



WORLD AIDS DAY-DECEMBER 1, 2007

As we approach another World AIDS Day, the pandemic is still with us with little encouraging news of its imminent demise. We continue the fight to bring an end to AIDS and to provide support to impacted communities. Center on Halsted's legacy since the early days of AIDS has been to teach prevention, provide testing and counsel thousands through our Youth and Mental Health Services Programs. Today, our programming and services have expanded to greater meet the needs of LGBT communities of color and elders.

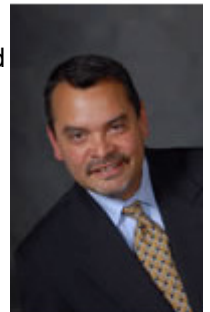
As we reflect on World AIDS Day, remember that every day someone is dying from AIDS. Whether you know them or not, they need our help-as givers of care-financially or voluntarily.

Please join us for several activities planned as part of Center on Halsted's commemoration of World AIDS Day: We are providing free, confidential HIV testing on **Saturday, December 1, from 1:00pm - 3:00pm**, and on **Monday, December 3, from 12noon - 6:00pm**. Panels from the AIDS Memorial Quilt also will be on display at the Center. Plan to participate in the Candlelight Vigil and March described below on **Saturday, December 1 at 6:30pm**.

We hope you will join us for these important events.

Modesto Tico Valle

Modesto Tico Valle
Executive Director
Center on Halsted



A message from

*Executive
Director*

*Modesto
Tico Valle*

WORLD AIDS DAY



Youth Program

I recently attended a conference on Illinois adolescents and HIV/AIDS presented by The Children's Place Association. Participants heard from experts in the field as well as a number of courageous young people who are themselves infected with the disease. During the day-long event, I was most struck by the paper delivered by Professor Dexter Voisin from the University of Chicago. Dr. Voisin spoke about the correlation between community violence and HIV/AIDS. His and other's research provide evidence that the more violence young people are exposed to-beyond what they might experience in their own homes-the more at-risk behaviors young people engage in. The more shootings, gang violence, and assaults our children witness in their neighborhoods and in their schools, the higher their risk for HIV. Witnessing trauma leads to emotional and mental challenges such as depression, anxiety, aggression and post traumatic stress disorder. These disorders lead to low performances in school, low self-esteem and poor choices in peer involvement. All of which lead our young people to engage in activities that put them at risk for contracting HIV.

His conclusions were persuasive and challenging because he asked us to reconfigure how we understand HIV prevention. It is not enough to simply teach HIV 101. This is why everything we do in the Center's Youth Program can be understood in broad terms as HIV prevention. When young people are provided opportunities to talk about decreasing violence in their relationships, when they are offered opportunities to build their self-esteem through leadership and performance, when they learn life skills that assist them in securing a job and when they play through their pent-up emotions and energies on our volleyball courts, they are increasing their ability to make healthy choices about their lives. They experience self-efficacy and potential and they begin to believe in a different kind of future.

On this World AIDS Day, our young people will participate in an About Face Youth Theatre workshop, developing material for next summer's performance. The theme this year: HIV/AIDS. Our youth are busy interviewing each other and people in the community about the disease and discussing why our public schools don't do more to teach responsible sex education inclusive of all our youth. Eventually they will help create a performance piece from the material they collect. Through it all, they will gain confidence and skills that may do as much or more to protect them from the disease as the "ABCs of HIV."

And how about you? What will you do to increase the likelihood that our young people do not contract HIV?"

Janine Denomme

*Youth Program Director
Center on Halsted*

Mental Health Services

J. Buzz von Ornsteiner, Ph.D., a New York State-licensed psychologist and author of the "Psychologically Speaking"

column in Body Positive Magazine, recommends that HIV+ individuals do 10 things to establish a comprehensive wellness plan:

1. Build a strong, supportive, trusting relationship with an HIV/AIDS doctor
2. Develop consistent contact with a health care case manager
3. Join an HIV/AIDS support group
4. Get a psychotherapist
5. Attend workshops or other HIV/AIDS events to stay on top of new developments
6. Stay informed about your HIV/AIDS medications
7. Address any substance use issues you may have
8. Exercise regularly and maintain good nutrition
9. Work if you can to benefit from the fulfillment that employment provides
10. Seek a sense of self outside of HIV/AIDS: start a hobby, travel, volunteer, etc.

