



AIDS Community Resources

A Multicultural AIDS Service Agency

Celebrating 23 Years of a Community Responding to AIDS

SERVING CAYUGA, HERKIMER, JEFFERSON, LEWIS, MADISON, ONEIDA, ONONDAGA, OSWEGO, ST. LAWRENCE COUNTIES

September 2006



Viewpoint

by Michael Crinnin

Great sho(u)t huh?!: me trying to compete with the mighty, Niagara Falls, at opening ceremonies for the Empire AIDS Ride 4. The Falls won - hands down - both in volume and inspiration... No big surprise there...

A lot happening, and I am scurrying to catch up from two weeks vacation and 7 days on, "The Ride"... Regardless, I can not not talk about the 'extreme cycling' - looming too large. Always 'a trip' (no pun intended) when a phrase like, "pain in the butt", can be used so literally: one way the whole experience might be neatly summed up..! I'm happy to report that there are other descriptions of this elephant that raise the level of dialogue.

It was a vastly different experience over last year: rainy, humid, and moody - versus a week that was made in, 'bike-weather heaven'. I didn't realize until I was well into this years 'climb' (always seemed like we were going uphill...), how much extra effort/energy/strength was required last year just to, 'hold the road' (white knuckling in the rain...), much less to do the actual work of cycling. This time, my recovery time each day and at the end of the 7 days, was noticeably improved - as was my ability to expand my focus.

Last year, as I think about it, I was pretty much 'self absorbed' - marshaling all my resources just to survive. I had no idea if I was capable of achieving a 560 mile ride, and the road/weather conditions demanded absolute concentration. I had little energy left at the end of a day, and all of that was directed towards a shower, a meal, a few moans and groans, and preparation for the next day.

This time around I actually noticed and appreciated the other riders - and the stunning scenery: a new experience! Green was everywhere, in every variation. Torrents of early summer rain had made for spectacular foliage throughout NYS: pine forest cathedrals, forested mountain backdrops, vast cornfields stretching toward the horizons... Add in the blues: huge cloudless skies, glittering lakes, rivers, reservoirs, streams. I cannot remember ever feeling so completely a part of the natural world: from 6:00AM until 9:00 PM I was literally out of doors - no shelter other than 'Mother Nature': genuinely exhilarating - despite the grind of those never ending hills.

Those other riders and volunteers! Lovely people each and every one - I do not exaggerate - all with a unique story that brought them to this week of cycling. There was the team who joined us from Washington State: all having lost brothers and/or uncles to AIDS. For a number of years they have ridden together in memory of their deceased loved ones, as well as to raise dollars for research and services.

A key organizer of the "Peugeot Sound Riders", John (always smiling and always passing me - had the best clothes, to boot!), with his two children in tow, as volunteers, had a teddy bear ("Road Kill II") affixed to the back of his bike. R K II was rescued along the side of a highway by his older and now deceased brother who, once HIV diagnosed, used to do all the cycling events in the family. After his death, John and his two other siblings took to the highways to keep their brother's memory and efforts alive.

There was Kim: a 26 year old woman in the

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AIDS COMMUNITY RESOURCES

is a not-for-profit, community-based organization, supported by both public and private funds, bringing information and education, direct services, referrals, and advocacy to everyone in our nine-county region who needs help with HIV/AIDS

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Newsletter Editor:
Jean Kessner

AIDS Prevention Efforts in the North Country

When you live in a beautiful, sparsely populated area, it's easy to think that HIV/AIDS (if you think of it at all) is just a big-city disease. At AIDS Community Resources (ACR), we know HIV infections occur in all 9 counties we serve, including St. Lawrence, Jefferson, and Lewis counties in the North Country.

Here are the facts: from 1981, when the Centers for Disease Control first recognized AIDS as a disease, to December 2004, 1339 North Country residents have tested positive for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS; and 611 of them have died.

