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The AIDS Project

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A LOT HAS HAPPENED SINCE JULY....WE'RE BACK WITH NEWS OF TAP'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.....INFO ABOUT STAFF AND BOARD CHANGES AT THE AIDS PROJECT.....UPDATES ON NEW AND RETURNING SUPPORT GROUPS FOR PEOPLE INFECTED AND AFFECTED BY HIV/AIDS.....AND MUCH, MUCH MORE IN THIS EDITION.....

The AIDS Project Hires A New Executive Director
George Friou will start in November

by Mike Martin

On August 20th the Board of Directors of The AIDS Project voted to hire George Friou as its new Executive Director. The Board acted on the unanimous recommendation of the Search Committee.

George Friou (pronounced "free-u") comes to TAP from an Executive Director position at North of Market Senior Services in San Francisco, which he has held for two years. George is devoted to a career in health and social service delivery, especially, he said, "to people who must call upon the wider community to act with compassion." He also goes on to say that, "providing services to people with AIDS has been a major component of my work here in San Francisco."

George has a Bachelor's degree in Humanities from Sonoma State University in California and an MPH in Health Services from Boston University. He has held some pretty interesting jobs, from his time in the Peace Corps in Africa to working at Upham's Corner Health Center in Dorchester, MA at a time when they were starting one of the nation's first needle exchange programs. He is a past president of the board of directors at the San Francisco Community Clinic Consortium.

George is married with two children and has family in Maine. His family has owned land and a camp in Aroostook county since the late 1800s and on Cranberry Island off Friendship in Knox county. George expressed his desire to continue working in the non-profit arena and in relocating to Maine during his interview with the Search Committee. He will begin his duties at The AIDS Project on or near November 1st. Marjorie Love will continue as TAP's Interim Director until George comes on board.
Effectiveness of HIV Post-Exposure Treatment May Be Overstated

Some of the HIV consultants for the CDC and even a CDC employee are questioning the validity of the premise used to establish post-exposure treatment (PET). Post-exposure is usually associated with needle sticks to healthcare workers and is also termed "the morning-after" treatment.

Recommendations for PET are being based on a CDC report that stated healthcare workers accidently exposed to HIV through needle sticks had a 79% less chance of developing the infection if they were treated with AZT after the exposure. Dr. Alfred Saah, a consultant to the CDC, says that, "there is not a 79% reduction." He and others voiced concern that the data used to draw this conclusion was sketchy at best and that U.S. data was obtained through a "passive surveillance project" which had no strict controls. Dr. Saah is concerned that "we're going to create an expectation (on the success of PET) we're not going to be able to deliver on. We're really flying by the seat of our pants."

Dr. Alastair Macleod of Vancouver doesn't believe the 79% figure either. "I think it (PET) probably works," he said, "but it's not that good." And he believes that data on the efficacy of PET is many years away.

Effectiveness aside, some HIV workers are concerned that if PET becomes the norm it will undermine prevention efforts. Randy Pope of Michigan's HIV/AIDS Prevention program said, "One of the major fears we have is that guidelines on PET will only further erode the advances we've made over the past decade in behavior change." Pope noted that risky behavior is already on the rise anyway among HIV patients, due in part to new, more efficacious drug therapies.

Dr. Richard Johnson at Johns Hopkins fears hospital emergency rooms will bear the brunt of people seeking post-exposure treatment, and with that the associated costs which might not be covered by health insurance companies (provided the patient has health insurance).

The CDC said it may draft PET guidelines by year's end, with a final recommendation next year.

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But who's counting?

Numbers tell an awful lot of stories about who and where we are. This is the 24th issue of In The Affirmative, totaling 204 pages. Back in December of 1993 when I began putting this newsletter together, the number of AIDS cases in the United States stood at 339,250, now it's at 581,429. That means that 41% of all cases of AIDS in this country have been reported in less than 4 years. Deaths from AIDS in the U.S. stood at 205,390 in December of '93, now that number is 362,004. Which means 43% of people who have died from AIDS in the U.S. did so in less than four years. The personal toll is staggering.

