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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **WANT TO HELP GAY MEN QUIT SMOKING?**

#### ***GMFA Recruits for Stop Smoking Outreach Project***

London, 14 October 2009 – Do you enjoy chatting to other gay men on the scene? Are you a non-smoker or ex-smoker and want to help other gay men quit cigarettes? Then GMFA, the gay men's health charity, would love to hear from you. Following the success of its free Stop Smoking courses for gay men, GMFA is recruiting volunteers to help with its latest outreach project. Volunteers will visit gay bars and clubs in London to talk with smokers and to help them on the path to quitting.

Matthew Hodson, Head of Programmes at GMFA, says: "This is not about nagging or pressurising gay men into quitting smoking. No one is going to succeed at quitting if they don't want to. However, we can help those smokers who want to quit find out how to get help and support. We are looking for gay men who are confident in approaching other gay men on the scene to help out with this work. So if you need an extra excuse to chat to gay men in a bar or club – this could well be it!"

Gay men tend to start smoking younger and keep smoking for longer than heterosexual men. Around 70% of gay men who smoke say they want to quit, of which, over 40% have sought support to give up. Furthermore, 47% of HIV positive gay men smoke and this group have an increased risk of lung

cancer, heart disease and emphysema. A spokesman for the stop smoking pressure group ASH recently estimated that around 13,000 gay men in the UK die each year from smoking related illnesses. GMFA has run its successful free Stop Smoking courses for gay men in London since 2001. Nearly 1,000 gay men have attended the sessions, which have consistently achieved a higher success rate than the standard NHS courses.

If you become a volunteer for the outreach work, you will receive full training and support from GMFA, including an induction into the charity, so that you are equipped with the right skills and knowledge before heading out onto the scene. You will also work in pairs, so you won't have to approach venues on your own.

Matthew adds: "Typically we recruit for our courses through adverts and word of mouth. However, by approaching smokers directly, we hope to make this course available to more of those men who want to quit, but are finding it too hard on their own."

If you would like to put yourself forward, please contact GMFA at [newvol@gmfa.org.uk](mailto:newvol@gmfa.org.uk) or call 020 7738 6872.

- ENDS -

### **About GMFA**

Founded in 1992, GMFA is the UK's leading charity dedicated to gay men's health. Its mission is to improve gay men's health by increasing the control they have over their own lives. The organisation is based on the belief that the best health promotion for gay men comes from gay men themselves. For this reason, it uses the knowledge and ideas of its 170 volunteers, most of them gay men, to design and plan its thought-provoking sexual health interventions. These include a range of advertising campaigns, leaflets, postcards and booklets; FS, its health magazine, distributed nationally in gay venues and GU clinics; and national and London-based courses covering sex education, life skills and smoking cessation. In addition, GMFA creates targeted sexual health interventions for black gay men and HIV positive gay men. Independent surveys have concluded that GMFA's campaigns reach up to 60% of the London gay population and that the organisation is the most reliable agency at reaching gay men. The charity runs a range of information websites:

- Sex & Sexual Health, [www.gmfa.org.uk/sex](http://www.gmfa.org.uk/sex) - visited by a third of London's gay men in 2006;

- London Services, [www.gmfa.org.uk/londonservices](http://www.gmfa.org.uk/londonservices) - detailed listing of sexual health services for gay men in London;
- Positive Gay Guide, [www.gmfa.org.uk/positive](http://www.gmfa.org.uk/positive) - information for HIV positive gay men;
- The Guide, [www.gmfa.org.uk/theguide](http://www.gmfa.org.uk/theguide) - a guide to gay sports and social groups in London;
- Quit smoking, [www.gmfa.org.uk/quitsmoking](http://www.gmfa.org.uk/quitsmoking) - information and advice on quitting smoking for gay men;
- About GMFA, [www.gmfa.org.uk/aboutgmfa](http://www.gmfa.org.uk/aboutgmfa) - for more information on GMFA.

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