



25 Years  
AIDS Community Resources

# Viewpoint

By Michael Crinnin  
Executive Director



Generally speaking, I'm pretty bored with people's homophobia: "the prejudice against (fear or dislike of) homosexual people and homosexuality." So much ado about nothing, it seems to me. I have to admit however to a certain fascination with the many Individuals (who wouldn't know an Old Testament prophet or New Testament evangelist if they lived next door to one), who justify their homophobia based on, 'what the Bible says', once anything 'gay' lands on the conversational table ("Give me that olde time religion..."). I figure if they are lucky, one day they'll get over it, and that I can't be bothered entertaining such head-in-the-sand bigotry. Alas, never quite that easy to dismiss: too often a situation arises that compels me back to center demanding a response... So, here we are.

A couple of weeks ago a staff member alerted me to an unfolding drama in one of our regional school districts: the Superintendent demanded the removal of all 'Safe Space' stickers from faculty bulletin boards/offices/classrooms. These stickers (note the top of page #3) serve to alert students who experience themselves as gay/lesbian/bi/transgender /or 'questioning' (GLBTQ), that if they find themselves in need of adult protection, respite from bullying, guidance, etc., they can trust the faculty member who displays this sticker to take their concerns seriously .

The reason given for the removal order was (I am not making this up): the viewing of these stickers could cause kids to become gay... What does one say to do justice to such a remark – such a belief?! More to the point, what does it say to the students in question...? Think about that for a moment....

In this day and age when rampage school shooting sprees are not unheard of, there is an assumption that anyone in authority, much less someone with the job of school district superintendent, is highly attuned to issues of safety and security.

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Cayuga,  
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Oswego,  
St. Lawrence  
Counties

For a good time...  
turn to page 4



# 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

# North Country youth *launch* petition drive to save TATF

Youth served through AIDS Community Resources' Teen AIDS Task Force sexual health education program launched a petition drive to restore funding from United Way of Northern NY. This year TATF, also known as Teaching Awareness Through Friends, received \$7,500 from United Way, funding that stopped March 31. TATF members hope their petitions will convince United Way of Northern New York to reconsider.

ACR Executive Director Michael Crinnin has assured North Country TATF chapters that the programming will be maintained through the end of the school year through ACR general funds. However, Mr. Crinnin said that it is unrealistic to expect that ACR can carry the program indefinitely. "We are looking actively for new funding streams and I hope that things will be back on track prior to the beginning of next school year," said Mr. Crinnin.

TATF is the only youth driven programming that meets young people "where ever they are at" (schools, youth groups, community centers, and Mental Health/Substance facilities) in St. Lawrence, Jefferson, and Lewis counties. TATF focuses specifically on educating adolescents about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, smart sexual health decision-making, healthy relationships, and drug and alcohol dangers.

"Without the TATF, many of our clients in the North Country would have gone without a lot of support this year," said Teen AIDS Task Force Coordinator Marissa Rice.

North Country TATF chapters are very active in their communities, hosting meet and greets with ACR clients for social support, providing food and personal care items, gifts for the holiday season, and handmade blankets. "These teens are truly an inspiration to us all as to what we can do for others," said Ms. Rice.

North Country TATF HIV Prevention Specialist Angela Foster said, "I understand that United Way of NNY has had to make some tough decisions, but young people make tough decisions every day that affect their health, safety and future life. They need to know how to make smart decisions, and TATF gives them the tools to do that."

For more information, about current TATF programming and past events go to [www.myspace.com/tatfcoordinator](http://www.myspace.com/tatfcoordinator).

Indian River TATF chapter with a snowman on World AIDS Day, 2008.



Canton and Colton TATF chapters visit an AIDS Quilt display in Albany.



Clifton Fine TATF chapter poses on the stairway.

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# SAFE SPACE

A "Safe Space" sticker lets Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Questioning students know that in this space, they will receive understanding and support

The Q Center @ ACR (315) 472-0260. Supporting LGBTQ young people and their allies

A further assumption is that anyone in such a position would be aware of the consistent and comprehensive data on kids who are most vulnerable in the school setting. I stand corrected in my assumptions.

