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APRIL 2007 EDITION

Although the weather this month has not felt much like spring, Center on Halsted has been April showered! Earlier this month our design and architectural friends held a "Furniture Shower" for the Center. What's a furniture shower? Just like a baby shower or a bridal shower, except our "registry" is for interior furnishings to ensure the Center will look as great on the inside as it is jaw-dropping on the outside. Say farewell to folding chairs. Sit through a meeting on someone's throwaway couch? Not at your Center. Thanks to the generosity of many individual and corporate donors, the building will be filled with really great furniture and décor! Typically, furniture of that quality costs an arm and a leg. But, in a tremendous expression of support for our mission and community, each furniture and accessory supplier has provided reduced pricing for each item. This equates to a major donation on all their parts. We are truly grateful. See our website for more details. . . and keep the April showers coming for your Center!



A message from

Executive

Director

Robbin Burr

The clock ticks to our opening. Our official move into the building is the end of this month and as of May 1, your center will be open to the public. During June we'll celebrate with a fabulous OUT and Open black tie gala on June 8. Beginning in June and beyond, your Center will be filled with programming that features each of our three program areas and the programs of our non-profit community partners housed in the facility. We have even more to be PROUD of during LGBT Pride Month this year, as our community center is unique in the nation, housing recreation, the arts, social services, retail and other community organizations all under one roof. We are eager to show it off!

Remember this is the last month Center on Halsted will be on Lincoln Avenue! Our new address is 3656 N. Halsted, at the corner of Halsted and Waveland, our phone contact information stays the same, and I look forward to seeing you soon in our new digs!



Robbin Burr
Executive Director
Center on Halsted



For updated Center on Halsted events visit www.centeronhalsted.org

State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline

This is a special month for the State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline because April is National STD Awareness Month and April 25 is the 2nd Annual Syphilis Testing Day in the City of Chicago.

Below are some basic facts regarding the most common STDs. If you would like a testing site near you or have questions concerning any aspect of HIV or STDs please call the State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline seven days a week from 8:00a.m. - 10:00p.m. and speak to a trained resource counselor. All calls are anonymous and all callers are treated with concern and respect.

STD QUICKFACTS

Transmission of all STDs occurs only if your partner has the disease. The proper use of condoms protects against fluid-transmitted STDs like Gonorrhea, Chlamydia, Hepatitis, and HIV. They are slightly less effective for skin to skin contact diseases like Syphilis, Herpes, and Genital Warts.

SYPHILIS

get it from: oral, anal, vaginal sex with an infected partner. Syphilis is a skin to skin contact disease. It is spread through direct, repeated contact with a chancre

symptoms: Primary=painless sore on genitals, in mouth, or rectum. Secondary=rash on hands & feet. Many people have no symptoms

long term: brain damage, nerve damage, death

treatment: curable with antibiotics, but long-term damage can be irreversible if left untreated

test: blood test

GONORRHEA

get it from: oral, anal, vaginal sex with an infected partner

symptoms: burning urination, discharge, fever, sore throat (through oral sex), many have no symptoms

long-term: damage of urethra and urinary tract, sterility, throat damage if contracted

from giving oral sex

treatment: curable with antibiotics

test: urine test and/or swab test of penis, throat, anus, or vagina

CHLAMYDIA

get it from: oral (sometimes), anal, vaginal sex with an infected partner

symptoms: similar to gonorrhea, but most people have no symptoms

long-term: damage of urethra and urinary tract, sterility

treatment: curable with antibiotics

test: urine test and/or swab test of penis, throat, anus, or vagina

HERPES

get it from: oral (cold sores), anal, vaginal sex with an infected partner, contact with herpes sores or cells, skin to skin contact

symptoms: blisters on genitals, thighs, buttocks, or mouth

long-term: individuals vary, some continue to have regular outbreaks

treatment: no cure, but suppressive medications can reduce severity and number of outbreaks

test: visual, culture from sore, or blood test

GENITAL WARTS

get if from: skin to skin contact with warts

symptoms: flesh or white colored warts on genitals or anus. Some symptoms may be subclinical. Not everyone develops warts.

long-term: possible increased risk for anal/cervical cancer

treatment: removed surgically or frozen off by doctor. Warts may reappear after treatment.

test: visual, anal/vaginal pap smear every year or so to check for precancerous cells.

