



26 Years
AIDS Community Resources

Viewpoint

By Michael Crinnin
Executive Director



AS I write a group of volunteers are meeting in the conference room outside my door. This is not unusual – depending on the time of the year and time of day. We are entering our busiest special events/fundraising season, so volunteers are particularly ubiquitous as we gear up for Walk/Runs in all three regions we serve.

I confess that too often I take them for granted: an indictment of me and a testimony to them. They ask for nothing in return. I'm not exaggerating. I've been here over 20 years now and never once have I had a volunteer demand attention and or appreciation... And we have a lot of volunteers: hundreds.

Volunteers have cleaned and maintained our central office for my entire time here. They have managed our extensive mailings for almost as long. (These two functions alone save us thousands of dollars a year). They shred our confidential papers; they enter data; they take complete responsibility for every aspect of two monthly client meals; they participate in street outreach both in Utica and Syracuse; as Board members they govern the agency; they distribute posters, flyers and lawn signs for our major events; they adopt client families at Christmas and conduct personal care item drives throughout the year; they deliver and drive; they 'staff' our three aforementioned Walk/Runs – as well as walk and run in them(!); they conduct their own fundraising activities with friends and co-workers; and they now serve in a Front Office/Reception capacity both in Utica and Syracuse easing the strain and pain of budget cuts. I'm sure there's plenty I'm missing.

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Serving
Cayuga,
Herkimer,
Jefferson,
Lewis,
Madison,
Oneida,
Onondaga,
Oswego,
St. Lawrence
Counties

What's this man doing standing on a street corner, before dawn, fifty miles from home? He's trying to break a bad habit and getting no support from the system. Read his story on page 6.



AIDS COMMUNITY RESOURCES

is a not-for-profit, community-based organization, supported by both public and private funds, bringing information, 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

Platoon update!!!! North Country Valentines and Bears **WOW** the troops!



Last month we told you about "Hearts for Heroes" – a huge drive among North Country Teen AIDS Task Force chapters to support ACR's Adopted Platoon of Fort Drum soldiers serving in Iraq. The packages of hand made Valentine cards, candy, and stuffed toys arrived – much to the delight of the soldiers, as we heard in this email from the front lines.

Northern Iraq, February 23, 2010

"Thank you for all the V-Day packages. The guys really appreciated all the cards. The walls of their living spaces are covered in cards. As for the bears, well, rough tough Infantry Soldiers... they had a great time putting smiles on the faces of little Iraqi children. It helps with the relationship between the locals and the US Forces in the area. The adults see how we treat the children and realize that we are not an occupying Army and that we are here to help them and care for the future of Iraq.

"As for the guys, I am so sorry for not sending pictures. It consumes a lot of time trying to upload them. I promise you when we get back I will put a photo album together of things we accomplished here in Iraq.

"Thank you so much again for all the support you and your organization have provided. I know all the small things from the States really boost the guys' morale."
Dennis

AIDS Community Resources is collecting for its April and May shipments. If you'd like to donate, contact clarge@AIDSCommunityResources.com for more information.



The Colton Pierrepont TATF took part in a friendly competition to see who could collect the most bears for 10th Mountain Division soldiers.



2nd Platoon, A Company, 4-31 Infantry Battalion from Fort Drum.

OUR MISSION

The Mission of AIDS Community Resources is three-fold:

- To prevent the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases;
- To provide support services to those who are living with HIV/AIDS; and
- To promote sexual literacy and improved medical outcomes.

Continued from page 1

AIDS Community Resources runs on volunteers (and maybe Dunkin's!). I barely exaggerate. We would be a far less comprehensive prevention and service agency without the community members who continue to sweat for our clients and our cause: all with no monetary compensation. I dare say most human service agencies would agree with me.

Spring is the perfect season to wake up and 'smell the coffee' (I can't help myself...). Lately it's been too easy to focus in on only one kind of capital and miss the resources that hold the foundations strong in good times and bad. Today I'm aware, and today I'm a bit awe struck at the thought of it all. Today I can speak for all those we serve in expressing a deep gratitude to the many who keep us strong.

I hope to hear that buzz outside my office door for years to come.



Bigger than ever crowds at the World's Shortest Mardi Gras Parade

The beads are \$5 – the condoms are free in this AIDS Walk/Run fundraiser in Syracuse.