There is no cure for AIDS, but it is preventable, and ACR's job is to spread the prevention message. One recent summer weekend, members of churches met with Case Manager Sonia Bonilla and HIV Prevention Specialist Karen Loftin to discuss effective ways of educating North Country youth about how to avoid being infected by HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

"The majority of people don't seem to think they have an AIDS problem here," said Sonia Bonilla. "Our plan so far is to work both with churches and the major universities – St. Lawrence, SUNY Canton, SUNY Potsdam, and Clarkson University and bring AIDS awareness through a variety of events."

Initial programs could begin in churches, educating people of all ages about this disease that strikes all ages.

"The first thing ACR would like to do is set up a curriculum of diversity and AIDS awareness training for all age groups," Karen Loftin said. After college students settle in, events would be scheduled on cam-



Canton, July 31, 2006 (left to right): Gary Van Kennan, Judy Van Kennan, Karen Loftin, and Sonia Bonilla.

pus. "It's a work in progress," Loftin said.

AIDS is a serious disease, and some church members are prepared to play a key role in the new awareness partnership. Gary and Judy Van Kennan introduced Bonilla and Loftin to representatives from a number of churches in North Country communities. "We were greeted with open arms," Ms. Bonilla said about their reception by church leaders. "We're anxious to get a prevention strategy designed and up and running."

Potential events now in the planning stages are a fundraising and awareness raising "Great Walk in the North Country", a camp for children of those affected and infected with HIV/AIDS, speakers at churches, civic groups, and universities.

If you want more information about the Partnership for North Country AIDS Awareness, contact the AIDS Community Resources office in Canton, 386-4493 and ask for Sarah McCargar.

New York State Department of Health Website (<http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids/statistics/index.htm>) statistics show 28 people living with HIV/AIDS and 13 deaths over the course of the epidemic in Lewis County.

In Jefferson County, there are 347 current cases of HIV/AIDS and there have been 279 deaths.

In St. Lawrence County, there are 353 people living with HIV/AIDS, and 319 who have died from AIDS.

Continued from Cover

military (with no immediate connection to AIDS, "Just searching for a long bike ride..."), soon to be deployed to Afghanistan – wanting to make sure she attempted such a feat before she, "... risked losing one of her limbs and regretted never taking on such a challenge..." I'm rarely speechless, but I had little more than a, "Wow", to offer Kim – along with a lot of admiration for her sense of self and her place in the universe. She understood 'action on behalf of a cause' – she understood, expected and accepted sacrifice.... And she was fun and funny! I learned an awful lot from the many folks who were many years younger...

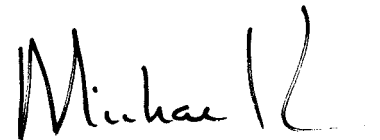
Then there was our team - the ACR Spokes! 10 dedicated 'kick butt' individuals (One of whom - not me - won the "Potty Mouth Award" (!) - no names to be mentioned...). I do not exaggerate when I say how proud I was to be riding as a part of this group: all giving up vacation time, raising money, and putting themselves through months of rigorous training, culminating in a week of unrelenting physical demands – all with great good humor and mutual encouragement.

I have to mention Tristan – "New York City Boy" (but part of our team). After seeing a documentary about an AIDS Ride in the spring, he up and left a bed

he had spent most of the last three years in and began to train... He was the only person who looked better at the end of the 560 miles than at the beginning! I don't exaggerate (and I have photos to prove it...). He was literally transformed. With each passing day he seemed to 'thaw out': smiles and strength and a personality unfolded until we all found ourselves riding with a 'new man' – a whole person who radiated confidence and genuine joy. A gift to be with him.

I felt solid and centered during that week. All of us shared a single vision, arrived at in our own unique way. 24/7 was all about 'The Ride' - There was no ambiguity and there were no losers – only winners, corny as that may sound. It helps to have a genuine sense of hope and possibility every now and then.

Think about it for next year. You won't be sorry – just very satisfied and very sore...