In Maine in December 1993, there were 443 cases of AIDS; now there are 791. 43% of all reported cases in just under four years. Maine AIDS deaths in '93 were 282; now 426. Less than four years account for almost half the deaths (46%) in Maine.

They used to say there were "a million stories in the Naked City"; well there are hundreds of millions of stories about AIDS around the world. All as sad as sad can be.

It's the numbers that temper my enthusiasm as miracles are being pronounced in the fight against AIDS. There is work to be done -- work that may be hampered by a public perception that AIDS is under control. And there are an awful lot of people who must be pretty frustrated that "the cure" hasn't reached them or has passed them by.

It has been 9 years since I tested positive for HIV, and probably 12 years since I was infected. I just turned 43 years old. There was a time when I thought I'd be lucky to live till 40. I've been lucky. I wish everyone could be as lucky as I have been. I'm alive and pretty healthy. I have a great doctor, good medical insurance, and have had a pretty good run with the anti-HIV drugs I take every day. I have a family that watches over me, always ready with the latest good news about HIV from Sally, Jerry, Geraldo, and Oprah, not to mention Tom, Dan, Bernard, and Peter. My real fear is that too many people don't have good medical care, the financial resources to buy the anti-HIV drugs, access to those drugs, a tolerance for the drugs, and the support they need to live as long and healthy as possible. So, in our part of the world, that's why I feel so strongly about the need for The AIDS Project. And that's why TAP is so important to everyone in southern Maine. The work of the agency in supporting clients and in working to prevent the spread of HIV is far from over, despite all the good news. The needs continue to grow, and everyone at TAP is looking at ways to meet those needs and how to grow responsibly.

One of our needs will soon be met, when George Friou arrives to be our new Executive Director. The Search Committee worked hard and diligently to find a good person to fill the job. We think we have found that person in George. While I took August off from putting out In The Affirmative, I was working with a really fine group of people -- as chair of the Search Committee. Four staff persons and four board members, along with Marjorie Love as the committee's facilitator, made up the group. We began in June and reached our goal of finding a new Executive Director by mid-August. My thanks to my fellow committee members Charles Dwyer, Doug Eaton, J.C. Edelberg, John Holverson, Marjorie Love, Betty Payson, Anne Romano, and Jill Tacy. They all worked very hard with good humor (and sometimes wicked good humor) to do the job right. Thanks, gang.

We've had our share of Executive Directors at The AIDS Project. (It's a tough job, as are all the jobs at The AIDS Project.) But who's counting?
It's too soon to think AIDS is cured

by Jeffrey L. Reynolds,
Director of Policy at the Long Island Association for AIDS Care, Inc.

It was this time last year that people with HIV/AIDS and their advocates were celebrating a long-awaited turning point in a battle marked by 16 years of failed treatments and staggering death rates. Just as hope had begun to wane, the new "wonder drugs" called protease inhibitors promised to transform what was once considered a terminal illness into a chronic manageable condition. As the search for a cure continued in a recharged environment, AIDS would become a disease you could live with, rather than die from. For those with the right body chemistry and the economic, medical, and social support necessary to succeed on the complicated treatment regimens, protease inhibitors have meant better health, increased stamina, and a new lease on life.

AIDS units in local hospitals and nursing homes once filled beyond capacity now sit half empty. And, for the first time since the early 1980s, overall deaths from AIDS not only stopped their upward climb but fell 19% in January to September 1996, according to the CDC report issued in July 1997. While any drop in AIDS deaths comes as good news, it's too early to claim victory -- especially since the gains aren't universal. Consider, for example, that AIDS deaths dropped 22% among men, but only 7% among women. Similarly, deaths fell 28% among whites, but only 16% among Latinos and 10% among blacks.