HEPATITIS A

get it from: rimming infected partner, contaminated food

symptoms: nausea, yellow eyes, dark urine, fatigue, fever

long-term: usually lasts 2 to 6 weeks before the body clears the virus, and builds immunity, can be deadly for those with liver disease or compromised immune system

treatment: no treatment for hepatitis A. Once you've had it, you won't get it again. A vaccine is available to prevent Hepatitis A.

test: blood test

HEPATITIS B

get it from: anal, oral, vaginal sex, blood contact with an infected partner

symptoms: similar to Hep A. May occur an average of 12 weeks after exposure. Many people have no symptoms

long-term: for an estimated 5% of people older than 5 years old, it becomes a chronic disease that can lead to liver cancer

treatment: no treatment for acute hepatitis B. Once you've had it, you won't get it again. A vaccine is available to prevent Hep B.

test: blood test

*Chart based on information from www.abmhp.org/cms/index.php?page=STD_QUICK_FACTS
Revised 2007 by Jill Dispenza, State of IL AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline*

Jill Dispenza

*Hotline Call Center Manager
Center on Halsted*

Anti-Violence Project

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The Anti-Violence Project recognizes the barriers survivors of rape and sexual assault face and is committed to working with survivors at their comfort level.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

Rape and sexual assault can happen to anyone, including men, regardless of race, class, age, size, appearance, or sexual orientation.

IT'S NOT ABOUT SEX!

Sex requires your consent. Rape and sexual assault are violent crimes motivated by anger, hatred and aggression and used to exert power, humiliate and control. Being forced to have unprotected sex or to engage in more sexual activity than you want also constitutes rape or sexual assault.

IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT!

No one "asks" to be raped. You always have the right to say no even if you pick someone up or are already engaged in sexual activity.. If you cannot say no because you are drunk, high, unconscious, or have a disability, it is still considered rape or sexual assault. If your boundaries are violated in a "scene" or your "safe words" are disrespected, it is still considered rape or sexual assault. If you are sex working and someone forces you to do something you have not agreed to, it is considered rape or sexual assault.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Injury as well as STDs can result from rape or sexual assault. Getting treatment as soon as possible can help prevent infections and lessen your risk of HIV infection. A rape evidence kit can be completed at a hospital and kept as evidence to build a strong case against your attacker. You are entitled to medical care whether or not you chose to have a rape kit completed. Also, it is a normal reaction to want to feel clean after a rape or sexual assault; however, to preserve your rights and save valuable evidence it is NOT recommended that you bathe or shower until you have been seen by a doctor or nurse. Other important ways to preserve evidence is to keep your clothes and not wash them.

Deciding to report a rape or sexual assault can be a difficult decision. It is always your choice.

If you know someone who has been raped or sexually assaulted, pass this information along to them. Encourage them to seek appropriate medical care and **call the AVP 24-**

hour Crisis Line 773-871-CARE (2273) for counseling and support.

Laura A. Velazquez
*AVP Manager
Center on Halsted*

Horizons Youth Program

April is Sexual Assault Awareness month and an opportunity to understand at a deeper level how our LGBT young people become victims-and survivors. Did you know that 30% to 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBT here in Chicago? And that within 48 hours of being on the street, our young people are approached and asked to trade sex for shelter, food and/or clothing? Often, in their attempts to survive, our young people become prey.

