

27^{Years} AIDS Community Resources



Viewpoint

By Michael Crinnin
Executive Director



Dec. 1st: World AIDS Day has rolled around again. HIV/AIDS is getting a shrinking 'Fifteen Minutes of Fame', and I wonder if there is room for yet one more issue to be emotionally and intellectually juggled by your readers during this season of crunch, cash, celebration, and chaos? While talking with a local news producer yesterday, he shyly confessed to being uncertain as to, "Whether or not AIDS is still a crisis? I don't see much about it anymore..." It's a, "yes", to both: the crisis continues and awareness diminishes.

In the earliest days of this global epidemic the images were haunting – most being of emaciated young men dying quickly and well before their time... No article about AIDS was complete without graphic photos of how the virus wreaked havoc on the body. Whether you wanted to include AIDS in the purview of your concerns or not, you couldn't ignore the images, nor could you deny the reality - especially as it grew globally, as it brought down sports figures and celebrities, as you began to read the local obituaries of so many young men, and as you began to attend their wakes and funerals.

Those startling images, for all practical purposes, have disappeared here in the USA. It's the good news the bad news thing. Good news: thanks to education and prevention initiatives many more people at risk are getting tested earlier, know their HIV status earlier, receive treatment earlier, and do not die of those terrible wasting diseases. Medications are better than ever, and many who start treatments early, stay connected to medical providers, and live a healthier lifestyle, can reasonably manage their HIV infection and live a full life. Bad News: people continue to become infected – especially the young.

Continued on page 3

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A ZUMBA workout fired them up enough to make the First Frost AIDS Walk/Run a stunner! The story begins on 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

In the Mohawk Valley...

A gathering of friends supports ACR

Friends of AIDS Community Resources gathered at the glamorous Stanley Center for Performing Arts for the 9th annual "A Time to Remember," a fundraising cocktail party and art auction that raised \$4,810 to benefit AIDS Community Resources in the Mohawk Valley. Mayor David Roefaro was presented with a plaque thanking him for his commitment to diversity in the City of Utica. He reminded the audience to stick together through the hard times. "Whether you're black or white, gay or straight, rich or poor; in Utica we are all in this together. But that's more than a slogan," the mayor said. "It's something we have to fight for. You see, we are always up against whispers of division, people who want us to fear differences. So I combat those whispers by supporting events like today's, proudly raising the flag of our LGBTQ friends, and declaring our city a city of the people and for the people."

ACR is proud to thank our sponsors:

The Stanley Center for Performing Arts
Jim Brock Agency
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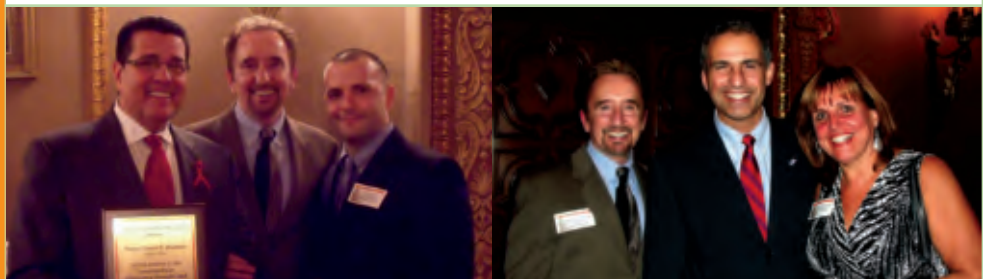
Thank you, Red Ribbon Patrons: Robyn Shafer and Albert Mazloom.

ACR sends out a special thanks to participating artists:

Melissa Arcuri, Carleen Creedon, Tony Thompson, Wayne Hesler, Sarah Kilian, Jane Kreutzer, J.A. Mulet, Jessica Mulet-Retamar, Kim Myers, Vartan Poghosian, Kayla Sergio, Mia Swasey, and Walt Wadas Jr. Music was performed by The Rusty Doves.

A Time to Remember would not be possible without the dedication of committee members:

Jim Brock, John Brown, Christine DeSanctis, John Leech, and Steve Merren.



Mayor David Roefaro, left, with ACR Executive Director, Michael Crinnin and Joe Racalto, also of ACR.

