



AIDS Community Resources

A Multicultural AIDS Service Agency

Celebrating 24 Years of a Community Responding to AIDS

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



February 2007

Viewpoint

by Jean Kessner

Michael is away, making good use of the John F. Marsellus Sabbatical, a lovely gift from the CNY Community Foundation that gives him a month off to clear out the cobwebs and develop some fresh ideas for his pet projects. Well, while the cat's away...

...the Empire State AIDS Ride – Michael's signature event - amazes and delights me. I toyed (for about a nanosecond) with the idea of bicycling along with the ACR Spokes Team in the 560-mile trek from Niagara Falls to New York City this summer. Then reality struck. I can't ride a bike! I'm very good at riding horses, but Empire State AIDS Ride officials said a horse would give me an unfair advantage.

What I needed was a surrogate – someone willing to ride 560 miles on a bicycle as a favor to me. Think about it: do you know anyone who owes you that big a favor? Well, neither did I. Until I gazed out my window last week and saw Don Hughes jogging down the street, bundled against single digit wind-chill temperatures and plodding carefully to stay upright on icy snow. Don owes me no favors, but he looked just crazy enough that he might consider the bike-ride thing a fun event.

I gauged my call for late enough that he should be home from his run, yet early enough to still be mellow from the endorphin buzz. "Can you ride a bike?"

"Of course," he responded. "I've been riding since I was a kid growing up on Long Island. I used a bike

to get to school, and to deliver newspapers."

Don runs five to eight miles on days when he doesn't ride his bicycle. When the weather gets warmer, he fits in a longish bike ride (30-50 miles) every couple of weeks. He's a natural for the Empire State AIDS Ride, unlike me – and unlike many who participate.

I am in awe of the "unnaturals" – those who have not ridden a bike in years, who train hard and emerge reborn at the end of the annual 560-mile trek. They always return the next year, forever changed, it seems from the outside, by the bliss of accomplishment, the warm glow of camaraderie, and knowledge that their effort has helped make the world a better place.

This year I'm proposing we broaden the field. Include everyone who wants to help AIDS Community Resources in its twin missions to educate young and old about HIV/AIDS prevention, and to help those already infected. Many of us have a passion to keep our young people safe, to make the world a kinder, gentler place. So what if we can't ride a bike!

Here's what I propose – open the competition to everyone. If you can't ride, sponsor someone who will.

...I continued making my pitch to Don Hughes, "You have to raise \$3,500 dollars to participate. If I help raise the money will you ride the 560 miles?"

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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

WHY CENTRAL NEW YORK MAN VOLUNTEERS

I'm constantly asked why I have no spare time. I tell people that I fill my life with work, and most of it volunteer work. They always tell me that it's nice to know someone who cares enough to dedicate time to an important cause, but they seldom ask what motivates me to do it.

Remembering when my adopted mother found out that she was positive for HIV, AIDS Community Resources helped my family through many difficulties. My number one best memory was when a volunteer and a case manager dropped off holiday gifts to us the day before Christmas. Knowing that someone was there for my family and me in a time of need truly inspired me.

So, I do volunteer work for AIDS Community Resources for two reasons: first, I want to give back to the community that has given so much to me and my family; and being constantly busy keeps me away from influences that might not be the best for me at this time in my life.

A speaker I heard recently explained why he volunteers. Back in 2001 he was out of work because of his health (he is overweight). After doctors told him that his heart was four times larger than average, he fell into a state of depression.

His depression deepening, he realized he needed to do something. Being at Gay Pride in 2006, he spotted Mary Doody. "Chasing her down was not easy for someone my size," he said. Now he is volunteering, too, which gives him something to look forward to. Being part of an organization that specializes

in helping people who need it was one of the main reasons he volunteers. "The doctors may have told me I couldn't work, but they never said I couldn't volunteer.

This way there is always something to look forward to, whether it's the people or just the feeling of being needed."

AIDS Community Resources Volunteer Coordinator Mary Doody explains the importance of volunteers by explaining that volunteers founded ACR, and if it weren't for their constant support,

ACR would not have gotten this far. Many tasks volunteers help with on a daily basis could not be done with staff alone, that is why ACR appreciates any volunteer that comes through our door. "If it takes a village to raise a child, then it takes an army of volunteers to keep our programs running," Mary Doody said.

