

26 Years
AIDS Community Resources



Viewpoint

By Michael Crinnin
Executive Director



I was just reviewing the annual summary of Teen AIDS Task Force Chapter activity from last year. What in 1992 was a modest high-school based HIV/STD peer education/leadership initiative, has now morphed to 30 sites throughout our 9 county service area, conducted in: high schools, middle schools, alternative-to-school programs, after school programs, and juvenile psychiatric and detention facilities. We've come a long way, learning as much from teens as we're teaching – more sobering than you might want to acknowledge...

At its core, the program provides multiple session intensive HIV/STD prevention information to a primary group of teen participants who, in turn, develop projects to educate/influence their peers on how to/the need to avoid risky sexual and drug using behaviors. The program has always had a life of its own: despite following a State approved curriculum, program goals, and prevention objectives, teens (and teachers!) lead us where they want to go – where they need to go. In a nut-shell the message to us is, "Talk to us/them about sex!" It seems that frank and comprehensive sex education, even in the 21st Century, remains as elusive as the Grail. Those who do talk with teens about sex, this includes parents, continue to talk with them as if the only reason humans have sex is to have babies... (A brief pause). Regardless of your beliefs about the proper place of sex in a person's life, could we all agree that the list of reasons young people are sexually active most likely does not include, 'baby making'...?!

In my experience teens gravitate to the TATF for this very reason: in order to talk about HIV/AIDS/STD prevention, you have to talk about sex.

Continued on page 3

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

To find out why the woman in the middle is such a "Hitt" with her students, turn to page 7.



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

ESAR 2010: on the (new) road again....



This year the Empire State AIDS Ride turns into the Eastern Seaboard AIDS Ride as the ACR Spokes bicycle team pedals not to New York City but from there to Washington DC to raise money for AIDS Community Resources. The 330-mile trip will take four days, and participants must raise \$3,000 in order to ride, be fed, and sheltered. ACR Spokes teammate Julie Silipo – Jules – joins ESAR veteran Sheri Dozier Owens in the ESAR 2010 lineup. Jules' goal is \$3,500, inspired by her work with youth at the Q Center.

"Besides going to graduate school to get my masters, I also work at the Q Center @ ACR, a center for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth and their allies. I've come to learn that there is quite the war to wage. Not only on the stigma in our schools and within our culture, but on the diseases that continue to inflict our youth. (Not that one goes with the other, but the sad fact is that most LGBT youth do not hear the "practice safe sex" messages that schools might teach straight kids – let alone the neglected population of youth most schools ignore. Because of this "hiding" most LGBT kids do they are susceptible to the dangers of unprotected sex and unhealthy closeted relationships). So here I am – In your face – trying to help my kids."

Help Jules and Sheri meet their fundraising goals.

Step 1 – sign on to empirestateaidsride.org.

Step 2 – Click the "donate" button.

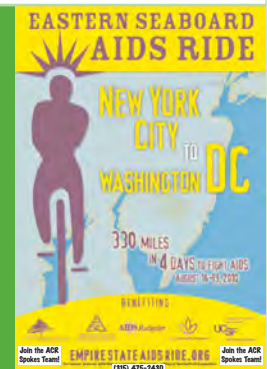
Step 3 – Enter Julie Silipo or Sheri Dozier Owens and click "search."

Step 4 – Give!

Make sure you check out all the riders on the ACR Spokes Team.



Jules is ready to roll in ESAR 2010 – changed to a four day, 330-mile event to raise money for AIDS Community Resources.



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

Teens want a forum where they can hear themselves think out loud about what they believe when it comes to sex and sexual expression; they want their real thoughts/beliefs/activities not dismissed or denied but, challenged, affirmed, informed... They want a forum where it's safe for them to struggle – a forum where they can acknowledge the power of their passions and test out their strategies for making wise and safe decisions despite managing powerful drives and emotions.