Protease inhibitors aren't working for everyone, and just as these statistics never made it into recent headlines, the stories of those who have found the drugs inaccessible, toxic, or ineffective have been overshadowed by musings about the end of an epidemic we were slow to acknowledge in the first place. That AIDS has become treatable for some -- especially white men -- also seems to have overshadowed the fact that AIDS is 100% preventable. The same CDC report touting the drops in deaths also estimated that 40,000 people become infected with HIV in the U.S. each year -- a number that continues to rise, particularly among those populations that haven't experienced the benefits of protease inhibitors.

The growing popular notion that living with HIV means popping a few pills each day has given license to abandon already shaky safer sex practices. Indeed, it would be ironic if medical advances designed to solve a public health crisis actually made it worse, but in some ways that's what seems to be happening. A second wave of infections has already emerged among young gay men, and as attention remains steadily focused on treatment rather than prevention, the number of drug users, women, and teens testing positive continues to rise unabated. Perhaps that's why some doctors are reportedly starting to use the powerful drugs to try to prevent infection in patients who show up in their offices the morning after a night of unsafe sex. Though there are no studies supporting the prophylactic use of protease inhibitors, some doctors are hoping the same regimens used to prevent HIV infections in healthcare workers accidently stuck with needles or splashed with blood can be carried over to those exposed to HIV in other ways. Within a day after stories about the potentially preventive treatments appeared in major newspapers, the phones were ringing off hook at AIDS hotlines with frantic callers asking where they could get "the morning-after pill." Counselors spent hours explaining that the treatments have horrible side effects, cost several thousand dollars, and at this point can't be used to prevent HIV. Still, such details are frequently lost on those looking for any excuse to avoid condoms.

The new drugs have been a godsend to some, a disappointment to others, and an absolute disaster for prevention efforts. Without sustained attention, HIV will destroy whatever gains we've made in a way reminiscent of diseases such as syphilis, gonorrhea, and tuberculosis, which re-emerged -- and thrived -- due to complacency.

The current calm on the AIDS front, like the eye of any storm, can be not only deceiving but downright dangerous if it prompts us to relax our vigilance and lose sight of the continued threat.
FREE LUNCH

Enjoy a free lunch at The AIDS Project every Thursday at noon. Join other clients and TAP staff for a great meal, good conversation, and good company. Drop on by!

TAP and the Internet

To contact The AIDS Project on the world wide web, visit our site at "www.neis.net/aidsproject"
To e-mail The AIDS Project, send your message along to "aidsproj@neis.net"

Ryan White/Client Assistance Funds

An important reminder to clients:
There are funds available to TAP clients with financial need for the following items:

Routine Dental Care,
Routine Eye Care and Eyeglasses,
Vitamin Supplements,
Non-Prescription Skin Care Products, and
Non-Medicaid Medication Co-pays.

There is a dollar limit to how much an individual client can receive in any fiscal year. Contact your case manager for assistance by calling TAP in Portland at 774-6877, in Auburn at 783-4301, or in Kennebunk at 985-8199.

Men's Drop-In Discussion Group

Portland, 142 High Street, 6th Floor
Thursdays, September 18-November 6 7-9 p.m.

This is an 8-week drop-in discussion group for all gay, bisexual, married, and other men who have sex with men. Open to all men; HIV status not important. Come and meet other men to share experiences around sexuality, coming out, relationships, HIV transmission, etc. This is a free program designed to provide a safe, confidential, and supportive space for all men who have sex with men.

For more info, call Gerry at 774-6877.

3-Week Support Groups for HIV-Negative Men

Meet other men to share experiences around sexuality, dating, coming out, etc. Groups are open to all HIV-negative men who have sex with men: gay, married, bisexual. Groups are safe and confidential opportunities to talk about and get support for staying HIV-negative, dealing with testing issues, etc.

This is a free program, but you must pre-register.
Call Gerry at 774-6877 to sign up.