In the last sixteen years with ACR Mary has heard countless reasons why people volunteer, ranging from: they were affected or infected by HIV and wish to help, they were looking for personal development, trying to advance social justice, and wanting to just stay active in the community.

Volunteering means a lot to staff members we work with, for sure, but it means so much more to those of us learning new skills as we volunteer. And volunteers, if ever you think that by just helping once you're not doing ACR justice, remember if it weren't for volunteers in 1983 ACR would not be here today.

James

See page 6 for pictures of some of ACR's volunteers...



James the Volunteer

Continued from Cover

"Sure, riding's the easy part!" said Don Hughes, undoubtedly dehydrated from his daily exercise.

While I admire riders and volunteers from 2006 - Michael, Mary, Carrie, Stacey, Paul, Sue, April, Tristin, Marnie, Annemarie, Rosemary, Jerena,



June 4, 2006: Don Hughes was first in his division at the AIDS Walk/Run.

Cecilia, Dan, Jerry, Michelle, Rob, Tim, and Fred, I can't duplicate their effort. I can, however, share their commitment and make their ride a little easier.

Jean Kessner



"Sal" - Jean's preferred ride at 15.

To donate to Jean and Don or any ACR Spokes Team member, send a check payable to ESAR to AIDS Community Resources. 627 West Genesee Street, Syracuse, NY 13204. And, thank you.

many blessings to 2006 holiday angels

Albany District "YAMS" Missionary Society
Altmar Parish Williamstown High School TATF
Anita Bertrand
Barbara Lindsey
Ben & Jake Greenfeld
Beth Machan
Bill & Donna Brown
Bill Louer & Wil Murtaugh
Blessed Sacrament Church/
St. Mary's Mount Carmel
Canton High School TATF
Carol Sweet
Carolyn Fitzgerald
Carrie Large
Charles Pannaci
Chris Shepherd & Will Lenton
Clifton-Fine High School TATF
Colton-Pierrepoint High School TATF
Craig Schaub, Cindy Needham & Elise Schaub
Dana Pierce
Daryl Gonchoroff
Deborah Hardy & Vivian Derrickson
Diane Price
Donald & Joan Gloo
Donna Seeber
Dr. Frederick Farrar
Ellen Pierno
Family of Janet Ours
Heidi Venero
Immaculate Heart of Mary Church
Jackie Adamo

Jamesville-DeWitt High School TATF
Janice Harvey
Jean Kessner
Jefferson Elementary School
Jim & Terry Deegan
John O. Dunlap
Jo Kennedy
Judy Klein
Katherine Zappala
Kathy Miller, David & Sophie Friedman
Kelly Morehouse
LGBTQ Youth Center @ ACR
Lisa Harder
Liverpool Central School District -
District Office
Lucinda Drescher
Marge Foody
Mark Kavouksorian
Mary DeStefano
Mary Ellen Kalahar
Michael A. Maroun Elementary School Staff
Michelle Haab & Galen Haab
Mohawk Reformed Church
Murray/Miladin Family
Old Navy - Carousel
Ontario Credit Corp.
Oswego Health Center
Pat Campbell
Paul Sexton
Pitcher Hill Community Church
Rachael Davidson

Richard King
Sally McSween & Mary Cornelius
Sedona Brown
Shirley & Michael Kennedy
Social Security Administration
St. Mary's Church
Starbucks Fayetteville
Sue & Roger Smith
Susan Brown
Susan Podd
Tabitha Towles
The Balles Family
The Hartford
The SU LGBT Resource Center Staff
Thea van der Ven
Tom Angiolillo
Unitarian Universalist Church
Watertown Church of the Nazarene
Westhill High School TATF
Zonnica Lucas

Thank You...

...to those who have made the commitment to support AIDS Community Resources through Annual Giving in the month of January 2007.

Elizabeth Costello
Bill Louer
Joseph Spatuzzi
Beverly Taylor

MEET ACR's NEW MOHAWK VALLEY REGIONAL DIRECTOR...

Wenona Wake has been named Regional Director for AIDS Community Resources in the Mohawk Valley Utica office. The first months were very busy as the Utica office revved up for action. Recently Wake sat down with Jean Kessner to talk about what makes her tick.

Jean: You are an efficient whirlwind of a woman. You're always "on", always busy, always effective. You are a wife, a mother, and a student working toward a Masters in Social Policy. How do you manage all that?

Wenona: By starting early, I guess. I was a high school senior at 15; graduated at 16, and became a mother at 17. I had to be self-sufficient in many ways.

