Merck’s HIV Campaign, *I Design*, Partners with Music Industry Promoter and HIV Advocate Maria Davis and Positive Women’s Network - USA to Encourage Women Living with HIV to be “Vocal” about their Treatment

“Speaking Up” is Vital, Given the Significant Impact of the Disease on Women

WHITEHOUSE STATION, N.J., July 17, 2014 – Merck (NYSE: MRK), known as MSD outside the United States and Canada, today announced that Maria Davis – a music industry promoter and HIV advocate – and Positive Women’s Network – USA (PWN-USA) – are joining its national HIV education campaign, *I Design*. The awareness campaign will help inspire and motivate women living with HIV to “vocalize” how they are feeling on their treatment plans, and to work with their healthcare teams to design treatment plans specific to their individual health needs.

“As an organization founded to build collective power among women living with HIV, we are glad to partner with Merck and the *I Design* campaign in our shared mission to support women living with HIV in advocating for our health and rights,” said Naina Khanna, Executive Director of PWN-USA. “Women living with HIV have unique needs and face specific challenges that healthcare providers should take into account when considering treatment and care plans. Community leaders like Maria Davis can help underscore the importance for women to amplify their voices in open, meaningful conversations between them and their care providers.”

Only four in ten women diagnosed with HIV have the virus under control; therefore, it’s important to support women in having an open dialogue with their healthcare team regarding their treatment.

It is estimated that there are more than 275,000 women living with HIV in the U.S., of which a disproportionate number are African-American. “As an African-American woman living with HIV, it is critical for me to make sure my voice is heard in discussions with my healthcare
team and I want to encourage other women living with HIV to do the same,” said Davis. “That is why I am proud to be part of the I Design campaign and lend my voice to help mobilize women.”

Maria Davis, a music industry insider who currently produces and directs music showcases for signed and unsigned artists, was diagnosed with HIV in 1995 after unknowingly contracting the virus from the man whom she was planning to marry. She always thought “it could never happen to me” and has since become a devoted advocate for HIV awareness and education. Over the years, Maria has leveraged her position in the entertainment industry to educate the community about HIV by partnering with organizations such as Lifebeat, Music Fights HIV/AIDS and BET Rap it Up Community Service, as well as serving as a keynote speaker for the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, Inc.

Maria joins existing I Design team members Project Runway All Stars Season One winner and Under the Gunn star Mondo Guerra, and renowned HIV activist and acclaimed photographer Duane Cramer, on the campaign’s two-year anniversary.

**Getting Involved with I Design**

I Design is a national HIV education campaign led by Merck, that aims to help empower people living with HIV to work with their healthcare team to take an active role in designing their treatment plan, “vocalize” how their treatment is working in discussions with their healthcare team and “tailor” their HIV treatment plan by approaching treatment “through their own lens.”

To learn more about the campaign, visit www.ProjectIDesign.com where you can download a conversation checklist, which offers tips on how to engage in an open and honest dialogue with your doctor; design a digital textile illustrating your approach to managing HIV; take a quiz about women and HIV; and view videos and photos. To help you track and manage your health, there are the “My Health Matters” and “My Positive Agenda” mobile and desktop apps. These easy-to-use tools help you track the symptoms of your HIV, set up reminders to take your medications on time, and keep a record of when you have taken them, which can serve to prompt you on important discussion points when you are with your doctor.

**About Positive Women’s Network – United States of America**

Positive Women’s Network – USA (PWN-USA) is a national membership body of women living with HIV and their allies that exists to strengthen the strategic power of all women living with HIV in the United States. PWN-USA envisions a world where women living with HIV can live long, healthy, dignified and productive lives, free from stigma and discrimination. PWN-USA’s mission is to prepare and involve all women living with HIV, in all their diversity, including
gender identity and sexual expression, in all levels of policy and decision-making. Founded in 2008 by 28 diverse HIV-positive women leaders, PWN-USA develops a leadership pipeline and policy agenda that applies a gender lens to the domestic HIV epidemic grounded in social justice and human rights. Every day they seek to inspire, inform, and mobilize women living with HIV to advocate for changes that improve their lives and uphold their rights. In addition to federal advocacy, PWN-USA supports regional chapters to build leadership at a local and state level. For more information, visit pwn-usa.org or contact PositiveWomensNetworkUSA@gmail.com.

**Merck's Commitment to HIV**

For close to 30 years, Merck has been at the forefront of the response to the HIV epidemic, and has helped to make a difference through our proud legacy of commitment to innovation, collaborating with the community and expanding global access to medicines. In the United States, we are helping to address healthcare disparities through educational programs and resources that align with the National HIV Strategy. Merck is dedicated to applying our scientific expertise, resources and global reach to deliver healthcare solutions that support people living with HIV worldwide.

**About Merck**

Today's Merck is a global healthcare leader working to help the world be well. Merck is known as MSD outside the United States and Canada. Through our prescription medicines, vaccines, biologic therapies, and consumer care and animal health products, we work with customers and operate in more than 140 countries to deliver innovative health solutions. We also demonstrate our commitment to increasing access to healthcare through far-reaching policies, programs and partnerships. For more information, visit [www.merck.com](http://www.merck.com) and connect with us on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

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