Meetings held in Portland at 142 High Street:
Series A: Tuesdays, September 16, 23, 30 from 7-9 p.m
Series B: Tuesdays, October 7, 14, 21 from 7-9 p.m.

Meetings held in Kennebunk at Lafayette Center:
Series A: Tuesdays, November 4, 11, 18 from 7-9 p.m.
Series B: Thursdays, December 2, 9, 16 from 7-9 p.m.
Invitation
for all gay, bisexual, married, and other msm*
Community Dinner
this is a free event, just bring your fabulous selves

Willow Tree Restaurant
Homestyle Cooking in Our Childhood Home
Cottage Rentals

Albert Austin
Route 1 & 9B
Wells • Maine 04090

Saturday, Sept 20th, 1997 7 pm
RSVP if you can call Gerry (207) 774-6877

sponsored by The AIDS Project Portland
*MSM men who have sex with men

Gay Men Together
Community Building for the Next Century
October 17-19, 1997
Pilgrim Lodge - West Gardiner, Maine

The Gay Men Together weekend retreat is held twice a year at a wonderful, rustic, turn-of-the-century lodge in central Maine. The weekend provides an open environment where gay men can make new friends, share experiences, develop trust, and gain a better understanding of ourselves and others.

You must be pre-registered to attend. The cost is $45 for the weekend. For more information contact: Gay Men Together, 7 Cat Tail Lane, Alfred, ME 04002, or call (207) 499-0166.

Sponsored by:

AIDS Hotlines
Questions about HIV/AIDS? Call toll-free for answers.
National AIDS Hotline:
1-800-342-2437
Maine AIDSline: 1-800-851-2437
Maine Teen Hotline: 1-800-851-2437
(on Wednesdays from 6-9pm)
AIDS update

Since the Beginning of the Epidemic:

AIDS Cases in the U.S. (as of 12/31/96): 581,429
AIDS Death in the U.S. (as of 12/31/96): 362,004
AIDS Cases in Maine (as of 6/30/97): 791
AIDS Deaths in Maine (as of 6/30/97): 426
AIDS Cases by Maine Region:
   Southern Maine - 415
   Central Maine - 252
   Northern Maine - 124
AIDS Cases in Maine by Gender:
   90% Men
   10% Women

HIV/AIDS in the U.S. (from the CDC):

About 30,700 Americans died of AIDS between January and September of 1996, down from 37,900 during the same time period in 1995.

Deaths among men dropped 22%, but women dropped just 7%.

Deaths among black Americans dropped 10%, Hispanics dropped 16%, while the decline was 28% among whites overall.

Last year black patients accounted for the largest proportion of AIDS cases at 41%.

Heterosexual AIDS cases in the U.S. are increasing at 15% a year, compared to 5% or less among gay men and injecting drug users.

AIDS Around The World (from UNAIDS):

It is estimated that by year's end a million of the world's children under age 15 will be HIV-positive -- more than 90% in developing countries.

It is estimated that the 9 million of the world's children have lost their mothers to deaths from AIDS.

Call To The People
by J. E. Boone

As the new staff member at The AIDS Project, I would like to say "hi", and that it is my pleasure to formally join the fight against this epidemic. I not only add a little color to the Project, but I bring a varied and diverse background of working with people and bringing parity. I look forward to working with the people of color communities to get a better advantage in the battle to stem the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus.

Please, please, please, please, please, please! We need everyone's help in fighting HIV/AIDS. This call goes out to both the infected and affected members of our community who would like to come together and focus on the issues that are important for this community. If you are interested in becoming a member of a focus group that is willing to work on the issues as you see them, give me a call. If I'm not in, leave a message for me, and I will get back to you. I am really interested in helping to meet the needs of the community as you see them. The war goes on in the U.S. and other countries, but with everyone attacking the issues together and not attacking each other, we can win this battle here in our state and our communities. I'm available for workshops and seminars. If you have a place you think I should be going to with the message, the literature, condoms, needles, etc., let me know what you think.