With its wide range of programs and services, Center on Halsted is uniquely poised to help HIV+ clients and their allies in developing such a plan. The Mental Health Program currently offers a free weekly support group for HIV+ LGBT individuals. This group provides a safe place to explore relationships, disclosure, health, wellness, identity, coping with stress and other issues in a supportive environment.

We also receive funding from the Chicago Department of Public Health to make mental health services available to qualified individuals with HIV at no cost. In addition, we partner with Rainbow Hospice and Midwest Palliative and HospiceCare Center to offer a wide range of grief services for those impacted by loss. This is particularly critical during the winter months. Our December group offerings will include a special workshop for bereaved LGBT people to explore positive alternatives for coping with memories, feelings and activities associated with the holiday season.

We also recognize the toll this disease takes on those who serve as caregivers to the HIV/AIDS community. Beginning in December, we will offer a monthly group for LGBT caregivers. Offered in partnership with Rush University Medical Center, this is an educational and supportive forum for LGBT caregivers who are attending to a partner, parent, family member or friend.

Finally, social, recreational, educational, legal and wellness services are available through a number of other Center programs, including Community and Cultural Programs, the Center's Youth Program and SAGE, its program for LGBT elders. These resources can be invaluable to relieve and counter stress—a crucial component of coping with any illness.

Please call our Client Services Coordinator at 773.472.6469, ext. 158 to explore ways that our Mental Health Program can be helpful to you. With its mission of fostering wholeness and enriching life experiences, Center on Halsted is proud to serve those living with HIV and those working to protect their best interests.

Jason T. McVicker, LCSW, RDDP
Director of Mental Health Services
Center on Halsted

State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline

To mark World AIDS Day on December 1, 2007, I will share some of the stories that we are honored to hear on the Hotline. The following examples show the wide range of subjects and people that we help every day.

There was the call from the Spanish-speaking woman from the west side of the state who was looking for a culturally sensitive HIV testing organization in her area. One of our many bilingual counselors discussed her level of risk, why her decision to test was a good one, and what the testing procedure involved. She had a lot of questions and the counselor was able to give her the latest information and offer her reassurance. She was grateful to have someone to talk to about such a private matter.

A man in his 50s called the Hotline one weekend afternoon and stated that he was HIV+ and had a mouth full of pills that he was going to swallow to kill himself. The counselor was able to convince him to spit out the pills so that they could talk for a while. The man was very depressed because he was having financial troubles. He had been HIV+ for years and just didn't want to live any more. The counselor found out this man had children and grandchildren and that he had been in tougher spots in his life than the one he was in right then. They talked about how strong he was for living a fulfilling, family-filled life with HIV and about how much he loved his children and would not want them to find him dead by his own hand. They also discussed the fact that there was help out there for him and he would get the help he needed but that he had to be persistent and not give up. After a while he said that he would continue to ask for the help he deserved until he got it and that he would not hurt himself. He ended up calling the counselor back late in the evening and said that he just had to let the counselor know how he was doing because the counselor seemed to care so much about him and he didn't want her to worry. He then said the most amazing thing: He was on his way to the store with a friend to buy food for supper! He felt hopeful for his future and was looking forward to cooking dinner; a simple, yet powerful act.

And, there was the call from the teenage girl who heard differing opinions from her friends as to how HIV is transmitted. One told her a person could get HIV from holding hands with someone who had it. Another told her that physical intimacy could cause HIV even if neither partner had it. Both of her friends were misinformed. She knew her friends were mistaken but she needed help finding the right words and facts that would not only counter her friends but teach them too. She was very bright and was excited to have current and understandable information from the Hotline counselor to share with her friends. She cared enough about herself and her friends to get accurate information on HIV and its transmission.

The stories above are examples of why we are needed and why every counselor looks forward to coming to work. Very few people have the good fortune to have such an immediate and direct positive effect on people's lives every day.

