HH&S Director Presents at UN Population Fund Conference in Middle East

Hollywood, Health & Society Director Sandra de Castro Buffington traveled to the Middle East to present three papers at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Strategic Communication for Behavior Change: Youth Pop Culture, Media and HIV/AIDS conference in Muscat, Oman on July 1-4. Conference participants included four-person national teams made up of a celebrity, a journalist, a young adult “Y-PEER” educator, and a UNFPA staff member from nine Arab countries and key Balkan States.

Offering an orientation to the importance and power of youth pop culture and entertainment media in behavior change and HIV prevention, Buffington delivered presentations on Strategic Communication for Behavior Change and Development: A Paradigm Shift; Working with Producers and Creators in Hollywood to Incorporate Sexual and Reproductive Health, including HIV/AIDS in Popular Television Programs; and Incorporating Health Issues in Entertainment Television Programs: Ethical, Legal and Economic Issues.

Buffington said the “Y-PEER” initiative is an innovative way to empower young people and celebrities in the Middle East to educate each other on critical HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health issues. The brain child of Dr. Aleksandar Sasha Bodiroza, Programme Specialist with UNFPA, “Y-PEER is a comprehensive approach to the promotion of health and well-being of young people in the Arab States, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and East Africa through strategic and innovative communication and partnerships. Its primary focus is prevention of HIV and promotion of sexual and reproductive health and gender equality. The Y-PEER initiative takes its origins in grassroots movements and continues to be directed and implemented by young people from developing countries.”

HH&S Holds Pioneering “Narratives Workshop” at CDC

Hollywood, Health & Society conducted the Impacting the Health of Millions Through Social Marketing and Entertainment Education: The Power of Narratives workshop at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, GA for 30 scientists and senior health marketing specialists on July 28-29, 2008. The workshop prepared participants to use entertainment education and social marketing as strategies for effective awareness and behavior change communication. In addition to providing the theoretical constructs and evaluation results of entertainment education programs, the workshop gave participants practice crafting compelling narratives to convey accurate and timely public health information. An exceptional group of speakers presented original work including Dr. Tom Valente, Director of USC Masters of Public Health Program, Dr. Shelia Murphy, Associate Professor at USC Annenberg School for Communication, Dr. Neal Baer, Executive Producer of Law and Order SVU, Dr. Debra Lieberman, Researcher at University of California Santa Barbara, and Sandra de Castro Buffington, Director of Hollywood, Health & Society. Due to popular demand, HH&S has been invited to return to CDC to conduct the workshop for an additional 50 participants.