



25 Years
AIDS Community Resources

Viewpoint By Michael Crinnin
Executive Director



I shouldn't be writing this article today...I was scheduled to be cycling across NYS with the Empire State AIDS Ride – an amazing 560-mile-across-NYS event I've had the privilege of participating in 3 times in the last 4 years. Memory will have to suffice from here on in; looks like my road-bike days are at an end.

While training for this year's event I (once again) lost control of my bike and slammed down on my right side: concussion and fractured femur – resulting in a replacement of my right hip replacement from two years ago (similar cycling accident –can't make this stuff up...). So here I sit unable to bear any weight on my right leg for a couple months, mastering crutches, and cultivating patience with, hopefully, a bit of humility.

Since the accident my basement has flooded (first time ever), my house has been robbed, my financial planner was put out of business, and my coffee maker blew: karma or what?!

I share this reluctantly and only to make a point: in the midst of all of this I have a lot of support: family, friends, co-workers, neighbors - even people from the gym who have been checking up on me! I'm the lucky guy – and I know it.

It is impossible for me not to think of our clients during these long days of not-a-lot-of-activity. Most are not 'lucky guys' – quite the contrary. Their HIV/AIDS is routinely complicated and compromised by poverty and all that comes along with being poor in America: no reliable transportation, poor nutrition, sub-standard (or no) housing, unemployment, broken family relationships, history of addiction, no history of primary health care, sexual exploitation, etc., etc.

Continued on page 3

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

Our heroines!
Turn to page 7
to read all about
the Empire State
AIDS Ride.



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 Central New York...

Youth Advocate departs TATF program

Cheri Giancola has touched the lives of thousands of youngsters over 16 years. The school nurse was the first advisor of the first-ever Teen AIDS Task Force chapter, which was established at Chittenango High School in 1993. Cheri's chapter has been one of ACR's most active and enthusiastic youth groups, having fundraised thousands of dollars over the years, and winning the coveted AIDS Walk/Run trophy for Top Fundraising for 14 years in a row! This feat would never have been possible without Cheri's hard work and dedication.

Because of her advocacy, untold numbers of youth are safer from HIV and STDs because she supplied them with direct and correct information. We will genuinely miss working with Cheri, send our heartfelt thanks, and wish her all the best the future has to offer. THANK YOU, CHERI!



Cheri Giancola, a school nurse, has taken a position at the elementary school and will be unable to continue as TATF advisor at Chittenango High.

Salute Kudos and applause... to AIDS Walk/Run \$500 Club members

Nearly a hundred individuals and team captains fundraised more than \$500 each for the 17th Annual AIDS Walk/Run, winning them an invitation to the exclusive \$500 Club party at Outback Steakhouse in Clay in late July. The festivities included a salute to dozens of event sponsors, including Penn Traffic, parent company of P&C, whose representative, Kathy Allen, was on hand for the celebration.



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 sexually literacy and wise sexual decision making.

Continued from page 1

I have no idea how I would have managed without the many hands freely offered daily to keep me functioning: all the meals provided, shopping, and chores performed (not to mention the hopeful and supportive companionship lavished on me) - this courtesy of others who do not live in poverty. I'm the lucky guy. . . .

This job continues to keep me closer to the fragile, and too often desperate, circumstances of our region's urban, rural, and suburban poor than I might have chosen to be. I'm no different than most: I don't want to face such need – such desperation – the holes in so many systems. . . . And I don't have quick and easy answers (although fixing the health care system would be a real good place to start: a 'no-brainer'!). I do know that the staff here do their part in the midst of seemingly impossible situations - sticking close to the most troubled and difficult of individuals – reminding clients by their consistent presence that they are not alone. More often than you might believe 'fragile' morphs into 'resilient', and we all take a moment to drink gratefully from unexpected small springs of hope.

Sooo, even though I'm not sailing along the highways and by-ways of New York State, I am reaping the benefits of a change of routine: viewing life from an altered perspective – letting images surface and working to cultivate gratitude. I'm the lucky guy (landed but lucky!), and I know it. . . .



In Central New York...

Wal-Mart supports youth HIV and STD prevention programs



At AIDS Community Resources we know that you build a successful fundraiser one friend at a time. The phenomenal 17th Annual AIDS Walk/Run continues to break ACR fundraising records, with proceeds now totaling **\$202,864**. That total increased recently when Sheryl Jones of Walmart Store #1830 in Auburn presented ACR Development Director Wil Murtaugh with a check for \$1000 to be applied to the AIDS Walk/Run.

In Central New York, Northern New York, and the Mohawk Valley...

Not too early to think about becoming a Holiday Angel!

For hundreds of individuals, families, churches, and community organizations, ACR's Holiday Angel program has become their favorite way to give to others at Holiday Time. Adopting an ACR family has become an annual tradition for the Syracuse Crunch Booster Corps. "We are always looking for good community services projects to do," said Kathy Arcaro. "Being a Holiday Angel is perfect because it allows us to help people. That always feels good."