Jill Dispenza

State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline Director

Center on Halsted

800.243.2437 (Open 7 days a week, 8am-10pm)

SAGE Program (Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders)

World AIDS Day

After three decades of facing the AIDS pandemic, the numbers of infected individuals is staggering. According to the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, 40,000 people will be infected with HIV this year, 4.3 million worldwide. Of these, how many are older people? AIDSInfonet.org has a fact sheet that should give us all pause.

About 78,000 people age 50 or older have AIDS in the United States. This is about 10%-15% of all people with AIDS. In some cities, 15%-25% of people with AIDS are 50 or older. The number of older people diagnosed with AIDS is increasing. About half of the older people with AIDS have been infected for one year or less.

Many people don't consider age 50 to be "old." However, age 50 is being used more often to keep statistics on "older people" with HIV and AIDS.

Older individuals with HIV are statistically more likely to be isolated and have increased rates of depression. SAGE Center on Halsted provides safe, welcoming space and offers a variety of programs across the wellness spectrum including opportunities for HIV positive people to make friends, attend support groups and connect to resources. We also have a Friendly Visitor program for isolated LGBT elders that includes a weekly social visit to individuals living either in the community or in a care setting.

For more information on SAGE programs, call 773.472.6469, ext. 160.

Serena Worthington

SAGE Program Director

Center on Halsted

Anti-Violence Project

In honor of World AIDS Day, the Anti-Violence Project recognizes the challenge for individuals living with HIV/AIDS who are surviving violence because of their status. The nature of HIV as a highly stigmatized disability makes it an especially effective tool of abuse.

As we celebrated Coming Out Day and acknowledged October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the reality is that many LGBT individuals' fear of violence prevents them from living openly. LGBT persons experiencing violence in their relationships may be reluctant to reveal their orientation, the abuse, or their HIV/AIDS status for fear of perpetuating the stereotype of an "inferior relationship" or admitting abuse within our own community. It is much harder to focus on one's physical well-being when suffering from trauma or distress and these factors can contribute to ongoing health challenges of LGBT people living with HIV/AIDS.

Center on Halsted's Anti-Violence Project (AVP) provides crisis counseling, information and referrals, and legal advocacy to survivors of violence and discrimination, and we advocate for fair and sensitive treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV positive or living with AIDS (LGBTH) persons by service providers, law enforcement and the community at large.

If you or someone you know is the victim of LGBTH discrimination, domestic violence, hate crime, pick-up crime, police misconduct or sexual assault, please call the Anti-Violence Project 24-hour crisis line at 773.871.CARE (2273).

Laura A. Velazquez

AVP Manager

Center on Halsted

Community and Cultural Programs

World AIDS Day Events

On Saturday, December 1, 2007, Center on Halsted will host a visual arts installation, *After, image*: a memorial for those lost to HIV/AIDS by Cole Robertson. This collection of photographs is meant to serve as a memorial, in the most traditional sense-an aesthetically beautiful gesture commemorating the past. The images, donated by their family members, are re-workings of photographs of those lost to HIV/AIDS that are then digitally manipulated and printed on fine vellum. They hang as a testament, as a loving tribute, and as a call to action.

The event begins with a reception at 4:00pm and is followed by a talk back with the artist and others who contributed images to the exhibit. Requested donation is \$10. This project is supported by a Community Arts Assistance Program grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

After the arts installation stay for the **World AIDS Day Chicago Candlelight Vigil and March: A Remembrance and Celebration of Life**

Beginning at 6:30pm members from the community will meet in the SAGE space to honor those lost and living with HIV/AIDS. The vigil will commence with a reading of names and end with a candlelight march from Center on Halsted, down Halsted to Belmont, Belmont over to Broadway and then Broadway to Waveland.

The event is hosted by Caritas Chicago in collaboration with Sankofa Way and AChurch4 Me.

For more information or to RSVP contact Culture@CenteronHalsted.org 773.472.6469, ext. 245 or visit www.centeronhalsted.org.

CC Carter

*Director of Community and Cultural Programs
Center on Halsted*