Thanks, thanks, thanks.

J. E. Boone can be telephoned at 774-6877 or faxed at 879-0761.

For information you need to know if you're HIV-positive, Project Inform of San Francisco is a most valuable national resource. On the cutting edge of the AIDS epidemic, Project Inform has the most up-to-date information on HIV/AIDS and its treatments. The information is free for the asking (although donations are accepted).

You can contact Project Inform:
by calling 1-800-822-7422 (M-F, 6am to 3pm EST; Sat., 7am to 1 pm EST.)
by the internet at www.projin.org, by e-mail at pinform@hooked.net. Ask to be put on their mailing list for their newsletter called PI Perspectives.

This is not a paid advertisement, but rather a recommendation of the editor to others, like himself, who are HIV-positive.
TAP to continue service in Androscoggin and Oxford counties through its Auburn office

Recently TAP announced that it will stay in Androscoggin and Oxford counties for another fiscal year (starting October 1997) pending expected funding from the state of Maine. Diana Carrigan will continue to provide services to people with HIV/AIDS in those two counties, as she has done for many years.

The AIDS Project announces changes in its staff

J. E. Boone has joined the staff of TAP in the role of HIV-prevention educator for the community of color. J. E. introduces himself elsewhere in this newsletter. Welcome aboard!

Paul Lavin, coordinator of HAVEN and housing, has cut back his schedule from full-time to half-time.

And as we mentioned on page one, George Friou will begin the job of Executive Director in November.

TAP's Annual Meeting held

In August, TAP's Board of Directors held its Annual Meeting at St. Mary's Church in Falmouth. Tamara Harvey and Anne Romano coordinated the event, which was open to all staff, board, and advisory board members. They did a great job with the food and decorations and other essentials.

The board said goodbye to board members Paul Albert, Mary Anderson, Michael Quint, and Alan Stearns.

Also the board noted, with an appropriate sense of ceremony, the loss of three long-time board members and officers. Celeste Gosselin, who had served for several years as board Treasurer; Pat Pinto, who had been the Vice-President; and Leo LaPlante, who had been President of TAP for four years, were each thanked wholeheartedly for their years of service to TAP and to people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Three new board members were voted in during the meeting. They are Dino Giamatti, John Wade, and Verne Weisberg, M.D.. They will attend their first board meeting this month.

It was also voted that Joel Martin would become President of the board; Mike Martin will serve as Vice President, Anne Romano as Treasurer, and JoAnne Peterson will be the Secretary. Committee chairs are: Charles Dwyer for Client Services; Anne Romano for Finance; Karla McGowan for Fundraising and Public Relations; Judi Mansing for Nominating; and Steve Schuit for Personnel.
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One Auburn Center/Box 14L
Auburn, ME 04210
Phone: 783-4301
Fax: 795-4084

York County Office
Suite 1
208 Lafayette Center
Kennebunk, ME 04043
Phone: 985-8199
Fax: 985-8646

Staff:
Doug Bailey,
Cumberland Cty Case Manager
Declan Buckley,
York Cty Outreach Worker
J. E. Boone,
HIV-Prevention Outreach
Diana Corrigan,
Andro/Oxford Cty Case Manager
Janine Collins,
Cumberland Cty Case Manager
Sequioa Dance,
Street Outreach Worker
Douglas Eaton,
Program Coordinator of HIV Prevention
Tamaro Harvey,
Development Associate
John Holwerson,
Director of Policy & Program
Paul Lavin,
HAVEN Project Coordinator
Housing Coordinator
Carol LeBlanc,
Director of Social Services
Marianne Love,
Interim Director
Randy May,
Case Management Services
Manager
Rodney Mondor,
Client Services Coordinator
Gerry Payson,
York Cty Case Manager
Steve Reavy,
Staff Accountant
Jill Tacy,
Executive Assistant

