

by Billy Russo

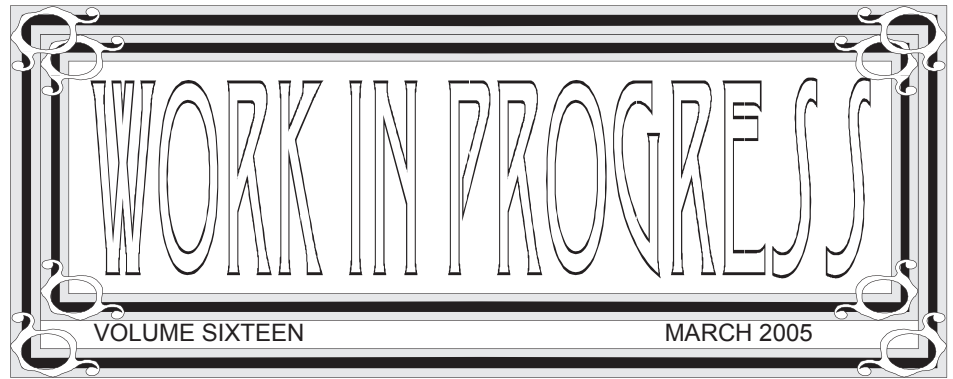
Goeff Alexander started volunteering at the HIV Resource Center when he was 14. By his 16th birthday he had been trained to receive calls on Douglas County's 24 hour Gay & Lesbian Switchboard. This training included completion of an eight week Gay Men's Consciousness Raising Group where homosexuals explore their relationships with family, peers and the community.

That same year he was elected to the Douglas County AIDS Council Board of Directors and currently he serves on the executive committee as Secretary to the Board. He has participated in the Gay Men's Advisory Board which met annually to set priorities for HIV prevention interventions.

He is a founding member of Club Queer, a social group that serves gay and gay-friendly youth. Club Queer has been in the news recently after a county commissioner referred to it as a "sex club" at a board of commissioner's meeting in November.

Not new to controversy, Geoff "came out" at Coffenberry Middle School in Myrtle Creek when in the eighth grade. Homophobia at school and home forced him into Child Protective Services, and he was placed with a gay parent for one year. During that time he volunteered at Community Kitchen and the HIV Resource Center.

(For more see page two)



State of the Office

by Billy Russo

We received more funding from private foundations this quarter than we have in any quarter in our 18 year history. Cow Creek Tribe of Umpqua Indians (\$12,000), FOHS (\$10,000), Richard Kent Hofmann (\$5,000), North American Syringe Exchange Network (\$2,500), Mercy Foundation (\$2,500) and Mercy Employee Fund (\$1,000). Awards totaled \$33,000.

We can thank our Public Health Authority for an abundance of technical assistance this quarter. Douglas County Health Department staff worked closely with us in developing resources and fine tuning our outreach programs to insure they conform to the ever-changing Federal guidelines.

Now in our second year of board development, most of the training is behind us and our committees are hard at work. Besides the three development committees, Finance & Audit is also playing an important role in the governance process. This year it is expanding its role to address weaknesses in our reporting processes.

Board Development is finalizing the rewrites of staff job descriptions. Next it will tackle an employee handbook. Fund Development continues to develop a funding base in Coos and Curry Counties. They are also gearing up for the annual recognition dinner this spring. Program Development/Eval is determining methods to measure our mission statement and goals based on using the outcomes model. They are also reviewing the new CDC.

WORK IN PROGRESS

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Billy Russo

Club Queer Fiasco

by Billy Russo

In November a number of agencies and school districts dramatically withdrew from the Coalition for Sexual Minority Youth under pressure from county commissioner, Dan Van Slyke.

According to a News-Review article, "Coalition for gay teens draws fire from Van Slyke", Van Slyke felt it was his place to raise concerns because many nonprofits receive some level of funding through the county and he wants to ensure public funds are being spent on initiatives the community will support.

At issue was a press release announcing the creation of a monthly social activity for homosexual youth and their friends. Coalition members met last summer with gay youth to discuss formation of such an activity. At that time the youth decided to meet on the first Friday of each month during the school year. They christened the activity "Club Queer".

According to the above mentioned article, agency heads were unaware that their organizations were members of the coalition. Van Slyke's description of the youth group as a "sex club" contributed to the misinformation, ignorance and intolerance that led to the hasty withdrawals.

The bad news is that, like the Hebe controversy, it makes Douglas County look small and intolerant. The good news is that it has brought the work of the Coalition into the public's eye.