In case you've missed it, the Internet has forever changed the level of teen's exposure to sexually loaded content – much of it pornographic and far beyond the bounds of what adults discuss with them. If we're lucky they talk with each other – with their peers - and it is here the TATF tries to make a connection and a positive behavioral change impact.

TATF trained teens design activities for their peers that ideally will connect to their day-to-day realities - and they do it royally! I am amazed at the scope of events and the depth of concern the TATF members cultivate with their peers and the community at large – some of which we've highlighted within the following pages.

The young people we work with have, in so many words, asked us to expect more from them. Given the resources and those expectations, we find ourselves not only sobered by what they're exposed to and struggle with, but humbled and inspired by their energy and talent to make a difference to their generation... Can the Grail be far behind...?

Wilbur

In the Mohawk Valley... *Take a Hike!*

Sunday, April 25, 2010 Empower Federal Credit Union presents AIDS Community Resources' 12th Annual AIDS Hike for Life at Hamilton College in Clinton. The event features a 5K fundraising walk and a 5K fundraising timed run.

The AIDS Hike for Life is AIDS Community Resources' largest outreach and fundraising event in the Mohawk Valley. 100% of the money raised stays in the Mohawk Valley to benefit ACR's youth HIV prevention programs and client support services in the Mohawk Valley.

If you would like more information about the AIDS Hike For Life visit www.AID-SwalkCNY.com or call 1.800.475.2430 and ask for Wil or Carrie. We ask you to raise a minimum of \$25 to participate.



SIGN UP TODAY! Or come to Café Domenico's on March 9th for the Kick-off Breakfast.



Q Center Learning Opportunity



The Reduction of Stigma in Schools Program© will offer a workshop for educators on the alcohol and drug use of LGBTQ youth on April 6, 2010 from 9:00-11:00 a.m. at the Q Center @ ACR.

The workshop is open to educators in the school systems and to youth service providers. There is no cost to attend the workshop but space is limited. For more information or to register to attend, please contact the Q Center (315) 701-2431.

In Central New York... Heart



H



Tennis friends Elie Peavey and Michelle Nowyj. It's not whether you win or lose but how much exercise you get playing the game.

Players return year after year to the biggest, some say the "funnest" tennis tournament in Central New York: the Heart to Heart Tennis Event held February 5-7, 2010. More than 60 teams kept the indoor courts hopping all weekend at Tennis-n-Gear and Gold's Gym in Liverpool and DeWitt.

"Competition was fierce for some of them, especially in the Junior Division because players are potentially looking to play at the college level," said Michelle Nowyj, a return player who admits she's just in it for fun and friendship. She played and lost on Friday night, but returned over the weekend to cheer on her tennis pal Elie Peavey. "She's really good," said Ms. Nowyj of Elie. "She made it to the finals. Me – I like the exercise, the socializing, and the new friends I've made playing tennis."

The Heart to Heart grossed more than \$3,700. The Heart to Heart Tennis Event benefits AIDS Community Resources, whose six offices give direct client support to hundreds of HIV-infected individuals, their families and friends. Funds raised help support AIDS Community Resources' Q Center for LGBTQ youth.

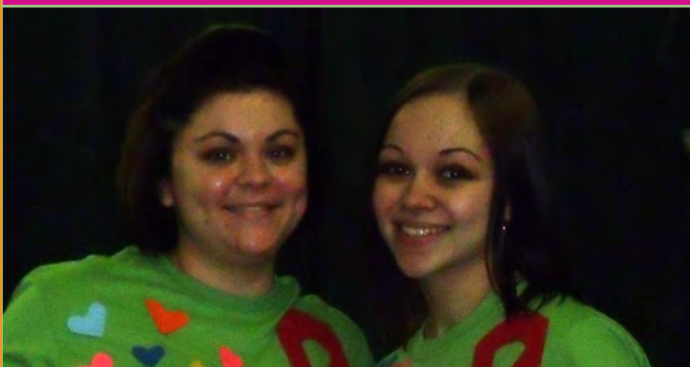
Thank you, Tournament Director Christopher Galle, Steve Pekich and Bill Louer!!!