Support Groups in Portland
Ongoing Drop-In Groups:
Monday 5:30 to 7:00pm
HIV and Substance Abuse Recovery
A supportive and safe space for people in the process of recovery around alcohol and other drug abuse.
TAP Office, Small Group Room.
Tuesday 10:30am to noon
HIV Infected/Affected Drop-In Support Group
A meeting for people living with and impacted by the virus.
TAP, The Meeting Place, Suite 632.
Tuesday 7:00pm
The Color of Light
A meeting by and for people with HIV/AIDS using the 12-step book "The Color of Light" by Hazelton.
TAP, The Meeting Place, Suite 632.
Thursday noon
Open Lunch
An informal gathering of TAP staff and clients.
TAP, Conference Room.
Thursday 5:30 to 7:00pm
People with HIV/AIDS
A drop-in support group for anyone with HIV/AIDS.
TAP, The Meeting Place, Suite 632.

Time-Limited Groups:
Mixed HIV Status Gay Male Couples
A closed, time-limited support group that provides a space for both positive and negative partners to explore issues specific to their relationships. This group is limited to five couples, so please contact TAP at 774-6877 to sign up for the next group.

Heterosexual Couples Group
A closed, time-limited support group for couples (whether one or both is positive) to find support, gain information, and explore issues around living with HIV as a couple. This group is limited to five couples. If the response is greater, we will start another group.
Please contact TAP at 774-6877 to sign up for this group.

Directions:
142 High St. (State Theatre Bldg.);
take the elevator to the sixth floor,
take a right to reach TAP's office in Suite 601 or The Meeting Place in Suite 632.

Support Groups in York County
Heterosexual Men and Women Living With the Virus
This ongoing drop-in support group is now meeting in Biddeford at Southern Maine Medical Center. Mondays 6:00pm to 7:30pm.
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Persons Living with HIV
This ongoing drop-in group is now forming in Wells and will focus on living well, empowerment, and support.

Please contact Getty Payson at the Kennebunk office at 985-8199 or TAP's Portland office at 774-6877 to register for either group. When we have six people who are interested, we will start the group and post the day and time for others to join. Both are to be evening groups.

Prevention Education Groups for Gay, Bisexual, Married, Questioning, and Other Men Who Have Sex With Men
Summer/Fall Programs:
Mixed-Status Drop-in Discussion Groups
For all men regardless of HIV status. Eight-week, time-limited groups in Portland, Ogunquit, and Kennebunk. Meet other men in a comfortable, supportive atmosphere to discuss topics including sexuality, dating, safer sex, coming out, etc. An eight-week group begins Saturday, June 28th, 4 to 6pm, at the Willow Tree Restaurant, Route 1, Wells. Meets every Saturday until August 26th. Portland groups begin in September. For more info, call Gerry at 774-6877.

Community Networking Dinners (York County)
Quarterly gatherings designed to provide networking and meeting opportunities for all married, gay, bisexual, transgender, and all other men who have sex with men regardless of HIV status. Events are free and open to all men with an interest in promoting healthy and safe sexuality. Next program is a cookout/dinner on Saturday, July 12th, 4pm, at the Willow Tree Restaurant, Route 1, Wells. For more info, call Gerry at 774-6877.

Safer Sex Workshops for HIV-Negative Men
For gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, designed to support HIV-negative men in staying negative. Meetings will be held in Portland and southern York County. The first series meets at TAP, The Meeting Place, Suite 632, on three consecutive Tuesdays - July 1st, 8th, and 15th. This workshop series will be offered once a month through the end of the year. Pre-registration is required. For more info, call Gerry at 774-6877.

All programs are free.

Support Group in Androscoggin County
Tuesday 1:30 to 3:00pm
People Living with HIV
An ongoing drop-in support group at TAP's office at 1 Auburn Center in Auburn.
For more information contact Diana Corrigan, TAP Case Manager for Androscoggin and Oxford counties, at 783-7301.

If you have questions or comments about support groups, contact The AIDS Project at 774-6877.