Michael Crinnin with Congressman Michael Arcuri and ACR Board of Directors member Christine DeSanctis.

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.

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Almost 40% of those newly infected in the US (the US sees upwards of 56,000 new infections each year) are under the age of 29 with figures skewing younger and younger. Stigma remains high – with ¾ of our clients not wanting to receive mail from us for fear someone in the household or post office would find out their status. As stigma remains high so does loneliness and isolation. The suicide of clients is not rare enough here... As people live longer and feel better they begin to deal with a wide array of mental health issues – not the least of which is sexual violence at an early age: a staggering number of our male clients were sexually abused as children. There are very few mental health care providers who accommodate Medicaid. The majority of our clients are on Medicaid... There is still plenty of ‘bad news’ to go around. There is still plenty of need. There is still a world with AIDS and I’m glad for those shrinking fifteen minutes World AIDS Day provides. Every heart moved and mind changed makes a difference.



In our next newsletter, Karen Hinson tells her amazing story of recovery to a World AIDS Day audience.

ACR receives \$10,000 grant from The UPS Foundation

The UPS Foundation, the charitable arm of UPS has given ACR \$10,000 to be used for technology upgrades for the Teen AIDS Task Force (TATF) and Q Center youth programs of AIDS Community Resources.

“The Teen AIDS Task Force is all about educating youth to be peer leaders on topics like self-esteem, healthy relationships, and promoting sexual health and safety,” said Carrie Large, Development Director of ACR. “This grant will be used to buy laptop computers and projectors for use during classroom and community presentations.” At the Q Center, The UPS Foundation grant will convert and equip an underutilized area of the Q Center into a Media training and Conference Room. “This will be a wonderful resource in educating the community at large how to respond to LGBTQ concerns,” Ms. Large said.

“The UPS Foundation is committed to funding impactful programs that make a meaningful difference in our communities – so we are proud to support AIDS Community Resources’ TATF and Q Center programs,” said Ken Sternad, president of The UPS Foundation. Last year, The UPS Foundation distributed nearly \$43.6 worldwide to provide support for building stronger communities.



Michael Crinnin, ACR Executive Director, ACR’s Justin Lynch, Carrie Large, ACR Development Director, Susan Isgar UPS, Marissa Rice, TATF Supervisor, and Wil Murtaugh, ACR Deputy Executive Director pose for a photograph upon ACR’s receipt of a \$10,000 grant from The UPS Foundation.

North Country demonstrates

preventing the spread



From start to finish, there has never been a livelier, more profitable AIDS awareness-raising / fund-raising event in the North Country! The 11th Annual First Frost AIDS Walk/Run attracted its biggest crowd ever, fired them up with ZUMBA exercise, and set them off down the beautiful trails through Thompson Park and Zoo, with fair weather clouds above making the afternoon warm and the walking and running easy. The total tally – the highest ever - was **\$45,417** to support the work of AIDS Community Resources in the North Country.

“What we had was a perfect mix of the old and the new. Long-time community supporters,” said ACR’s Development Director Carrie Large, “combined with Teen AIDS Task Force chapters who always try to outdo each other and strong support from fraternities and sororities. That is a win-win-win situation.”

All of the money donated at the First Frost AIDS Walk/Run supports emergency client services and HIV/AIDS Youth Prevention programs like the Teen AIDS Task Force (TATF).

In its 27 years, AIDS Community Resources has been dedicated to educating to prevent the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.



Carmen Sweet was the top individual fundraiser with \$7,780.99.



Dr. Marylene Duah was 2nd highest with \$2,797.



Third highest individual fundraiser is Ethel Soukey with \$2,005.

...erates how serious it is about
of HIV and STDs

Top fundraising team and team with the most members was "Friends of Carmen" whose 44 members raised \$10,563.99.



SMC HfiVe was 2nd highest with \$4,3358.



SADD – Students Against Drunk Driving – at Carthage High School came in 3rd with \$1,894.



Top TATF Student Member honors went to Kaeliann Fraser for raising \$526.

Nicholas Fraser, also from Clifton Fine, raised \$500.