To sign up to sponsor and ACR client family, call 1.800.475.2430.



Support Services at ACR

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



Support Services Director Alissa Viscome with her daughter Madeline.

Support Services staff often meet their clients at a difficult and frenetic point in their lives. They have just been diagnosed with HIV. Clients have credited our staff with "saving their lives" by supporting them during the dark days immediately following the original diagnosis; by helping to overcome obstacles to care; and by showing them that with commitment and treatment there is plenty of life ahead.

Keeping clients' lives stable and their health under control can be exacting and difficult, but it is vital work and central to AIDS Community Resources' mission.

I am proud to lead a team of people who are dedicated to improving the lives of HIV infected and affected individuals. I am continually inspired by my staff; every day I discover another reason to be proud of them.

Alissa Viscome Director of Support Services

The Comprehensive Case Management Team

Case Manager: As team leader, the Case Manager works with you to identify your needs, outline goals, and connect you to services.

Case Management Technician: can accompany you to appointments.

Community Follow-up Worker: assists in meeting your needs and answering questions when your Case Manager is unavailable.

Transportation Coordinator: arranges medically necessary transportation.

Treatment Education Nurse: helps you understand your medications and assists you in minimizing side effects.

Harm Reduction Specialist: Those using alcohol or drugs can work with a harm reduction specialist to reduce or eliminate substance use.



Community Follow-up Worker Shereese Graves delivers a food pantry order to an ACR client.

Need a ride to the doctor? We can help.

Because staying healthy is key to combating HIV/AIDS, STAR Transportation provides free transport to doctor and other medical appointments for qualified HIV positive individuals. To qualify: you must have HIV; be ineligible for Medicaid; and unable to get to the doctor on your own.

AIDS Community Resources' serves nine counties that stretch all the way from Syracuse, Auburn, and Utica to the Canadian border. STAR Transportation arranges rides across its service territory, free of charge.

Don't let circumstances stop you from getting where you should be. 800.475.2430. As always, you can count on AIDS Community Resources for the lift you need.



STAR Transportation customer Earl Mayers (left) said "STAR Transportation changed my life." Jo-Anne Bal-estra is ACR's Transportation Coordinator.



Case Management

AIDS Community Resources offers a comprehensive array of support services for HIV positive consumers, their families, and their partners. Bilingual services, offered in English and Spanish, are provided at no cost to ACR consumers.

ACR services are offered 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.



Frequent meetings like this one between Case Manager Joe Abbott, right, and client Jim LaRoina ensure that service plans are kept up to date.

Comprehensive Approach



Margaret Mims, right, with her Case Manager Vicki Tagg.

After 16 years' association with AIDS Community Resources, 56-year-old Margaret Mims of Utica is about to graduate. She came to ACR out of desperation in 1993 after learning that she had HIV. She says she spent a month drinking and doing crack, anything to keep from facing the fact that she had HIV. "It didn't matter to me if I ever got clean, because I would still be dirty from the virus. That's what I was thinking."

At ACR a Case Manager educated her about medications, how to prevent the spread of HIV, and how to take control of her life.

"Our Case Management model is about meeting a client where they are at. The most successful way to address substance issues is when the client is ready," said Vicki Tagg, a Comprehensive Case Manager at ACR.

Margaret overcame her addictions and, in time, worked through housing, mental health, transportation, and medication issues.

"She helped me through every crisis," she said of Vicki Tagg. "ACR has been like a family to me. Even though I'm proud of myself for 'graduating', I really don't want to go."

HOPWA – Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS



Lack of stable housing has many negative consequences for the HIV+ person. HOPWA, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS, provides both long-term and short-term assistance. Many HOPWA clients eventually transition to Section 8 housing, but there is a waiting list of 5 years in Syracuse and 4 years in Utica.

James Keany of Syracuse has received HOPWA services for the past two years. "Life gets overwhelming sometimes. Paying the utility bills, buying food, just trying to stay afloat financially created a lot of stress for me," said James Keany. "I most definitely appreciate HOPWA."

A first in the North Country... Fort Drum youth welcome ACR prevention message

“Teens face tough decisions with lasting consequences on a daily basis.”

Angela Foster



No matter where they live, young people have a lot of questions about sex. When they live on a military base with soldiers for parents, they have just as many questions, and perhaps fewer opportunities to get straight answers. Fort Drum authorities have responded to the challenge by responding to a request by AIDS Community Resources to set up “One Voice!” a TATF chapter where teens learn about sexual health. It is one of a growing number of chapters in alternative community settings ACR has set up to reach young people outside the traditional school setting.

Angela Foster, HIV Prevention Specialist for the North Country was instrumental in the creation of One Voice! “Teens face tough decisions with lasting consequences on a daily basis,” said Ms. Foster. “Growing up in a military family where one parent is deployed serving their country can create an additional layer of responsibility and stress.”