February 20, 2010 Syracuse~ The crowd grows every year for **Team Stumblers'** fundraiser for the AIDS Walk/Run, coming up in June. This is the third year for the "World's Shortest Mardi Gras Parade" which is sponsored by T.J. Sheehan and Magic Hat Brewing. The Parade helps to maintain youth programming like ACR's Teen AIDS Task Force (in many Central New York middle and high schools) and the Q Center for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth.



← He's the man! Alan Newman of Magic Hat Brewing makes ACR's World's Shortest Mardi Gras Parade possible. Thank you, Magic Hat!

→ Armory Square spectators took a second look at the favors tossed into the air. They expected candy, perhaps, but caught condoms instead. ACR's way of making sure they don't catch anything else!



At Syracuse Stage: counting cash, not calories!



March 7, 2010, Syracuse Stage~ Incredible desserts and coffee donated by W. S. Girvin III and Starbucks Coffee made ACR's annual reception and matinee at Syracuse Stage a huge success this year. We sold 80 tickets, raised \$2,700 and enjoyed a wonderful production of *Lookingglass Alice*.

The emerging threat of Hepatitis C.



Presently, ACR, NYSDOH, and Harvey's Pharmacy supply new needles to injection drug users through a process using vouchers. ACR HIV Prevention Specialists take ACR's mobile street outreach unit into targeted neighborhoods; educate about the health dangers of sharing needles; and offer a voucher that can be redeemed at Harvey's Pharmacy for ten new syringes.

Now AIDS Community Resources is fighting to establish a needle exchange program to make Central New York safer and healthier.

Hepatitis C is now the most common blood borne infection in the United States. In New York State nearly 70,000 infections have been diagnosed in the past eight years.

The hepatitis C epidemic seemed to come out of nowhere, but it is having a strong impact in New York State. The federal government didn't even keep track of infections until 2003, but when the cases were tallied, health officials became alarmed at the explosive rise in infections. In its chronic form, this infectious disease of the liver is a serious illness that can cause long term health problems and even death. The cost to treat chronic hepatitis C is great and significantly stresses the health of the infected individual and the healthcare system at large.

Hepatitis C infection is preventable.

The two leading causes of Hepatitis C infection are injection drug use and unprotected sex - two of the same risks for HIV. AIDS Community Resources has developed effective prevention programs to stop the spread of HIV and is presently working with the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) to expand ACR's mission to include a needle exchange program to get dirty needles out of the hands of injection drug users. Such a move would immediately lower the infection rates of both hepatitis C and HIV.

The Health Department previously established needle exchange programs in big upstate New York cities like Buffalo, Rochester, and Binghamton to curb the spread of HIV. Such a program was **rejected** in Syracuse. With this added epidemic of hepatitis C infections, ACR believes the time is right to try, once again, to bring a needle exchange program to where it is so obviously needed.

ACR has noted an increase in referrals of individuals who are diagnosed with both HIV and Hepatitis C (HCV). In the Mohawk Valley, 28% of ACR clients are co-infected with HIV and HCV. Overall, 18% of all case managed clients within ACR's nine county service area are co-infected.

Hepatitis C healthcare costs are enormous

- 3.9 million Americans are infected with hepatitis C.
- 80% (3.12 million) will develop chronic liver disease.
- Hepatitis C is responsible for one-third of all liver transplants.
- 1,000 people with hepatitis C receive transplants each year.
- The cost per liver transplantation is \$280,000 for one year.
- Liver transplants for hepatitis C alone is \$300 million per year.
- Average lifetime cost in absence of transplant is \$100,000.

New York facts 2001 - 2009: (totals exclude New York City)

- 69,424 individuals were confirmed to have chronic hepatitis C
- 64% were men; 36% women
- 71% were White; 22% Black
- 3,779 cases reported (excluding 2009) in nine counties served by ACR

. and what ACR plans to do about it

Seeking a bridge to somewhere

58-year-old Armecko Reid of Utica is an AIDS Community Resources client who is co-infected with HIV and Hepatitis C. Mr. Reid acquired the viruses by sharing needles to shoot heroin into his veins. He'd been using for 30 years before making the momentous decision to get clean. "I wanted to take the chains off. I couldn't take the hustle of street life any more," Mr. Reid said.