A bit of data: GLBTQ youth are 4 times more likely to have been threatened with a weapon at school; their dropout rate is three times the national average; they are 190% more likely to use drugs or alcohol to self-medicate than their heterosexual peers; they represent over 42% of homeless and runaway youth, as well as 30% of all adolescent suicide deaths each year in this country. You think the idea of alerting these teens to a safe space/person might be more than just a good idea..?!

I'm sure there are back stories about not wanting to upset the parents (of heterosexual kids). Or perhaps it was a parent who triggered the superintendent's decree...? This is leadership - this is courage and integrity? This is why someone gets paid the 'big bucks' – to keep parents from becoming upset - kids safety issues be damned...?!

Old Testament prophets are known for railing against those who turn their back on the poor and the helpless – the orphan and the widow – those most vulnerable in the society... They rained down condemnations loud and clear.... I have a feeling a few of them would have had this superintendent for breakfast. No 'safe space' to hide. How do I know? The Bible tells me so.

*Michael Crinnin*

## Ride, Baby, Ride!!!



Pedal those pounds off and pump up donations! Need to work out your charitable giving impulses as well as your body? Last year when Mary Doody and Michael Crinnin returned to work they looked trim, fit, and suntanned after a week off for the Empire State AIDS Ride. Do you want to be trim, fit, and suntanned? Sign up to ride 560-miles across New York State from Niagara Falls to Battery Park in lower Manhattan to benefit AIDS Community Resources. 1.800.475.2430 or [clarge@aidscommunityresources.com](mailto:clarge@aidscommunityresources.com)



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RIDERS WANTED**

**475-2430**

**AIDSCommunityResources.com**

# In the Mohawk Valley... Attendance and Enthus

The weather was perfect, attendance was great, and the AIDS Hike For Life raised \$35,505 (and climbing). AIDS Community Resources was thrilled with the total, despite the fact that it was less than a year ago. "Corporate sponsorships were down because of the economic downturn and many teams had trouble raising as much money as before," said AIDS Community Resources Development Director Wil Murtaugh. "That doesn't diminish what we accomplished at Hamilton College. Hundreds of people came out to support us – including a first for the AIDS Hike For Life – two teams made up almost exclusively of our clients, Mr. Murtaugh said.

AIDS Community Resources has lost more than \$300,000 from state and federal sources in the last year; a 20% reduction from United Way of Greater Utica has put ACR youth programs in danger. "Programming that keeps young people safe from HIV and other STDs is important work and we have been doing it for years," said Mr. Murtaugh. "We will have to go for the gold like never before at the AIDS Walk/Run on June 7th to help make up deficits, but I know our community will come through."

All of the money raised at the AIDS Hike For Life stays in the Mohawk Valley to finance emergency client needs and programs to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV in youth.



Top Fundraising Team: Romeo and Juliet's



2nd Highest Fundraising Team: Dr. J in memory of John R. Noonan PhD



3rd Highest Fundraising Team: The Green Hikers



3rd Highest Individual: Jeannine Murtaugh with Allison Gaston-Enholm



Highest Individual Fundraiser: Chaleau Valeriano-Evans



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**Fastest Female Runners:**

Ashley Langer • Kate Callahan • Elisabeth Ursell

**Fastest Male Runners:**

Jonathan Peres • Brian Kiely • Jeremy Wattles



Most Creative Team: Tin Foil Aliens



2nd Highest Fundraising TATF Oriskany High School



Jason Smith, Aiden (below) and Tricia West of The Hartford present a \$1,000 check.



#1 College Fundraising Team:  
Fabio Stole My Cutoffs



2nd Highest Individual Fundraiser:  
Tamara Delgado



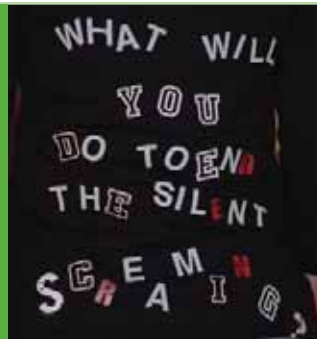
2nd Highest Fundraising College Team:  
The Will Beats AIDS

In the North Country...