How Wegmans Saved the Week

Like an Army, a team of cross-country bicyclists travels on its stomach. Imagine the calories they burn as they travel 560 miles in 7 days – Niagara Falls to New York City. Imagine how famished they are at days' end. Imagine how they felt the first night of the Empire State AIDS Ride when the caterer suddenly quit! With 26 meals (and 500 miles) to go, AIDS Rochester Board Member Chris Beato contacted his employer, Wegmans, and together they fed the army of bicyclists and proved what an incredibly strong commitment Wegmans has to the communities it serves.

The group of 60 riders and twenty volunteers was well fed by Wegmans' Irondequoit,

Canandaigua, Geneva, Ithaca, and Johnson City Stores, along with much help from Consumer Affairs and Wegmans employees who got the food where it needed to be. The food was delicious, Wegmans generosity astounding.

Empire State AIDS Ride riders and volunteers are grateful, and Chris Beato was awestruck by his employer's actions; his co-worker Ange Fantauzzo said it best, "Chris, I've been with the company for 47 years. This is what we do. In all my years here, there hasn't been a day where I haven't looked forward to coming to work. This is why."

For more on the Ride, see page 4.



Special Thanks to Special People

\$500 Club Party



JoAnn Kennedy

JoAnn Kennedy had never heard of the \$500 club until she came to work as a temp for special projects at AIDS Community Resources (ACR) just three weeks before the AIDS Walk/Run at Beaver Lake Nature Center. She got caught up in the excitement and in two weeks raised more than \$500 for the cause. Why jump into your new job with both feet? "The crown, of course and – the free meal," JoAnn said. "Who would turn down a free meal?" (The meal was the \$500 club party at Outback Steakhouse in Cicero July 22nd. Great food!!!!)

Interesting that she wanted the crown, because in the end she had to give it back. So many walkers

raised more than \$500 dollars, we ran out of crowns and JoAnn gave hers to another.

In all, 64 people qualified for the AIDS Walk/Run \$500 club this year. (In 2005 there were 38.) Online fundraising made it easier. Participants could email their friends and family asking for whatever they could give. No nagging, no checks to write, no cash to bother with – they did it all on line. Their combined effort helped propel revenue from the event to the stratosphere – more than \$143,000 raised to date – a 72% increase over last year! This money is vital to ACR's mission to provide services for those infected and affected by AIDS, and to help pay for youth HIV prevention and education programs.

AIDS Community Resources thanks its sponsors, Power Federal Credit Union, Bristol Myers Squibb, Time Warner, Wal-Mart, National Grid, and The Tunic. Their help, and the help of more than a thousand walkers, runners, volunteers, and employees like JoAnn Kennedy allows ACR to keep getting the job done.

JoAnn, now a permanent employee, says the AIDS Walk/Run opened her 'local' eyes. "AIDS is lodged in our consciousness as a global disease. When we say AIDS we think of Africa, and not the person down the street. AIDS is here, a real threat." One JoAnn works everyday to help eradicate.



Michael Crinnin with Matt Boak and Joan Gentile from Power Federal Credit Union, with Jeffrey Gentile holding the plaque.



Special Events Committee, Tom Angiolillo, Wil Murtaugh, Michael Crinnin, Colleen Clancy, Melissa Samons (back row), Pat Campbell, Ed Skellan (back row), Tom Honors, Mike Ducharme, Amanda Foster.



Stacey Portzline, Aimee Esce, and Marlo Paventi, all Starbucks store managers, along with Michael Crinnin.

Empire State AIDS Ride

The preliminary figures are in. 60 riders representing AIDS Community Resources, raised \$250,000 dollars during the Empire State AIDS Ride 13 - 19. Last year, ACR received \$40,000 from the ride. We know soon how much we raised this year.

Ride Report

The smiles on their faces as they coasted into Slaterville Springs Fire Department for lunch told the story: there was something fun and satisfying about the physical challenge of riding a bicycle 560 miles across New York State.