With help from his family, Armecko got off heroin and onto methadone; enrolled in a program at the Center for Addiction and Recovery (CAR) in nearby Clinton and was transported from his Utica apartment to the facility for his daily dose of liquid medication. Then, in April 2008, the facility abruptly closed, **leaving no place in the Mohawk Valley to receive methadone.**

Now, six days each week, Armecko Reid has to get up at 2:30 a.m. to catch a 3:30 a.m. cab to the bus station for a 4:10 a.m. bus to Syracuse. He arrives two hours later and reports to a treatment facility for his methadone treatment, and is back on the bus by 7:00 and in Utica by before 9:00.

On Saturday he receives both Saturday and Sunday doses. One Saturday Armecko missed the bus, and with no methadone in his system, was in the throes of withdrawal by Sunday afternoon, a shaky and jittery agony. "What we need here in Utica is help for drug addicts who want to stay safe. They make it so hard to do the right thing. Your whole life is wrapped up in just staying off heroin."

Donna Vitagliano, President of Insight House in Utica, said CAR's closing has made it much more difficult for those struggling with addictions to overcome them. Having a local location for methadone treatment, Ms. Vitagliano said, "would be one less obstacle for people trying to get their lives back together."

"Armecko Reid is an example of someone who could have escaped HIV and Hepatitis C," said ACR Executive Director Michael Crinnin. "With access to clean needles, he wouldn't have shared needles with other injection drug users."

For now, Armecko Reid is navigating the obstacles, staying off heroin and away from needles. He works with his AIDS Community Resources' Case Manager to be connected to treatment for HIV and Hepatitis C. He is not spreading the virus to others and is not using the emergency room as a doctor's office. Is he tempted to use again? "I never want to go back to the street. I screwed up. I can't take it back. I can just move forward." One bus ride at a time.



“ They make it so hard to do the right thing. ”

Armecko Reid says he wants to transition to using Suboxone, a pharmaceutical used to treat opiate addiction, instead of methadone. The drugs are similar, but Suboxone produces less euphoric ("high") effects and therefore may be easier to stop taking. If he can transition, Armecko would be spared the daily bus rides from Utica to Syracuse.

Reid says injection drug users understand the danger of sharing needles and if a needle exchange program were available it would be utilized.

Syracuse pharmacist recognized for *leadership* in groundbreaking syringe access program

February 19, 2010~ AIDS Community Resources publicly recognized Gary Brothers of Harvey's Pharmacy for his contribution to advancement of public health through the Expanded Syringe Access Program (ESAP). Mr. Brothers' cooperation was vital in the successful implementation of a state sanctioned voucher program designed to get new syringes into the hands of injection drug users in order to reduce their risk of infection. Since June 2008, injection drug users in Syracuse have significantly reduced their risk of infection by trading in vouchers for new syringes at Harvey's Pharmacy.

Every other pharmacy ACR approached in trying to establish ESAP turned us down. They feared the worst – and none of those fears has come to pass. "I've been very happy with how the program is working," said Mr. Brothers. "I know we are making a real difference in people's lives."



AIDS Community Resources' Deputy Director, Wil Murtaugh, and Assistant Director of Prevention Services Joanne Jimenez present a plaque to Gary Brothers in appreciation for his willingness to help when no one else would.



“Knowledge is Power... Get Some”

Young people have a lot of questions about human sexuality. They need straight answers and accurate information. AIDS Community Resources' Teen AIDS Task Force (TATF) **educates** young people about teen issues like healthy relationships and sexual health. Jana Gaeta asked Syracuse's E-L School TATF members: **Why do you think it is so important to learn about HIV/AIDS while people are still very young?**

Would you like a TATF chapter in your school or community group?
Contact mrice@AIDSCommunityResources.com.



Sean Goth

"It is important to learn about HIV/AIDS when you are young because your chances of being exposed to it are less."

Nyair Holloman

"Because when we do have sex in the future we know about testing so we can get tested and see if we or our mate has it."

Gerald Brown

"Simply so we won't get infected."

William Bashaw

"Because in the future when we decide to have sex we know how to find out if our partners could have it."