## Sometimes in order to be *heard*, you have to be *silent!*

Many North Country TATF Chapters observed the Day of Silence on April 24, 2009 in a coordinated effort to raise awareness about the effects of harassment, name calling, and bullying on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth in their own communities. Youth Services TATF, Canton TATF, Robin's Rebels TATF, Indian River Drama Club TATF, Watertown HS TATF, Indian River GSA TATF, and WAGY TATF, each with the support of their respective administrations, took part in calling attention to school violence faced by thousands of students daily across the country. Chapter members spent months preparing, planning, organizing, networking, advertising, and meeting with staff and administrators to ensure the day was a success. Kudos to all of you who dedicated yourselves to this project and committed yourselves to following through and advocating on your own behalf – you did a great job!

Angela Foster



## WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

**Less than a year after CDC announced the U.S. HIV epidemic is much larger than previously thought, the public's sense of urgency is down.**

In 2008, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that there were **40 percent more new HIV infections each year** than previously believed. Now a survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation finds:

- Only **six percent of Americans** name HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem facing the nation. (It was 44% in 1995).
- HIV rates are **seven times higher** among African Americans and three times higher among Latinos compared to whites.
- Only 17% of those 18-29 say they are **very concerned** about becoming infected with HIV. (It was 30% in 1997.)

We have work to do! Help AIDS Community Resources spread the prevention message. Volunteer! Donate! Educate! Call 800.475.2430 or email [information@aidscommunityresources.com](mailto:information@aidscommunityresources.com).

In Central New York... *Party! Party!*

February 21, 2009 – Armory Square, Syracuse – The 2nd annual World's Shortest Mardi Gras Parade stopped traffic as revelers grabbed free beads, candy, and condoms thrown into the crowd by marchers. Magic Hat Brewery's Lucky Kat float purred along Walton Street with an important message: always take time to enjoy irresistible pale ale...always make love safely.



"Lucky Kat" float representing Magic Hat Brewing Company the 10th largest brewer of craft beer in the country.

Volunteers Gavin and Karen carry the ACR banner down Walton Street.

## Central New York man breaks long silence... Now he's *talking the talk* and *walking the walk*

For six years an Auburn man kept his HIV diagnosis secret, now he's talking about his disease and challenging Central New Yorkers to outdo him raising money for AIDS Community Resources at the AIDS Walk/Run.

Six years ago this spring Andrew DeMarzio learned that he was HIV positive. At the time, he was living in Atlanta with his sister; his mother was visiting for the Easter Holiday. "I always thought the hardest thing I would ever have to tell my family was that I was different, that I was gay," Andrew DeMarzio said. "That happened when I was 22-year-old and I survived." Telling them he had HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, would be much harder – nearly impossible, he felt, as he struggled to find the right words.

When he had heard the words "HIV positive" the only thing that registered was an intense visual distortion. "I remember that the room turned totally white. I wasn't sad. I didn't cry. I wasn't afraid." Andrew knew that with treatment and medications being HIV positive was no longer a death sentence. The only thing he was truly afraid about was how he would tell his family.

Back home with his new reality, Andrew paced. His sister observed that he was behaving out of character, all quiet and reserved, and asked what was wrong. "When I told her I had HIV, she embraced me and said that everything would be okay." For Andrew, the important step was yet to come. He needed his mother's acceptance before he could come to grips with his diagnosis. However, the timing could not have been worse. His mother was in Atlanta to visit her children but she was also caring for her only sister, his aunt, who was dying from cancer. "Thankfully, my mother openly accepted the news and both she and my sister swore they would always be there for me and guide me through the difficult times."

After that, Andrew didn't feel the need to tell anyone except immediate family and closest friends. But as the years went by and HIV infections rates went up from 40,000 to 56,300 (infections per year in the United States) he started feeling some responsibility toward those newly diagnosed with HIV. He remembered having sex education in school, but it was far from comprehensive. In his opinion, sex education about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases was incomplete or non-existent.