Jean: How did you get interested in HIV/AIDS?

Wenona: When I first heard about AIDS I was in high school. I remember seeing on the news that prostitutes were infected and truck drivers were getting AIDS from them. I didn't connect it to myself. I lived with the myth that if you only had "one" partner at a time you could not get AIDS. I thought AIDS was for those who "slept around". Not until I came to ACR did I realize that I was one of those women who had been at risk of contracting HIV all along. I didn't realize the impact that

HIV had on the community that I lived in all this time, until I started seeing old friends walk through the door at ACR HIV positive. The light bulb came on that it could have been me.

Jean: Why doesn't the "safer sex" message sink in?

Wenona: I think like most teens I confused sex and love. Growing up in the Cornhill area of Utica there were very few African American mentors. You never had the confirmation that you were special, that you should value your body, or be encouraged that you could go places. I think many African American women lack a sense of empowerment.

Jean: Do you have any ideas why African American HIV+ rates are so high?

Wenona: Lack of ownership to the problem. We never really were told by some who we identify with (e.g. person of color) that this is our problem. Trust is a huge problem that creates a barrier to prevention. Face it! If you don't trust the messenger, you're not going to trust the message. I think prevention has not been as diligent in the communities of color as it has been in other populations. The Center for Disease Control put the

prevention message out there. Did they provide tools, skills for prevention? And some people say that government is saying "AIDS is a Disease" to put another negative spin on blacks. I'm not making this up.

Jean: What are your ideas on the spread of HIV in the African American community?

Wenona: Grass roots education about this disease like it's new. Conduct more ground zero. Conduct more education to get the message out. Engaging is a must. African American women in positions of leadership would

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the development and implementation of programs being delivered. Testing at churches and other faith-based organizations that target African Americans and Latinos. Educating about HIV confidentiality laws because some are in fear of others finding out about their status, it prevents them from accessing services.

Jean: What do Mohawk Valley residents need to know about HIV risks?

Wenona: That there are people in the community living with HIV. It affects all ethnic, racial and social



Wenona growing up in Utica.



"HIV Prevention Specialist Heidi Venero and Regional Director Wenona Wake review updated Safety First manuals."

re, however, backgrounds. There is a high teenage pregnancy rate therefore unprotected sex is occurring. If you don't know the status of your partner you are at risk. It's not who you are, but what you do that puts you at risk! We need youth to be educated now, before leaving for college, armed forces or independent living! Parents have to keep in mind, if we don't educate our youth now, someone else will later.

Jean: Proctor High School now has a Teen AIDS Task Force. What's the best way to get young people to come and listen?

Wenona: If you smoke marijuana, drink alcohol, are having sex, use someone else's prescription medication, or use illegal drugs, you are at risk of HIV and other STD's. If you say you know all about HIV then prove it! We need leaders like you! We use the slogan "Knowledge is power, get some!" I think kids want to know their HIV status; we should do more to promote testing to those who are at risk. ACR is making every attempt to engage kids who are at risk. We believe that bringing HIV prevention to the neighborhoods where these kids live will increase awareness for both the kids and the community. It's important that kids become educated and a part of the solution. Proctor has such a diverse population of students; to join this chapter will increase awareness throughout the Greater Utica area.

HIV/AIDS POLICY FACT SHEET BLACK AMERICANS AND HIV/AIDS THE HENRY J. KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION DECEMBER 2006

- Of the 1.2 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S., 500,000 are Black
- More than 2% of Blacks (aged 18-49) in the U.S. are HIV positive, higher than any other group
- Although Black Americans represent only 12% of the population, they accounted for half of AIDS cases diagnosed in 2005
- The AIDS case rate per 100,000 among Black adults/adolescents is 10 times that of whites
- The AIDS case rate per 100,000 for Black men was 103.6, the highest of any group (rate for white men was 13.1)
- The case rate for Black women was 49.9 out of 100,000
- Although Black teens (aged 13-19) represent only 15% of U.S. teenagers, they accounted for 73% of new AIDS cases in teens in 2004
- New York has 33,747 Blacks living with AIDS, more than any other state
- Among men who have sex with men (MSM), Blacks have been particularly hard hit. A recent study in 5 major U.S. cities found that 46% of Black MSM in the study were infected with HIV, compared to 21% of white MSM and 17% of Latino MSM.
- A recent survey found that Black Americans express concern about HIV/AIDS, and are the only racial/ethnic group to name it as the number one health problem in the U.S. In addition, half (49%) say the U.S. is "losing ground" on the domestic AIDS epidemic.