While community leaders have acted badly, the media has done an excellent job of providing a balanced, informative report on both the controversy and the Coalition. The end result is that more youth and their families are aware of the coalition's mission to provide education, safe and healthy environments for all youth in Douglas County.

Circle of Hope

by Billy Russo

(cont. from page one)

He suffered the wrath of the intolerant when he published an HIV prevention newsletter for youth during his freshmen year at Phoenix School.

He returned home and now attends classes at South Umpqua High School where he is a senior this year. Often the victim of homophobic hatred, he works with school officials to make South Umpqua School System safer for all youth.

Scientists Examine Possible New HIV Strain in NY

(Reuters) 15 February 2005

WASHINGTON - Scientists said on Monday they were studying a potentially new virulent strain of the AIDS virus taken from a New York man to see if it posed any public danger. Tests will include a close look at the genetic sequence of the virus to see if it is unique and perhaps has developed a more efficient way of infecting cells and progressing to full-blown AIDS.

New York City Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas Frieden publicized the case on Friday, saying the patient was a methamphetamine user who appeared to be infected with a strain of the virus that not only resisted most HIV drugs on the market but may damage the immune system more quickly than normal. "This case is a wake-up call. First, it's a wake-up call to men who have sex with men, particularly those who may use crystal methamphetamine," Frieden said in a statement. Some AIDS activists criticized the health commissioner, saying he was causing undue panic before he had all the facts. "Rather than increasing awareness of the risks of unsafe sex and crystal use, the Health Department risks stigmatizing gay men as crazed drug addicts carelessly or wantonly spreading a killer bug," the New York Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project said in a statement issued on Monday. "The history

of the AIDS epidemic has taught us that misinformation spreads more quickly than the virus itself." Other health officials said they were concerned.

"Certainly CDC is alarmed by the apparent intersection between two dangerous conditions – multi-drug resistance and apparent rapid progression," said Jessica Frickey, a spokeswoman for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention. A spokesman for the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center in New York said scientists there were having samples from the patient tested. More information was expected on Tuesday. "The patient is a male in his mid-40s who reported multiple male sex partners often while using crystal methamphetamine (crystal meth). He was first diagnosed with HIV in December 2004 and appears to have been recently infected," the New York Health Department said in a statement. The AIDS virus mutates easily and patients often develop strains that resist the drugs they are taking. Such strains of multi-drug-resistant virus can also be passed to newly infected patients, and several groups have reported on HIV patients who have drug-resistant infections before they take any of the cocktails of medications used to control the virus.



Lynn Sterchi

Dr. Susan Little and colleagues at the University of California San Diego found in 2002 that drug-resistant HIV was affecting as many as one in five newly infected people in the United States. The CDC has said it was researching reports that methamphetamine users may be more susceptible to HIV infection, although it is not clear if that is due to behavior or something the drug itself may do to alter the immune system. But HIV infects immune cells, and a patient's genetic makeup or overall health can affect how quickly an HIV infection develops into Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, not a disease in itself but a susceptibility to a range of infections from pneumonia to cancer. New York officials say more than 88,000 New Yorkers are infected with the AIDS virus, which has no cure, and estimates 20,000 more are infected and do not know it.

HIV RESOURCE CENTER

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Women & Teen Outreach Program

by Mary Murphy

I hope that everyone had a wonderful holiday and a Happy New Year!

There was a presentation ceremony held at Seven Feathers to honor the different programs that received grants from the Cow Creek Tribe. Our program received \$12,000. I want to thank the Tribe again for believing that the Women and Teen Outreach Program is very important. Because of this and other grants that we have received we will be able to continue serving the needs of women and teens affected by, and at risk of HIV in Coos, Curry and Douglas Counties.

Today I want to share with you an article from *Straight Talk*, a magazine for teens. I often have young people tell me that they just do not feel comfortable talking to their partners about sex. The article addresses this issue.

SAYING NO TO SEX

There are many teens who choose not to have sex. In just one year the number of young people who took the "True Love Waits" pledge reached 40,000. They committed themselves to postpone sexual intercourse until marriage.

Yet, you probably still hear it said, "Everybody's having sex. I'm the only virgin left in my school."

The pressure of wanting to "be like everybody else" is one of the main reasons many teens say "yes" when they really want to say "no" to sex. But, while many teens choose to "do it", many choose to abstain. Today, trying to be like everybody else is very confusing.

