

AIDS Community Watch

The State of Things

Currently, massive attention is being focused on the HIV/AIDS epidemic raging beyond the United States borders. After all, it appears 40 million individuals worldwide live with HIV, 3 million of whom lose their lives to AIDS every year, while only 2 million individuals are receiving antiretroviral therapies.

While the numbers here in Rhode Island are much smaller, given the size of the population, trends here seem no different from what is experienced nationally.

Question: If evidence suggests the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States clearly has not been eliminated and may be growing stronger, why the failure to bring prevention strategies to a scale necessary to do the job? Could it be the widespread distribution and availability of drug therapies has had the unintended consequence of wrongly justifying a sharp reduction in prevention and education efforts? If so, the important messages of the international HIV/AIDS community to ramp up prevention efforts should be heeded here in the United States, here in Rhode Island.

Leather & Lace Gay Bingo

Leather and Lace gay bingo will be held on February 21 at Riviera Bingo Place 1612 Elmwood Ave, Cranston, RI. The doors open at 6 p.m. and the festivities will commence at 7 p.m. Costumes are strongly encouraged and prizes will be awarded! To make your reservation, visit our website: www.aidsprojectri.org. Please be advised, this is an alcohol free event. Monthly sponsorships are still available; please contact Stephen by email at stephen@aidspjrojectri.org or by phone at 286-5352 for more information.

Red Ribbon Community Awards Raises Record Amount!

On November 30, the eve of World AIDS Day, AIDS Project Rhode Island (APRI) in collaboration with Brown University AIDS Program (BRUNAP) and Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) honored some of the people who have been on the front lines of the local fight against HIV/AIDS at the Red Ribbon Community Awards Dinner. This year's event rose over \$64,000 which was \$48,000 more than last year! The 2007 recipients were David Abbott-Richard Katzoff Leadership Award; Alysha Brock- Maggie Valentine Volunteer Service Award; Comprehensive Community Action Program (CCAP)- Community Partner Award; Sen. Rhoda Perry and Rep. Thomas Slater- Advocacy Award; Dr. Anne DeGroot- Dr. Alvan Fisher Medical Service Award; and Stephen Hogan Jr.- Outstanding Service Staff Award.

This year's master of ceremonies was president of the International Institute of Boston and former CEO of Family Service Rhode Island, Carolyn Benedict-Drew. "AIDS Project RI has been doing incredible work for many years," said Benedict-Drew. "I am proud to have been a part of making this special night happen."

This year's Awards Dinner included a tribute to one of APRI's Founding Fathers, Dr. Alvan Fisher, who died in early October. The Medical Service Award was dedicated and named after Dr. Fisher. In 1985, Dr. Fisher was the first and, for a long time, the only physician who would treat patients with HIV/AIDS in Rhode Island. His wife and two sons, along with many other family members, were present to witness the dedication.

The first Alvan Fisher Award recipient, Dr. Anne DeGroot, expressed her gratitude for being honored in the same category as Dr. Fisher. "He fought tirelessly for patient care at a time when the cause of the disease was unknown and most physicians would not touch AIDS patients."

The evening's events concluded with a live auction that included a dinner for 20 with Providence Mayor David Cicilline at the home of Carolyn Benedict-Drew, which went for \$7,000!

Founded in 1985 by a small group of doctors, nurses and community activists, AIDS Project Rhode Island is the state's first AIDS service organization. Its mission is to provide compassionate, non-judgmental and collaborative response to the needs of people infected, affected and at risk of HIV/AIDS. This is accomplished through leadership in prevention, education, supportive services and advocacy.

Carnival Season is Here!

AIDS Care Ocean State is planning its best Mardi Gras event yet! Planned in the tradition of the New Orleans Mardi Gras balls, the most outrageous party of the year will be held at The Federal Reserve in downtown Providence on Saturday, Feb. 23 from 5 p.m. to midnight. We are honored this year to have Mayor David Cicilline, WPRI's Karen Adams and Miss Rhode Island Ashley Bickford as our honorary chairs for this event, along with Tad and Brian from 93.3 WSNE radio.

The evening will feature delicious food, live music by The Cappola Sisters band and roving entertainers. The historic building will be transformed into a Bourbon Street scene with the sights, smells and sounds of New Orleans winding their way through two stories of fun and frolic. Proceeds from the evening provide much needed funds that allow AIDS Care Ocean State to do good in the community. Also, don't forget-it's a chance to have fun with friends and colleagues!

AIDS Care Ocean State is Rhode Island's largest provider of services to people living with and affected by HIV and AIDS. The children in our nursery and our families in the community have the burden of living with HIV in addition to the burden of meeting the most basic needs. Your kindness can make the load more bearable.

Tickets are \$75 in advance and \$85 at the door. To purchase tickets and for more information, please visit www.aidscares.org. To sponsor this event, please contact Stephen Hartley at 521-3603.

Adopt-A-Family Campaign a Success!

Due to drastic state budget cuts and rising oil costs, the winter chill threatened many local homes. AIDS Care Ocean State kicked off its third annual Adopt-A-Family campaign to help combat the fears of clients and raise funds to keep homes warm. The holiday campaign successfully raised over \$15,000 and quelled fears of families in need.

In addition, gifts were provided for children during the holidays, and warm clothing and medication were made available to those who could not afford it.

ACOS would like to thank the community for its outpouring of support. Without your social awareness and compassion, ACOS would not be able to serve its clients.

Overall, this year's Adopt-A-Family campaign was up 44 percent from last year and an amazing 87 percent from 2005. More than 700 toys were collected and over \$3,000 in gift cards were also donated as a part of the holiday campaign.

AIDS Care Ocean State is here for you!

If you are living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, ACOS is here to help. We provide various services that can help you meet your needs and alleviate the burden of the disease.

Take advantage of our supportive housing programs, assisted living services, mental health care, pediatric nursery, medication adherence programs, adolescent and adult groups along with the endless resources of our case management team.

If you are interested in becoming a client of ACOS, please call Pamela Dee, case manager supervisor, at 273-1888. Also ACOS is at the forefront of HIV/AIDS prevention and education. We offer FREE and ANONYMOUS HIV and HCV testing. We strive to increase awareness of HIV and hepatitis, in addition to, providing testing, education, promoting healthy lifestyles and risk reduction counseling.

FREE vaccinations for Hep-A (HAV) and Hep-B (HBV) are also available. Call 273-1888 or 781-0665 to set up an appointment and take advantage of our services. ▼