Clifton Fine Teen AIDS Task Force raised the most money for a TATF on the day of the event - \$3023.



Indian River TATF - \$2584.25



Watertown TATF came in 3rd with \$715 but took top honors as the most creative team.



Beta Tau, with \$1,111, was the top college team.

AIDS Community Resources wants to thank our sponsors for their invaluable assistance:

Title Sponsor: Empower Federal Credit Union

Walker Sponsors: Kinney Drugs Foundation • Samaritan Medical Center

Friend Sponsors: Oneida Savings Bank • Price Chopper

Trail Marker Sponsors: Butterscotch House Bed & Breakfast – Lowville • Countryside Veterinary Clinic – Carthage & Lowville
 Emmanuel Congregational Church • Seth's Pub – Watertown • Transitional Living Services • Sam's Club

In-kind Sponsors: Bentley & Hoke, LLC • Custom Logo USA • Hannaford Supermarkets • JetBlue Airways • JPJ Electronic Communications, Inc. • NYS Zoo at Thompson Park • Saranac Brewery • Stewart's Shops • Starbucks Coffee

Many thanks as well to our media sponsors: 7 News, 790 WTNY, Fox 28, Froggy 97, WNER 1410, and Z93.

AIDS Community Resources changes lives

In the Mohawk Valley, a young mother, hooked on heroin, who lost her children and nearly her life, has entered a new chapter of sobriety and accomplishment, thanks to a timely encounter with AIDS Community Resources.

In August 2009, 30-year-old Rachel Lopez-Pleasant's life hit rock bottom. Her baby tested positive for cocaine at birth and her other three children were removed by Social Services as a consequence. Though she had used cocaine all through her pregnancy, Rachel was devastated when the drug use resulted in the loss of her children. She and her husband Adrian - homeless, childless, addicted to injection drugs - went to live with his mother, who advised them to seek out the services of AIDS Community Resources.

"My whole life revolved around getting high and getting enough money to stay high," said Rachel, who had started using drugs at 15, beginning with marijuana, then cocaine. After her children were taken away, Rachel graduated to heroin in an attempt to dull the pain and sorrow in her life. "I wanted to feel nothing," Rachel said. "I was ashamed. I knew I had hurt my mother, I knew I had hurt my children, but I just couldn't stop." Within days of arriving in Utica, Rachel and her husband went to meet with AIDS Community Resources' Transitional Case Manager Kindell Murray.

"They knew nothing about this town, nothing about AIDS Community Resources, but they were really determined to get those children back and to do whatever it took to accomplish that," Said Ms. Murray. Kindell worked out a service plan, requiring Rachel to go into treatment, to go to a 12-step program, to volunteer, to work on getting her children back, to get tested - and she did all of the above. "I'll do it, she would say to me. If you say I can do, then I can."

Rachel participated in many ACR programs, including SISTA, which taught her to value herself; how to protect herself from HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; how to be self-assertive; and how to use condoms and negotiate condom use with her partner.

"The SISTA facilitators believed in me," Rachel said. "I never had anyone believe in me. Mom and Dad said I was nothing and I did my best to live up to their expectations."

On September 15, 2009, Rachel quit the habit she had been addicted to for the past 15 years - half of her life. She stopped using drugs and then set out to fulfill her dreams. Her goal before she left this earth, she said, was to get her children back. "Even when I was high, I wanted to get my kids back."

Case Manager Mamie Smith said, "I have seen this before. Motherhood is a very strong instinct. Nothing has broken Rachel's bond to her children."

She has regained custody of two of her four children. She earned her GED and has a part time job. She received perfect marks for attendance and good attitude at her 30 day employment review. She and her husband bought a used car last week. "I could have had ten cars and a house and vacations - but we blew all our money on drugs. I'll get all those things someday. I've learned to be patient. God is blessing me."



Rachel Lopez-Pleasant



Rachel worked closely with AIDS Community Resources Support Services staff, Mamie Smith and Angela Carter, left, and now volunteers with Michael Johnson, second from right, on Safety First Outreach.



Harm Reduction Specialist Kindell Murray worked out a service plan which Rachel followed.