The best part, said first time rider Paul Riccardi, was the people. "There are so many amazing - inspiring - stories about why people participate." The tale of the cross-country Teddy Bear was a favorite. "One rider from Seattle had a teddy bear, named 'Road Kill', strapped to the back of his bike. I was riding alongside him one day and asked about the bear. It was to honor his brother, he said, who had died of AIDS." The brother had raised money for AIDS by participating in rides. He'd found the teddy bear by the side of the road and strapped it to his bike. After his brother died, his friends and family followed in his bicycle tracks, riding for AIDS all over the U.S. and taking Road Kill along. "They've been doing that for 8 years. That bear's been everywhere," Paul said.

Also inspiring, HIV+ ACR Spokes Team member Tristin who, after 2 years, used the Empire State AIDS Ride 4 as an opportunity to get out of bed, get over his depression, and get back in shape. Tristin was one of those smiling both in Slaterville Springs on Tuesday and New York City on Saturday, feeling accomplished and in fantastic physical shape when he finished. Co-riders noted Tristin's transformation. "After 560 miles he looked better than he looked at the start," said ACR's Michael Crinnin. And there was April who trained for the Empire State AIDS Ride as a way to honor her mother who died of cancer earlier this year.



ACR Spokes Team before starting out.



ACR Spokes Team Captain Mary Doody



ACR's welcoming committee on day 3 of the Ride.



Jo-Anne Balestra has special welcome for Paul Riccardi.



Starbucks store manager Stacey Portzline had her doubts but aced the race.



Michael Crinnin and Sue Farrell, road weary from uncomfortable bicycle seats, use pillows at lunch.



Carrie Large led ACR's efforts and rode in the race three days before a knee injury.



ACR's

Wild and Worthwhile!

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Reflections

Some of the riders have connections to AIDS Community Resources and others ride for the cause. Stacey Portzline, a Starbucks store manager who volunteers regularly for ACR, was wondering what she'd gotten herself into a week before the ride. When it was over she was both ecstatic and pleased. This is giving in a most intimate form. It's easy to call in to a telethon and make a credit card pledge. It's deeply personal and physically demanding when you pledge your money and your endurance.

Paul Riccardi tells another story of two women from the West Coast who met on an AIDS ride in Seattle in 1997. Both were wearing badges with pictures of their brothers. Both men had died of AIDS, and within six days of each other. "The women have ridden together at AIDS rides all over the country since 1997. They wear the badges during the day, and pin them on their tent at night."

The ride brings out the best in people as it puts them to the test, and gives them endless miles to reflect on those they've lost, and the money they are raising to help stop this dreadful disease from spreading. Good to know that from coast to coast, good people are fighting the good fight.

They do something not everyone can say they've done: put themselves to a physical and mental challenge; work hard (and have fun) raising \$3200 for ACR; and spend a week among the most extraordinary people they'll ever meet. Sign up for Empire State AIDS Ride 5, August 12 - 18, 2007. Call (800) 475-2430 and ask for Carrie. Or email her at clarge@aidscommunityresources.com.



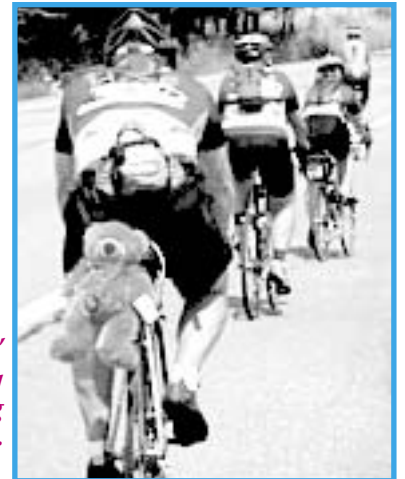
Rider Marnie and volunteer Annemarie at lunch on Day 3.



Luxurious overnight accommodations.



2nd year rider Sue Farrell trying out costumes on "red day".



"Road Kill" the teddy bear hitching a ride.



ACR Spokes member Rosemary Philips and volunteer Catherine Jahncke from the North Country.



ACR Spokes Team member April Koich.



Erin Grieves and Michael Crinin.



Tristin, who looked better everyday



The end of the ride.