It's normal to think about having sex and to wonder what it would be like. You may have seen movies or TV shows where people your age were shown "doing it". Some of your friends may be having sex. But, what's right for you?

Sexual relationships involve emotions, communication and understanding of ourselves and others. And, today, there are real consequences to consider, like pregnancy, STDs and AIDS. But more importantly, choosing to have sex is a decision one makes; it should not "just happen."

While many kids have the "it can't happen to me" attitude, about one million girls get



Mary Murphy

pregnant every year and millions of teens contract sexually transmitted diseases. Worse yet, HIV infection among teens is on the rise.

If you are trying to make your own decision, consider this:

Sex is never a test of love. If your partner is pressuring you to "do it," you better think about your partner again.

There are many ways to express love. Like hugging, kissing, saying "I love you," holding hands. Think of some ways that feel right for you.

(Continued on page 5)

Comments on proposed changes to SSA policy regarding digestive diseases.

by Mike Bunyard

I was diagnosed with HCV (the virus that causes hepatitis C) in 1991, very early in the understanding of the disease. Because of this, what to do about my disease was a complicated and lengthy process. I underwent numerous tests which may have more to do with the complications associated with the disease than the actual presence of virus in my body. At the time I was a roofer, a physically demanding occupation. As the disease progressed it became harder and harder for me to work. My wife would take me to the jobsite and pick me up for naps, etc. I went from being able to work hard for long periods of time (up to 16 hours a day) to perhaps 6 hours a day with the help of my wife.

Eventually it became more than my employer could underwrite and he let me go. I bear him no ill will, he went further than

most would have and continued paying my medical insurance for several months after that. Eventually I tried and failed Interferon monotherapy and then I was told that I needed to see the hepatologist at Oregon Health Sciences University. When I asked why, I was told that I needed a liver transplant.

Obviously I was one of the lucky ones, I received my gift of life on February 22, 1996. So far there is no evidence of recurrence of HCV, so make that extremely lucky. I don't remember how I came to apply for Social Security Disability Insurance, probably advice from Al Walker, my vocational rehab counselor and a good friend. In any event, even with documented end stage liver disease by numerous doctors, not the least of which were the transplant team at OHSU, I was still initially denied benefits. Imagine, you are unsure of

whether you are going to live, unable to make a living in your chosen profession, or any other profession for that matter, a family to support and love, and all of the hopes of the future that now seem pretty uncertain. But you aren't sick enough to be helped.

No explanation, no matter how reasonable or well thought out could take away the despair. Fortunately for me it was a minor setback that was soon corrected. So you could say that the system did not fail me. I am personally acquainted with over 100 people who can't say the same thing. They aren't yet sick enough to be listed, and when they are finally listed, if that is going to be their lot, they won't have as good a prognosis as I did. The lack of available organs will see to that. There are many things that are wrong with our society, most of which we just have to accept and say to ourselves, "Oh well, what are you going to do?" Making it more difficult for people with this disease; to hang on to their hope doesn't have to be one of those things. You have the power to change that and it is my wish that you will adopt the recommendations of the Caring Ambassadors Program as outlined in the previous comment.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and for making it possible for those of us affected by this disease to speak our minds and our hearts.

SAYING NO TO SEX

(Continued from page 4)

If you are thinking of having sex, you need to talk openly with your partner. You'd want to know a lot about your partner's previous relationships and current health.

Discuss using a condom with your partner. Both of you may decide to be tested for STDs and HIV. It's normal to feel uncomfortable to discuss such matters. But, if you can't talk

about it, you are not ready to have sex.

Always be clear in expressing your feelings; if you don't want to "go parking," say so. And, don't drink alcohol or do drugs. Their effect may cause you to do things you normally wouldn't do—like having unprotected sex.

One teen sums it up, "I risk too much by having sex just to say I've done it. I'd rather wait for the right person."

THE CORNER

A Heartfelt Thank You to our Legacy of Hope Supporters

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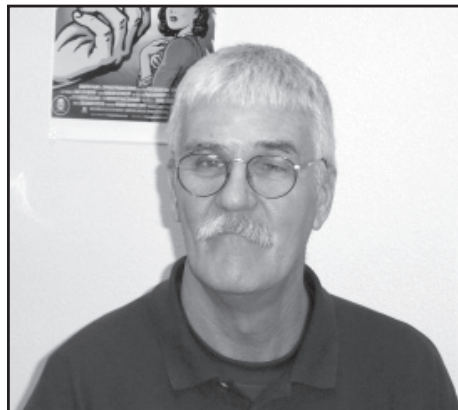
Circle of Friends

Also, thanks to the many other supporters who are far too numerous to list.