Mixed 4.0 Doubles Division: Betty Murtaugh and Woody Rao, champions; Robert Tompkins and Janis Cieply, finalists.



Mixed 3.5 Doubles Division: John Garrett and Barbara Crane, champions; Beth Cass and Phil Cass, finalists.



Fun Division finalists: Aimee Esce and Jess Mylott. Not shown are champions Bob Louer and Casey Louer.



Heart, Tennis Event brings out the best



Mixed 2.5 Doubles Division: Mike Caiella and Jennifer Caiella, champions; Elie Peavey and Clare Culver, runners-up.



Mixed Doubles 14 Division: Kahlei Reisinger and Justin Milner, champions; Ryan Cass and Samantha Heyn, runners-up.



Mixed 4.5 Doubles Division: James Legault and Allison Haynes, champions; Eriksen Stropp and Elizabeth Uhrnec, finalists.



Mixed 3.0 Doubles Division: Elise Perijard and Jonathan Conlon, champions; Jessica Geary and Kenneth Geary, finalists.



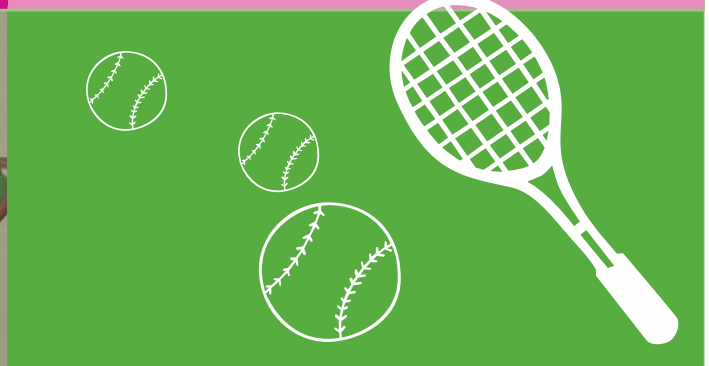
Mixed 18 Division: Shilpa Kamani and Daryl Johnson, champions; Nicole Leader and Shane Evans, finalists.



Mixed Open Doubles Division: Naveen Singh and Olivia Messineo, champions; Brian Galle and Rebecca Guzzo, finalists.



Champions of the Best Costume Competition.



Not shown are champions of the Mixed 16 Doubles Division: Shane Evans and Kahlei Reisinger.



Hearts for Heroes

North Country TATF chapters remember soldiers on Valentine's Day

The North Country TATF chapters participating in the **Adopt a Soldier** program came up with some creative and inspiring ideas to make Valentine's Day special for troops overseas. Their drive: "Hearts for Heroes" to support their adopted platoon by showing some love from home for Valentine's Day. Sponsors collected candy, made Valentine's Day cards, and teddy bears during January. "Our soldiers will get the candy and cards," said North Country TATF Coordinator Angela Foster. "The teddy bears will be for them to give to the local Iraqi children."

Talk about peer leadership. TATF chapters inspired communities across the North Country to get involved in the **Adopt a Soldier** program. Several non-TATF schools gathered candy, teddy bears, and Valentine cards in TATF's Hearts for Heroes initiative. **Canton Central School's** Amy Bortnick and her 9th and 10th grade English classes adopted a soldier of their own. **Canton High School Student Government Council**, led by Sue Lanning, adopted a soldier as well, and were featured in the St. Lawrence County Plaindealer with their teddy bears and an invitation to the community to participate. In **Hermon DeKalb Central**, SPORT peer educator, Rhys Bryant has involved the Big Brother and Big Sister Program in the TATF-led project.

The TATF chapters themselves adopted some creative ways to contribute: **Watertown High School TATF**, with the support of advisor Patricia Ryan-Tarbox, encouraged middle and elementary school art teachers to take up the project and created an outstanding number of hand made love notes destined for Iraq. **Youth Services TATF**, under 3 year advisor Sherry Kelley, have also designed and created more than 50 Valentines to post mark for the troop in Iraq.