Source: <http://www.kff.org/hivaids/6089.cfm>



HIV Educator Michael Valentin talks about "Medical Literacy" at Syracuse Community Health Center's National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day on February 7, 2007.

ACR VOLUNTEERS: THANK YOU FOR 'BEING THERE' AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE. YOU ARE WONDERFUL!



Kim and John



Patrick, Meagan, and James



Tonya



Ron



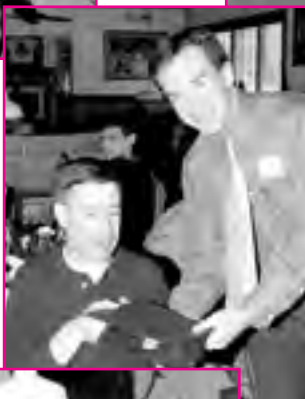
Nicole

Anne



Mary Doody

*Frank
and Wil*



Tim and Ed



Fred and Lisa



Jay and Crystal

POETRY FROM PAIN

On World AIDS Day seven people living with AIDS in the Southern Tier went to The Art School where they shared their personal stories. Tony Vilecco created this poem from their words...and their story continues to be told.

The Faces of AIDS

By Tony Vilecco

Grandmother, sister, mother
Brother, father, son,
uncle, lover.
The faces of AIDS.

Beautiful Black lady, so proud
of her children. Partied in the sixties;
made no apologies for a youth spent
like so many back then. Like so many now.
What can she do to save
her sisters in Africa?

Young man, handsome man whose
smile permeates the room with
a silken, sunny aura.
'I've been positive for ten years.'
Friends say 'but what if people see you,
Recognize you as that HIV guy?!'
He replies: 'But what if they don't see me?'
I cannot remain quiet.
The faces of AIDS.

Tall slender fellow turned gray.
'Where do I begin?' he asks.
And then a story burst forth like a film
on fast forward; a blast of light dilating ones eyes.
'My viral load is now undetectable but once
my T cell count was so low
I should have died. But I didn't.'
The faces of AIDS.

Grandmother speaks. Her very own baby
passed safely through her womb.
'I was positive-they gave me AZT to protect
the baby back then.' Then? When was 'then?'
Somewhere in the eighties?
Child grown. Mother now grandmother has survived.
She too has become, the face of AIDS.

And on and on it goes.
Another lady dated a man. He did not tell her.
Now she too is 'positive'.
When did this word 'positive' take on such a
Negative connotation?
How does one cope, live, explain, GO ON?!
'I'm HIV,' she whispers. 'He never told me.'
Now she speaks to kids in high school:
She, the advocate, heroine, teacher, mentor,
Friend.
Another face of AIDS.

Too scared to be tested. Not gonna happen to me.
Couldn't happen to me. When did the
complacency creep in? What right have we
to think we are 'safe'?

We are all...the faces of AIDS.

A VERY ARTISTIC WAY TO RAISE MONEY



"Spike Heels" a sassy Syracuse Stage production was a major draw for those who like a good time and want to help out a good cause. AIDS Community Resources raised \$2800 through ticket dessert reception sales January 28th. Thank you, Syracuse Stage!

Janet Epstein, Tim Nelson, Rosemarie Nelson, and Jeff Gilbert before the curtain rose on "Spike Heels".



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

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info@aidscommunityresources.com

-Or- mail
in the back
page of this
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AIDS Community Resources
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UPCOMING EVENTS

April 14, 2007

Bowl-a-thon at Bowl Mor Lanes to benefit the LGBTQ Youth Center @ ACR. Call 475-2430 for information or to register.

April 29, 2007

8th Annual AIDS Hike for Life – a 5K fundraising walk and fun run at Hamilton College. www.AIDSwalkcny.com

June 3, 2007

15th Annual AIDS Walk/Run – a 5K fundraising walk, 10K run at Beaver Lake Nature Center. www.AIDSwalkcny.com

August 12-18, 2007

Empire State AIDS Ride 5 – 560-mile bicycle ride from Niagara Falls to New York City. Join the ACR Spokes Team, Call Carrie at 1-800-475-2430

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

TREATMENT ADHERENCE

Contact Karen Anne at 475-2430, Ext. 410

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).