Wish List

We still need:

- Laptop Computer (for the road)
- Projection Television
- Proxima for PowerPoint Presentations
- DVD Player
- Conference Room Chairs (30)
- Computer Chairs (2)
- Front Door Notifier (bells?)
- Volunteers to do data entry



Mike Bunyard

October – December 2004

IDU Program Narrative

by Mike Bunyard

Exchange contacts and supplies are down a bit this quarter. Syringes are down about 10% but exchange contacts are down by 21%. I attribute this to more activity by my secondaries. Of course it could have something to do with the weather, it tends to get a little cold and wet up here in the fall and winter. IDU's have limited access to mobile exchange due to limited resources. Most of my participants are meth users and many of them don't have transportation.

Oregon recently adopted a plan designed to curtail availability to pseudoephedrine, a primary ingredient in the production of "bathtub" meth. Anyone wishing to purchase cold remedies containing pseudoephedrine must show picture ID and is limited to the amount they can purchase. One of the tactics employed by cooks has been the utilization of "smurfs", users who go around to pharmacies and stores, and purchase large quantities of these cold remedies. These measures just went into effect in this past quarter so it is too soon to tell if they are going to be effective. Given the inventiveness of most of the users I know, my fear is that the substance they come up with to replace pseudoephedrine is going to be even more toxic to the human body. Time will tell if this latest effort will have the desired outcome. Oregon is suffering almost catastrophic consequences from the use of this drug.

The Statewide Viral Hepatitis Planning Group plan was delivered to the legislature at the beginning of the current legislative session (January 5), and I'm scheduled to meet with the governor's health aide, along with Lorren Sandt of the Caring Ambassador's program and another HCV (hepatitis C) advocate next week. It is our hope that we can convince the governor to allocate some funding so that we can begin implementing the plan's recommendations. It will be an uphill battle in the present economic climate but at least we now have a plan. The DCHCV Task Force has wrapped up work on our public education presentation and we are in the process of securing funding to begin our local presentations.

During this past quarter we had 586 exchange contacts. We averaged 20 active secondaries, about the same as last quarter. We gave out approximately 9,000 syringes and received about 8,000 in return. We gave out 461 safer sex kits, 629 safe injection kits and 786 pieces of literature. I made 10 HIV presentations to 107 individuals, one of which was the Nursing Assistant class at our local community college. I continue to integrate HCV information in each of the presentations I do. During the quarter we administered 189 HIV tests and had 179 people return to get their results.

ACTIVITIES

**AT THE
HIV RESOURCE CENTER
832 N.W. HIGHLAND ST.
(541) 440-2761**

**Douglas County AIDS
Council Board Meeting:
April 21st
at 11:00 a.m.**

**Gay Men's HIV
Support Group:
2nd & 4th Thursdays,
11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

**Gay Men's Potluck:
Last Fri. of month
5:00 – 8:00 p.m.**

**HCV Support Group:
2nd Thursday
of each month,
6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**

**Gay Movie Night:
2nd Friday
of each month**

**Club Queer
"a safe place for youth"
First Friday
of each month**

**HIV Testing
is always available at
the HIV Resource Center
Monday-Friday
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

AROUND THE CORNER

Sixth Annual Recognition Dinner

Mark your calendars for the upcoming Recognition Dinner, formerly known as "The Spaghetti Dinner." This year's event will be May 20th at St. Joseph's School at 630 West Stanton Street from 5:00 to 8:00 P.M.

When Ruby House closed in 1998, and we reorganized as the HIV Resource Center (HIVRC), the DCAC Board wanted to recognize the many volunteers who gave their time during that ten-year project. That first dinner was held at the Umpqua Valley Arts Center. There were about eighty of us there to recognize Linda Hoppe, the first Ruby House volunteer. Linda continued to volunteer until her death last year. The award is now in her memory. This year's recipient of the Linda Hoppe First Volunteer Award will be announced at the dinner.

Last year we auctioned three tins of Clancy's famous cookies. We've enjoyed Clancy's baked goods at HIVRC for years and know how good they are; however, we were amazed when they sold for a total of \$565.00! This year we're looking for other items to auction. The price of tickets is the same as last year: \$6.00 in advance; \$7.00 at the door. Accompanied children, ten and under, are free. Please join us.

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