DIVAS program for girls helps stop HIV/STDs

Do you want your daughter to make good decisions but are afraid to talk to her about sex and drugs and AIDS? AIDS Community Resources' DIVAS program is a valuable resource for families who don't feel comfortable or adequate to teach their children valuable life lessons about health and safety.

Through DIVAS, participants learn how to solve problems, make healthy decisions, communicate effectively with their partners on all issues including condom negotiation, and condom use skills. They learn how to self-manage their behavior. The intent of the DIVAS intervention is for participants to delay the onset of sexual activities and incorporate safer sex practices for those who are sexually active (includes incorporation of abstinence). At the end of the ten hours of training, DIVAS graduates are asked to comment on what they learned.

"Your mom would tell you anything to keep you from having sex," one of the graduates said, explaining why DIVAS facilitators are adept at getting their message across. "In DIVAS they know what they are talking about. It's not the same as hearing it from your mom."

And another: "DIVAS opened my eyes to the dangers and responsibility of what can happen when you have unprotected sex."

August 25, 2010 Syracuse. Five young women graduated from DIVAS with a diploma and new skills. From the left: Angelic Saxton, Michayla Kelly, Marina Pointer, Maritza Barrientos, and Janessa Irons.



DIVAS (Discovering Important and Valuable information About Self) targets African-American and Latino females using the BART curriculum (Becoming A Responsible Teen). Call 800.475.2430 to enroll.

Q Center people and programs make news



Q Center Director, Dr. Elizabeth Payne (left) appeared on George Kilpatrick's "Central Issues" program on WCNY to talk about the Q's New Horizons, a new initiative to reach lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning young people who are no longer regularly attending school, who may be at high risk for dropping out of school, or may be at risk for homelessness. At right is Allen Wolff, who as a youth took part in ACR's Youth Safety Project – the Q Center's predecessor. Allen talked about pressures on gay youth that lead to homelessness and thoughts of suicide. The program aired in September.

ACR launches a fun new fundraising event



Space is limited, so register today.
1.800.475.2430.

Are you a daredevil? Then buckle up and bundle in for the first ever Sled for Red, a cardboard sledding derby, tubing party, and après sled festival coming up January 15, 2011 at Four Seasons Golf and Ski Center in Fayetteville. If you are not a daredevil and just want to go tubing, sample beer (adults only), great food, and hot chocolate, this is the winter event you've been waiting for!

Round up your friends and form a team. Choose a driver, pick a name and get ready to build that sled. Teams must build their sleds using only cardboard and tape (duct, scotch, or masking). The sled must have a front, rear, bottom, and two sides. Only one rider is allowed per sled.

Each team has to fundraise \$250 to participate. There are lots of prizes for fundraising, so give it your best shot!



627 West Genesee Street
Syracuse, New York 13204

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:
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UPCOMING EVENTS

December 2010

2010 Commemorative Holiday Ornament Collector's Edition with a 24 kt gold finish titled "Sometimes life needs a little push," a stunning design of a child's sled with gifts on board. Call 800.475.2430.

January 15, 2011

Sled for Red
Cardboard Sledding Derby at Four Seasons Golf and Ski Center. 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Register by calling 800.475.2430 or online at www.AIDSCommunityResources.com

February 4 – 6, 2011

Heart to Heart Tennis Event
Call 451.5050 to register your team to play.

February 13, 2011

Dessert Reception and Performance of *RENT*
Reception at 1:00 p.m.; performance at 2:00 p.m. at Syracuse Stage. Tickets are \$30-\$50 for the afternoon; \$20 for reception only. Call 475.2430 for tickets or online at www.AIDSCommunityResources.com
Only tickets bought through ACR benefit the agency.

February 26, 2011

World's Smallest Mardi Gras Parade at Armory Square.
events@AIDSCommunityResources.com

May 1, 2011

13th Annual AIDS Hike for Life
5K fundraising walk and run at Hamilton College
AIDSwalkCNY.com

Follow us on:



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.
NEW HORIZONS [ages 14-19]: 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 6:00-8:00 p.m.
CONVERSATIONS OF COLOR [ages 13-22]: 3rd Wednesday, 4:00-6:00 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:

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

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