Indian River TATF worked with the Iris Building (4-6 grades) in a school wide effort to create homemade Valentine's Day cards expressing their thanks to the soldiers; the Home and Careers classes were hard at work during January creating and sewing bears to contribute to the project.



The **Colton Pierrepont TATF**, (Brooke, Taylor, and Alex) with new advisor Megan Foster, created the ultimate rivalry both on and off the basketball court. The Girls Varsity Basketball Team, many of whom are TATF members, challenged the Boys Varsity Basketball Team to a friendly competition to see who could contribute the most bears.

Holiday Magic

We don't want all the snow to melt without sending a big shout out to Bob Forbes, an HIV Prevention Specialist with ACR for his day job and budding artist on his own time. Last December, he set up this display window in the Learned Building as part of Hanover Square Winter Windows Walk as a way to draw attention to ACR's Holiday Angel program. "My compassion for our clients' needs and HIV, and my ability to produce a wow window is why I do everything I can for the cause," Mr. Forbes said.

Photo by Paul Riccardi.



In the Mohawk Valley... Poland TATF restored after **BUDGET CUT**

The Poland Board of Education was looking to save money when it reduced by three the number of student clubs available at Poland High School. Out were the School Book Store, the Art Club and the Teen AIDS Task Force (TATF). But High School Principal Jason Mitchell lobbied to save the TATF program because, after talking with a parent, he considered it vital to youth development. "A parent came to me and said her daughter was very interested in joining TATF and wondered why it was no longer around," said Mr. Mitchell.

TATF was a very popular club. As much as 10% of the 200-member student body belonged to TATF, and the entire school benefited from their curriculum. In TATF, youth receive sustained intensive HIV/STD prevention training. They in turn initiate and participate in a variety of activities designed to reach a large number of their peers, and to their communities at large, with targeted HIV/STD prevention messages that cover: abstinence, safer sex practices, drug and alcohol use/abuse, impulse control, and wise decision making.

The principal wanted his student to have the kind of information they need to make smart life decisions. He recruited the Physical Education teacher, Sandy Hitt to become the 2010 TATF adviser.

Ms. Hitt had led TATF for one year in 1997 when both TATF and she were new to Poland High School. She'd intended to only teach there for one year and move on, but she and her young family fell in love with the small town and stayed. With all the serious threats to health out there in the real world, Ms. Hitt felt that TATF is just the kind of program Poland High School students needed. "Young people need information. Updated, correct, and at their level," Ms. Hitt said.

After lobbying from the principal, teacher Hitt, and parents, the Board of Education restored TATF. They approved of its high participation rate for students and its significant impact on the small community of Poland.

"We're an isolated rural community and we need to stay connected to updated and correct information," said Principal Mitchell. That's what they get from Teen AIDS Task Force peer education training.



Principal Jason Mitchell perusing the TATF display case with mementos from the 11th Annual AIDS Hike For Life in which TATF won an award for fundraising.



2010 Teen AIDS Task Force advisor, Sandy Hitt, advised TATF in 1997. She says Poland High School is a better place with TATF on board.

**“Young people need
information.
Updated, correct,
and at their level.”**

Poland High School TATF during Holiday Angel collections, 2008.





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Or mail in the back of this newsletter to:
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UPCOMING EVENTS

March 7, 2010

Dessert Reception and Matinee Performance:
of *Lookingglass Alice* at Syracuse Stage.
events@AIDSCommunityResources.com

March 9, 2010

AIDS Hike For Life Kick-off Breakfast 7:30 – 9:30 a.m.
Café Domenico's, 2011 Genesee Street, Utica
clarge@AIDSCommunityResources.com

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 run at Hamilton College. www.AIDSwalkCNY.com

June 6, 2010

18th Annual AIDS Walk/Run - 5K fundraising walk,
10K 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, DC. 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, 5:30-7:00 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:

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