Sounding The Alarm In The Hispanic Community

In the HIV/AIDS epidemic, New York's Hispanic communities fare far worse than the national average. 28.3% of those living with HIV and 30.7% of those living with AIDS in New York are Hispanic.

Hispanics make up less than 14% of the U.S. population, but they account for 19% of new HIV diagnoses.

In the past five years, the Hispanic population has soared in Central and Northern New York and the Mohawk Valley.



ACR Harm Reduction Specialists Cass Merrick (left) and Jobany Tirado (right) spread the prevention message on Syracuse's west side.

County	2000 Hispanic Population	2005 Hispanic Population	% Change
Cayuga	1,611	1,777	10.30%
Herkimer	580	891	53.62%
Jefferson	4,677	4,811	2.87%
Lewis	172	211	22.67%
Madison	734	886	20.71%
Oneida	7,545	8,519	12.91%
Onondaga	11,175	12,376	10.75%
Oswego	1,592	1,706	6.68%
St. Lawrence	2,008	2,115	5.33%

To combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic, AIDS Community Resources' peer-based bi-lingual street outreach program Safety First, works to prevent the spread of the disease by offering harm/risk reduction education, supplies, referrals, literature, and HIV testing, to residents in targeted, high-risk neighborhoods, including Hispanic neighborhoods.

Safety First peer-delivered services are offered at approximately 20 neighborhood sites in Syracuse and Utica. Components include peer training and support, street outreach by peers targeted to substance users, and services referrals. Distributed harm reduction materials include: safer sex pamphlets; Hepatitis A, B, & C information; condoms; bleach kits; and HIV Testing Information. Check the calendar for a location near you.

Health educators say some Hispanic communities are less likely to participate in HIV testing, education, and prevention. In part, says the CDC,

because of cultural values such as machismo (sense of manliness), communities may be reluctant to acknowledge risky behaviors, such as homosexuality.

HIV and AIDS disproportionately affect Hispanic adolescents, with the incidence of AIDS for adult and adolescent Hispanics in 2001 more than 3 times higher than among their non-Hispanic white counterparts.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that in 2001 HIV infection ranked as the fourth leading cause of death for Hispanics aged 25 to 44. Also, Hispanics were identified as one of the population subgroups with the highest rates of death from HIV/AIDS in 2001 (6.2 deaths per 100,000).

Heterosexual contact has been shown to be the major mode of HIV transmission among Hispanic adolescents.



ACR offers its services to anyone regardless of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or level of income

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-Or-
info@aidscommunityresources.com

-Or- mail
in the back
page of this
newsletter to:

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UPCOMING EVENTS

September 20, 2006

A Time to Remember, the 7th annual cocktail reception to benefit AIDS Community Resources. 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Fountain Elms Terrace, Munson Williams Proctor Arts Institute, Utica. Tickets \$35 per person, \$60 per couple. Call (800) 475-2430 or email events@aidscommunityresources.com

October 15, 2006

7th Annual First Frost AIDS Walk

Join hundreds of your neighbors and friends in a 5K AIDS Walk through picturesque Thompson Park and Zoo in Watertown. Registration begins at noon. The walk starts at 1 p.m. Call Wil or Carrie at (800) 475-2430. www.aidswalkcny.com

December 1, 2006

World AIDS Day

August 12-18, 2007

Empire State AIDS Ride 5

Call Carrie at (800) 475-2430

PEER/VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

Utica – September 12 – 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

September 23 – 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Syracuse – September 16 – 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

September 28 – 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Please call 475-2430 to sign up.

SUPPORT GROUPS

TREATMENT ADHERENCE

Contact Liz at 475-2430, Ext. 510

SYRACUSE YOUTH GROUP MEETINGS:

LGBTQ (ages 13-18): Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30

Transgender (ages 14-24): 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 5:30 – 7:00

Steppin' Out (ages 19-22): Thursdays, 7:00-9:00

For location and further information: lgbtqyouthcenter@aidscommunityresources.com

UTICA YOUTH GROUP:

Sundays from 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.

For locations and further information, contact Mary Doody at (800-475-2430).