These realities were presented recently by our youth in their public reading of *Body & Sold*, a play about youth and their involvement in our society's sex economy. Performed at Columbia College and co-sponsored by Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) and Chicago Foundation for Women's What Will it Take? campaign, *Body & Sold* is a play based on the true stories of young people and written by Tempest Productions in Boston. Twelve brave young people, including youth from Lawrence Hall Youth Services, stepped into the lives of these characters and presented their stories to a standing-room-only crowd of more than 120 people. It was a proud moment for our program and for our youth. Please take time this month to learn more about how and why our LGBT young people become homeless so you can assist in decreasing their risk of sexual assault.

Janine M. Denomme
*Director, Horizons Youth Program
Center on Halsted*

Mental Health Program

Spring has sprung and the season of growth represents a point of reflection for me. It has been a little over a year since I began working at Center on Halsted. And what an exciting year it has been! As I look back over the accomplishments of my department, I am intensely proud of what we have achieved in a relatively short amount of time.

My history here has been characterized by unprecedented expansion and an explosion in the number of clients served. The organization of the department was reconfigured to include three full-time staff members. This change resulted in greater cohesion for the functioning of the program, the increased presence of more experienced psychotherapists to supervise and guide clinical activity, strengthened outreach to the broader community and, most importantly, quality improvements to service delivery for

both new and ongoing clients.

In addition to these critical members of the team, Braden Berkey, Pys.D., was appointed to oversee the recently inaugurated Sexual Orientation and Gender Institute (SOGI), which houses the clinical training wing of our program. SOGI continues the Center's historical commitment to professional development for mental health providers working with LGBT clients. As our widely recognized post-graduate certificate program evolves, plans are in the works for making the curriculum available via long-distance training. This project will utilize a virtual classroom and other media to make quality LGBT training available to providers outside the immediate area. Finally, the Director of Clinical Training is coordinating the learning activities of almost a dozen graduate and doctoral interns selected from leading schools of counseling, social work and psychology. The Mental Health Program has long been a breeding ground for generations of clinicians, supervisors and teachers and our reputation for excellence grows with each successive year.

The impact of these changes registered almost immediately through the dramatic increase in intakes and new clients. By the end of calendar year 2006, Mental Health staff had provided services to 430 individuals-an almost 70% increase over the previous year. In addition, support groups and educational workshops flourished as never before. Almost a dozen group offerings were up and running by winter 2007, addressing a wide spectrum of psychosocial needs. These groups included brand new offerings such as our Poz 20s Group for HIV+ young men, a bisexual women's support group and a marital transitions support group for individuals leaving their heterosexual marriages.

Under the auspices of SOGI, we offered a continuing education seminar series featuring some of the premiere instructors in LGBT clinical training. Almost 50 mental health professionals participated in these trainings, which focused on topics such as ethics, clinical supervision, disabilities, substance abuse and addiction.

In other exciting developments, the Mental Health Services team:

- Collaborated with the Chicago Department of Public Health and several other organizations in offering various consumer forums for the transgender community.
- Partnered with a variety of social service organizations in creating important community initiatives, including grief/loss services, resources for LGBT parents and a support group for individuals with chronic mental illness.
- Developed a strategic plan to increase not only the diversity of our mental health providers but the collective expertise and proficiency of the program.
- To date, we have successfully recruited two Latino Spanish-speaking providers, two African American providers, an addictions specialist and a clinician who is fluent in sign language (ASL). All of these individuals provide services through our volunteer/contractual therapist program.

Spring is also the season for moving and this, too, gives me cause for celebration. As we prepare for the history-making transition into our new facility, I am confident that the energy, creativity and momentum of the Mental Health/SOGI team and its accomplishments will continue unabated. Indeed, I anticipate even greater opportunities for partnership, linkage and collaboration both within our community and

with our allies at large.

The difficult winter of our nomadic existence is coming to an end and our collective talents can now thrive in the affirming environment of our beautiful LGBT community center. Welcome, spring!

Jason T. McVicker, LCSW, RDDP

Director of Mental Health Services

Center on Halsted

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