

Dr. Amanda Zawaideh

## Between Ourselves

by Jessica Carreras

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Dr. Amanda Zawaideh, who is part of the team at the family-run DirectRx specialty pharmacy in Royal Oak, was recently appointed to the board of directors for HIV/AIDS non-profit Steppin' Out. The Birmingham resident, who has a wealth of knowledge of HIV/AIDS issues, was also a sponsor of AIDS Walk Detroit through her company and participated in the walk on Sept. 20.

### **1. Why did you decide to join the board for Steppin' Out?**

I decided to join Steppin' Out to give back to the community and make a positive contribution to a reputable organization where my I can put my knowledge to use.

### **2. In what ways have you contributed to the organization since joining?**

Since joining the organization, both my family's pharmacies, DirectRx and ZMC, were proud gold sponsors of the AIDS Walk Detroit. We also sponsored the first Step Inside the Box preview fundraiser that raised \$6,000 for the organization. Additionally, I have been speaking with the various HIV agencies to get a grasp on the unmet needs of HIV-positive individuals to see how Steppin' Out can help.

### 3. What is your personal experience with HIV/AIDS?

I work as a clinical pharmacist with our family-owned business, DirectRx. Our pharmacy services patients with chronic diseases nationwide, and I took a particular interest in HIV patient care early in my career.

As a pharmacist, I have initiated several community outreach programs. My focus has been to develop relationships with various groups by providing education and community services. One successful program I have spearheaded is called Motivational Mondays, which offers education to HIV/AIDS infected patients and inner-city support groups.

I have met many HIV infected patients through my involvement in these programs and others that I have participated in recently. To say that I have been inspired by their stories would be an understatement.



### 4. What should a pharmacist's role be in helping people with HIV?

If there is one goal that I would like for every pharmacist to achieve, it would be to help their HIV patients to understand the vital importance of drug adherence. It is the single most important factor in the treatment of HIV.

Beyond this, every pharmacist should listen to their patients and work with them to develop a drug regimen that works for their lifestyle.

In my work with HIV-positive patients, I found that a simple, discreet method of drug adherence for working individuals was really not readily available. This led our team to develop the EasyPak Rx - a customized, portable dose of the patient's medications. I'm proud to say that this easy-to-use solution has increased adherence in many of my patients. I believe a pharmacist's role should also be innovation and problem-solving for patients.

### 5. HIV/AIDS is still a huge issue in the gay community. What is your view toward helping people who are LGBT?

My focus is on treating patients of all walks of life who suffer from diseases. Because HIV/AIDS is still so prevalent in the LGBT community, I do feel compelled to direct a large part of my efforts toward this group, whether through education, counseling or support.

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