TATF Advisor Gala Hestilow and ACR’s Foster convened an exploratory meet and greet event in mid-July to test interest among Fort Drum families for HIV and STD prevention training, attracting a very good turnout - 26 youth, and parents/caregivers. Also present for the event to show program support and instrumental in establishing the chapter were: Kimberly Contino, CYS Services Nurse, Steve Ferguson, Director of Children and Youth Services, and James Arthur, Assistant Director of Children and Youth Services. The event was followed the next week by a three-hour peer leadership training, covering the basics of HIV and STD education and prevention.

“One Voice! is a great asset for Fort Drum families,” said Ms. Foster. “TATF offers youth the life skills, health education and resources, and support to be successful both now and in the future.” If you would like to know more about this new resource for Fort Drum youth, contact Angela Foster at 386.4493 or afoster@aidcommunityresources.com.

In the Mohawk Valley... LGBTQ Youth Safety Project member files federal lawsuit

The Utica LGBTQ Youth Safety Project played a pivotal role in a federal lawsuit filed last month against the Mohawk Central School District in Herkimer County for failing to protect a gay student. The lawsuit alleges that over the past two school years, Jacob, a 14-year-old student at Gregory B. Jarvis Junior/Senior High School, was regularly pushed and had things thrown at him. This past year, a student knocked Jacob down the stairs and another student brought a knife to school and threatened to kill him.

Jacob is a member of ACR’s Utica LGBTQ Youth Safety Project. “We knew some of the parents were having trouble advocating for their kids,” said ACR’s Mary Doody. “Barrie Gewanter of NYCLU was brought in to educate parents on youth rights in a school setting.”

“People always make fun of what they don’t understand, but the school has a responsibility to protect people,” said Jacob. “I shouldn’t have to fear for my safety at school. No one should.”



Mary Doody, Youth Safety Project
Coordinator

Hey, North Country... Please join us at the First Frost AIDS Walk/Run

Want to be an important part of your community? Hundreds in the North Country have learned over the years that the best place to meet old friends and make new ones is the First Frost AIDS Walk/Run at Thompson Park and Zoo in Watertown. It's the largest AIDS outreach and fundraising event in the North Country and it happens October 18, 2009, kicking off at 1:00 p.m. Bring your family, your church, your classmates and see for yourself.

The First Frost AIDS Walk/Run is brought to you by Empower Federal Credit Union, Kinney Drugs Foundation, Samaritan Medical Center, Hannaford Supermarkets, Stewart's Shops, Wal-Mart, New York State Zoo at Thompson Park, and Starbucks Coffee. Our media sponsors are Fox 28, 7News, Z93, 790 WTNV, WNER, and Froggy 97.

100% of the money raised in the First Frost AIDS Walk/Run goes to support AIDS Community Resources' youth prevention programs and client support services in Jefferson, Lewis, Oswego, and St. Lawrence counties.

If you are interested in walking or forming a team, you can register online at www.AIDSwalkCNY.com or call 800.475.2430.



2008 First Frost AIDS Walk/Run

10th Annual
"First Frost"
AIDS
Walk/Run

Empire State AIDS Ride results



A small but mighty ACR Spokes team took to the road August 16-22 for the Empire State AIDS Ride. The 560-mile bicycle journey across New York State began in Niagara Falls on August 16th and ended in New York City seven days later.

"It was an aggressive ride," said veteran ESAR participant Sheri Dozier Owens, clearly relishing the challenge of the often mountainous and wind whipped ride. On Friday strong winds force an early end to the day's endeavor. "One rider saw a tree blow past and there was lightning and thunder all around us. Owens, and teammate Mary Doody, Volunteer Director at ACR, took the weather (both hot and later stormy) in stride. Both Sheri and Mary are already talking about ESAR 2010.

"These ladies are role models," said ACR's Carrie Large. "During the hottest week of the summer-they took on a 560 mile bike ride to raise much needed funds for ACR---smiling the whole time."

For "Red Day" in the Empire State AIDS Ride, Wil Murtaugh and Carrie Large, left, met Sheri Dozier and Mary Doody on the road, along with volunteer Colleen Clancy.





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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

October 18, 2009

First Frost AIDS Walk/Run
5K fundraising walk and 5K timed run at Thompson Park and Zoo in Watertown. www.AIDSwalkCNY.com

October – November – December 2009

Collector's Edition Holiday Ornament "Melt my heart with a smile."
Call 1.800.475.2430 to order.

November – December 2009

Holiday Angel Collections
Call 1.800.475.2430 to sponsor

December 1, 2009

World AIDS Day
Service of Hope and Remembrance, 7:30 a.m. Panasci Family Chapel, Le Moyne College.

February 5 – 7, 2010

Heart to Heart Tennis Event
Call 800.475.2430 to register your team to play.

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@aidcommunityresources.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@aidcommunityresources.com