In the Mohawk Valley - **FIGHT** for change! Town and Gown Teams vie to set new record in 12th annual AIDS Hike for Life

Excitement is building on Hamilton College campus as the countdown begins for the 12th Annual AIDS Hike for Life. It's AIDS Community Resources' biggest Mohawk Valley fundraising event of the year and it's unique in that two distinct groups - town (Utica, Rome, Oneida) and gown (25 Hamilton College student organizations) - work together in a one-day blitz raising money to support AIDS Community Resources.

Get your Team Captain kit today. Call Carrie at 793.0661.



Gown

With nearly all of Phi Beta Chi's junior class studying abroad this semester, Elsie Love will have to hustle to find the 30 members she hopes to attract to her AIDS Hike for Life team. "We are going to raise more money than anyone else. I'm challenging all other sororities to go all out for the AIDS Hike for Life."



Town

Last year he was part of the second highest fundraising team: "Team Dr. J in memory of John R. Noonan PhD." This year, Brian Noonan got a jump start on fundraising with a \$1,000 donation from Wal-Mart. How high will his team total go?



Committee

College campuses are places for big dreams so try this: Hamilton College's AIDS Hike for Life Student Committee has set a \$20,000 campus goal. An overall event goal has been set at \$70,000. In this picture, Danny Harrigan of the Community Committee is on campus to help sign up AIDS Hike for Life participants. He's joined by Ysmerlyn Boez, Elsie Love, and Katie Stefanik who are all working hard for a successful April 25th event.

Fundraising tips to put your team above the rest.

- 1) Ask. Ask. Ask. You only get money when you ask for it.
- 2) Ask BIG. See how high your sponsors will go.
- 3) Set a personal fundraising goal.
- 4) Develop a plan; list everyone you know; decide the best way to ask.
- 5) Start now! Your efforts will quickly gain momentum.

www.AIDSwalkCNY.com



In the Mohawk Valley...TATFers march for a cause



March 13, 2010, Utica~ Low temperatures and high winds couldn't keep Dan, Sarah, Jackie, and Caytie away from the Saint Patrick's Day Parade in Utica.

Dan and Caytie are Oriskany High School Teen AIDS Task Force chapter members, working hard to raise money for the upcoming AIDS Hike for Life. Best friends Sarah and Jackie are friends of AIDS Community Resources.

"The kids were thrilled to be a part of the St. Patrick's Day Parade," said Nicole Skinner, TATF Coordinator for the Mohawk Valley. "They were proud to show their support for the AIDS Hike for Life."





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Or mail in the back of this newsletter to:
AIDS Community Resources • 627 West Genesee Street, Syracuse, NY 13204

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 1, 2010

AIDS Walk/Run Kick-off Breakfast

7:30 – 9:30 a.m.

ACR – 627 West Genesee Street, Syracuse
clarge@AIDSCommunityResources.com

April 25, 2010

12th Annual AIDS Hike For Life

5K fundraising walk and timed run at Hamilton College.
www.AIDSwalkCNY.com

June 6, 2010

18th Annual AIDS Walk/Run

5K fundraising walk, 10K timed run at Beaver Lake Nature Center.
www.AIDSwalkCNY.com

August 16-19, 2010

Empire State AIDS Ride 2010

330-mile bicycle ride from New York City to Washington, D.C. Join the ACR Spokes Team!
Call Carrie at 800.475.2430 or email to:
clarge@aidscommunityresources.com

October 17, 2010

11th Annual First Frost AIDS Walk/Run

5K fundraising walk and 5K timed run at Thompson Park in Watertown.
www.AIDSwalkCNY.com

PEER/VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

Orientation sessions for new peers and volunteers are held twice monthly in both Syracuse and Utica. In Syracuse, call 475.2430. To sign up in Utica, call 793.0661.


SUPPORT GROUPS

SYRACUSE YOUTH GROUP MEETINGS:

LGBTQ [ages 13-18]: Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
TRANSYOUTH [ages 14-24]: 1st Wednesday, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
STEPPIN' OUT [ages 19-22]: Thursdays, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
For location and further information: qcenter@AIDSCommunityResources.com

UTICA LGBTQ YOUTH GROUP:

New Time, New Location. Thursdays 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
For locations and further information, contact Mary Doody at 315.701.2422 or glbtqyouth@AIDSCommunityResources.com

 This newsletter is printed with soy ink