizations and other gay settings, informal networking, and small group meetings. We also sponsor events for young gay/bisexual men in Albuquerque ranging from weekly movie nights to hiking trips to large parties and dances at which HIV prevention outreach occur. All the events are fun and offer great opportunities for young gay/bisexual men to meet, socialize, and help build a strong sense of community.

**Entry:** Please submit a detailed sketch of your proposed design on 8.5 x 11 paper. MPower’s Core Group (comprised of 15 young gay/bisexual men from Albuquerque) will then review all submissions and select their favorite. If your design is selected, you will then be asked to produce the final, camera-ready copy of your proposed design. The artist whose design is selected will receive $100 in payment.

**Contact:** John Hamiga, 120 Morningside NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110.
For a Valentine's Day dance, the publicity committee decided they wanted to post flyers throughout the community (at three different points in time) and run an ad in the gay paper that comes out one week before the event. As you can see, in a relatively tight timeline, it takes approximately six weeks of planning to do adequate publicity for the dance.

### Sample Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approach volunteer designer with concept</td>
<td>1-3-02</td>
<td>Week One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist produces first draft of flyers and ad</td>
<td>1-7-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee discusses and gives feedback</td>
<td>1-8-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist revises flyers and ads</td>
<td>1-12-02</td>
<td>Week Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Group discusses and gives feedback</td>
<td>1-13-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist revises flyers and ads</td>
<td>1-15-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test market flyers and ads</td>
<td>1-16-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist revises flyers and ads</td>
<td>1-20-02</td>
<td>Week Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyers to printer</td>
<td>1-20-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of flyer</td>
<td>1-23-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyer uploaded to social networking sites</td>
<td>1-23-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of flyer</td>
<td>1-30-02</td>
<td>Week Four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement deadline for 2/6 issue</td>
<td>1-30-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of flyer</td>
<td>2-6-02</td>
<td>Week Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event: Valentine's Day Dance</td>
<td>2-14-02</td>
<td>Week Six</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Download this form as a Word document at [www.mpowerment.org/downloads/figure10-2.doc](http://www.mpowerment.org/downloads/figure10-2.doc)
**Publicity Plan:**
Due Dates and Person Responsible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Strategy</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outreach at Venues</td>
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<td>Community Events</td>
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<td>Weekly E-mail</td>
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<td>LBGT Student Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mailing List</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post Flyers/Calendars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Radio Spot</td>
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<td>Internet</td>
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<td>Myspace</td>
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<td>Twitter</td>
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</table>

Download this form as a Word document at www.mpowerment.org/downloads/figure10-3.doc
Attached is an article written by Andrew Hyde for Mu Crew in Dayton, OH. It was submitted to The Advocate’s online edition and published in March of 2005.

The boys are back in town

The youngest Amazing Race contestant is now helping to organize activities for young gay, bi, and questioning men in his adopted Ohio hometown. The goal is 90% fun and 10% safer-sex education, and it's working.

By Andrew Hyde

Hey, you gay men out there: Have you ever heard your friends complain that there is nothing to do where you live? Or that you can’t meet guys anywhere except the bars or the Internet? Well, meeting people is a problem that has plagued gays for decades. If you’re not into drinking or second-hand smoke at clubs, or antsy about meeting a potential serial killer via e-mail, what are your options for dating? Well, the times, they are a-changing.

I was a cast member on The Amazing Race on CBS—the openly gay cheerleader son from Kentucky, traveling with his conservative Southern Baptist dad, for you diehard fans out there. Ever since racing around the world and getting those famed 15 minutes you hear so much about, I have strived to use my newfound confidence and international out status to provide strength and guidance to those growing up in the generation behind me.

Just recently I moved to the state of Ohio, and I found that conservatism and closed-mindedness run rampant regardless of where you plant yourself in the Midwest. But there are a few of you trying to change that, and to raise the bar on what is acceptable for gay men. Despite my bad luck not winning the million bucks on TV, I was blessed to find the AIDS Resource Center Ohio, which had the same goal and vision in mind as I do.

ARC Ohio brought me in to coordinate the Mpowerment Project. This Project was created several years ago, evolving out of the University of California, San Francisco’s Center for AIDS Prevention Studies. It has slowly crept across the country and is now nationwide. This program was created to provide a group for gay, bisexual, and questioning men to become a part of, take ownership of, and send out safer-sex education in their communities through social networking.

The Project has been endorsed by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and others for its proven effectiveness in reducing behaviors known to transmit HIV. The program is directed toward guys aged 18 to 29 and is usually funded through grants obtained by the individual AIDS service organizations that sponsor the program.
The Mpowerment Program in Dayton, Ohio, has chosen the title Epsilon Mu Pi, or simply the Mu Crew, which represents the social aspect of a fraternity for young men. Since last fall we've been going strong, hosting such events as a pajama party, a Halloween bash, potluck dinners, movie nights, a pool party, and a huge New Year’s blowout. Coming soon we have planned a trip to the world’s largest cave for hiking and camping, and we have a white-water rafting trip in the making, as well as many other huge ideas.

Most guys just out of high school lose a huge portion of their social group, and being gay often makes fraternities or the workplace a difficult place to build a strong circle of friends. The Mu Crew is tailored for those in the professional world as well as for all the students at five surrounding colleges. We have computer geeks, athletes, professionals, students, movie buffs, music freaks, bookworms, gym bunnies, activists; you name it, we’ve got it. We pride ourselves on our diversity and the ability to accept anyone—including their differences.

While our program is only a few months old, we can already count hundreds of individuals who have come to events and heard our safer-sex messages. HIV is on the rise again and we’re doing our best to make sure the young community knows the facts about the virus and how to protect themselves and their friends.

For our program, the winning combination seems to be 90% fun trips, parties, and meetings, and 10% focused educational activities. This seems to be the perfect mix to keep guys involved and yet not burned out on the ongoing message.

When I first moved to Ohio I had no friends for quite some time because I worked so much. I had no one to go to the movies with. Now, with our group, I call one guy from the Crew, and 30 guys show up at the theater to watch a movie with me. We’re reaching the community like wildfire, and I am convinced that over the course of the next couple of years that the rate of new HIV infections will decrease in our area.

Now many guys’ lives in our area have changed. They say, “There’s so much going on I don’t know if I have time for all the parties and camping and stuff.” But I feel that that is a good problem to have.
AMP. GET INVOLVED. Community is what you make of it, and AMP is all about young gay men coming together to build a strong and supportive one. Call 447-4270 or surf www.austinmensproject.com

NO GURLZ ALLOWED! Well, not really, but we are all about young gay/bisexual men building a strong and supportive community. Call 447-4270. GET INVOLVED! www.austinmensproject.com

DOES MOM KNOW YOU’RE GAY? The Austin Men’s Project (AMP) is young gay/bisexual men coming together to build a strong and supportive community. Call 447-4270 or surf www.austinmensproject.com MARTHA SEZ AMP Is a good thing! Young gay, bi, and curious men coming together to build a strong and supportive community. 447-4270 www.austinmensproject.com

AMP - FULL THROTTLE Austin’s first and only young gay/bisexual men’s community-building project. Call 447-4270 for details. David, Jesse, and Luis love you. www.austinmensproject.com

HOT SEX! AMP! BOYS! Now that we have your attention, check out the young gay/bisexual men’s program that’s all about building a strong and supportive community for and by us! 447-4270 www.austinmensproject.com
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Together creating community for friendship for health for life

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Download a PDF of Module10, Publicizing the Mpowerment Project, at www.mpowerment.org/downloads/module10.pdf