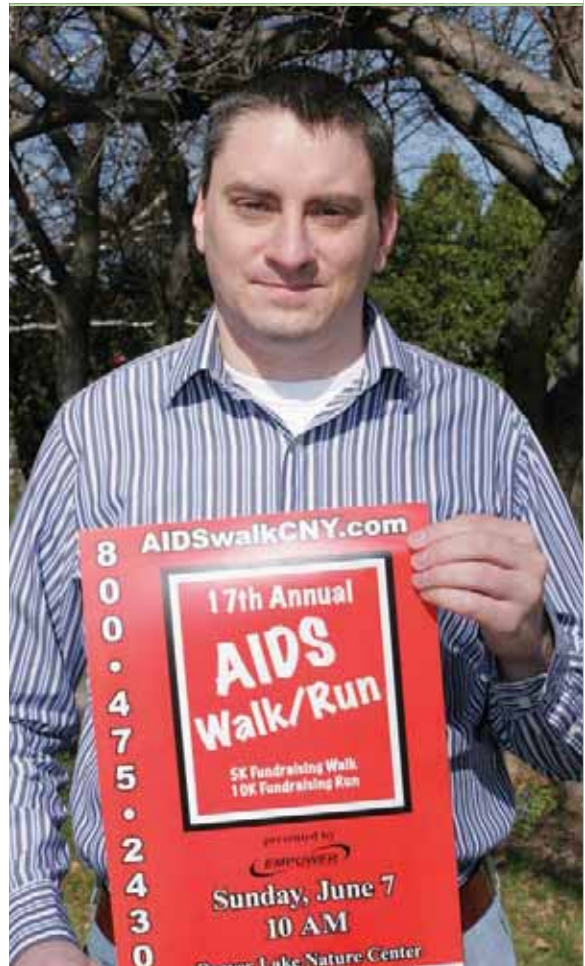
So now he's trying to do his part: volunteering, educating, and fundraising. "I am raising money for AIDS Community Resources. All that I raise I am specifically donating to the Teen AIDS Task Force program. TATF gives young people the straight stuff about HIV prevention."

Andrew told his story publicly for the first time on the www.AIDSwalkCNY.com Web site when he registered to take part in the 17th Annual AIDS Walk/Run on June 7th at Beaver Lake Nature Center in Baldwinsville.

He said telling his story on the AIDS Walk/Run Web site gave him closure; that it was time to be open and honest about his infection. "I have always accepted my responsibilities and choices I have made in life, and have never looked back with regrets."

You can donate now: [www.AIDSwalkCNY.com](http://www.AIDSwalkCNY.com). Click on "Sponsor a Participant" and read Andrew's story.

100% of the money raised at the AIDS/Walk Run stays in Central New York for youth prevention programs and emergency client services.



Andrew DeMarzio promoting his participation in the AIDS Walk/Run by holding a poster advertising the June 7th event.



ACR offers its services to anyone without discrimination based on age, race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, political affiliation, marital status, handicapped status, or mode of transmission.



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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**

**June 7, 2009**

17th Annual AIDS Walk/Run  
 5K fundraising walk, 10K timed run and Beaver Lake Nature Center. [www.AIDSwalkCNY.com](http://www.AIDSwalkCNY.com)

**Until July 12, 2009**

Vote Katie Hess for Top Designer & Support ACR  
 MacKenzie-Childs, Route 90, Aurora, NY  
 315.364.6118 • [www.mackenziechilds.com](http://www.mackenziechilds.com)

**August 16 – 22, 2009**

Empire State AIDS Ride  
 560 mile bicycle ride from Niagara Falls to New York City.  
 Join the ACR Spokes Team! Call Carrie at 800.475.2430  
 or email to: [clarge@aidscommunityresources.com](mailto:clarge@aidscommunityresources.com)

**October 18, 2009**

First Frost AIDS Walk/Run  
 5K fundraising walk and 5K timed run at Thompson Park in Watertown. [www.AIDSwalkCNY.com](http://www.AIDSwalkCNY.com)

**November – December 2009**

Holiday Angel Collections  
 Call 1.800.475.2430 to sponsor

**December 1, 2009**

World AIDS Day

**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.  
 TRANSGENDER [ages 14-24]: 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 5:30-7:00 p.m.  
 STEPPIN' OUT [ages 19-22]: Thursdays, 7:00-9:00 p.m.  
 For location and further information: [qcenter@aidscommunityresources.com](mailto: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](mailto:glbtqyouth@aidscommunityresources.com)