



CENTER ON HALSTED CENTERPIECES

APRIL 2008 EDITION

Spring is a season of renewal. We're finally emerging from a long cold winter; the days are longer and flowers are beginning to bloom. As Center on Halsted approaches its first anniversary in our new facility, we look forward to continuing the programming our clients and visitors have come to rely on. We've been busy this year, as our program directors recount below and our numbers of community members served will confirm. We're reaching members of our community who were long forgotten and underserved, yet there is much work still to be done. Working together and with your continued support, we will help our community thrive.

Modesto Tico Valle

Executive Director



A message from

*Executive
Director*

*Modesto
Tico Valle*

Youth Program

It's spring and time for new beginnings, time for shaking off the dust, cleaning out the cobwebs and mixing it up a bit. The Youth Program at Center on Halsted is doing just that with several new initiatives. Beginning May 1, the Youth Program will be a "Members Only Space." There will be four membership levels, each with their own expectations, responsibilities and benefits. Youth can choose from the lowest number of requirements - an intake and orientation - to the highest level of responsibilities on our Youth Leadership Council, also known as Stand OUT. Stand OUT members will serve as our Justice Circle, program planners, and space monitors, among other things. They and the Volunteer Level members (one below Stand OUT members) will facilitate orientations and Center tours for new youth. They will also represent the Center and the Youth Program when we go out to schools and organizations to speak. By becoming members, youth will become further engaged in the Center, will be recognized for their leadership, and will continue to build the culture of respect and accountability we expect in our program.

Our other initiative expands our vocational services. Recently awarded a contract with the city to be the Regional Youth Career Development Center, Youth Program vocational staff now provide a 30-hour job readiness program both at the center and in the community. Working with other fine institutions such as Lawrence Hall Youth Services, Alternatives, Inc., and Senn High School, the Center has become recognized by employers and other organizations as a provider of high quality vocational services. We look forward to celebrating with our youth as they move their lives forward here at the Center and out in the community.

Janine Denomme

Youth Program Director

Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE)

Elder Abuse in the LGBT Community

Elders are abused every day. The generally accepted definition of elder abuse is "any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult." Types are physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, financial or material exploitation, neglect, self-neglect and abandonment. According to the National Center for Elder Abuse, more than 550,000 elders report abuse each year. However, because most cases are not reported, the actual number of abused elders may be closer to one million.

In honor of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, Audrey Cantor, Director of Holocaust Community Services at Jewish Child and Family Services presented an elder abuse seminar for SAGE participants.

LGBT elders are believed to be especially vulnerable to abuse because of the history of second-class treatment and hiding. As a result, LGBT elders are more likely to be isolated. According to an article in gaywired.com, "Many of our seniors have learned to not ask questions, to not question authority and never, ever tell . . . indicators of emotional/psychological abuse include helplessness, hesitation to talk openly, fear/agitation and/or depression/denial. Indicators of financial abuse include changing of the power of attorney for no apparent reason, lost jewelry or other valuables, change in level of care, not having money for the necessities of life, and seniors signing legal documents they do not understand. Indicators of neglect include seniors being inadequately clothed, being malnourished or dehydrated, having untreated medical conditions or injuries, a progressive history of accidents or injuries and poor skin condition or hygiene."

What can you do to protect yourself, your friends and your family? Watch for signs of abuse and call the Elder Abuse Hotline if you or someone you know is being abused, exploited or neglected. You can also call Center on Halsted's Anti-Violence 24-Hour Crisis Line which responds to sexual assault, pick-up crime, harassment, bias violence, domestic violence, hate crime, police misconduct, threats, HIV/AIDS related violence and discrimination.

The Administration on Aging suggests these steps

- Know the warning signs
- Become a Community Sentinel-keep a watchful eye for loved ones, friends or neighbors
- Speak Up-You have a right to question even if you are not sure abuse is taking place
- Be Involved-Volunteer with older adults
- Support Initiatives-Work in your community on legislation in support of seniors

SAGE Center on Halsted works to reduce isolation of LGBT elders through our Friendly Visitor Program. SAGE provides companionship visits by trained volunteers to isolated or homebound LGBT elders or disabled individuals. We visit elders who live in their homes or in long-term care settings. Volunteers are committed to one visit a week for a year. The service is free. If you know an isolated LGBT elder who would enjoy a weekly visit, please contact Serena Worthington, SAGE Director at 773.472.6469 x 160 or sworthington@centeronhalsted.org.

Center on Halsted

Anti-Violence Project 24-Hour Crisis Line
773.871.CARE

Illinois Elder Abuse Hotline Information

1-866-800-1409
After Hours Hotline: 1-800-279-0400
E-mail: ilsenior@aging.state.il

Serena Worthington

SAGE Director

Anti-Violence Project

Sexual Violence Awareness

Rape and sexual assault can happen to anyone, regardless of their sex, gender, race, class, age, size, appearance, or sexual orientation. They are violent crimes used to exert power, humiliate, and control.

- If someone is not "out" as LGB or trans, they may be afraid to risk coming forward and being "outed" or they may be confused, embarrassed and ashamed of the sexual assault or consider it a "normal" first-time experience.
- A sexual assault survivor with HIV/AIDS may already feel shame or self-blame if they contracted the virus due to sexual play and, thus, be less likely to report an assault.
- If the assault occurred during an S & M safe word violation, they might not feel it was an assault or they might feel that they deserved it.
- Survivors of same-sex sexual assault have been invisible in mainstream sexual assault agencies and in legal and medical systems, so providers may not believe someone coming forward. Denial: "It doesn't happen," "It's not sexual assault."
- Trauma effects of sexual assault magnify for folks dealing with the stress of a homophobic society. Transgender individuals often go through periods of depression or suicidal thoughts. Many LGBT folks feel shame about their identity. All of this affects healthy coping responses.
- Internalized phobias may lead to feelings of responsibility (this happened to me because of the way I am). A sexual assault survivor may question his or her orientation and feel helpless.

If you or someone you know has experienced rape or sexual assault, remember it is not your fault and you are not alone. Call the **Anti-Violence Project 24-hour Crisis Line 773.871.CARE (2273)** for counseling and support.

Laura Velazquez

Anti-Violence Project Manager

State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline

April is National STD Awareness Month and the State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline is collaborating this month with the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and AIDS Legal Council to educate ourselves and our callers to the risks of STD transmission and available treatments. Wednesday, April 23 is Chicago's Syphilis Testing Day. To mark this day Center on Halsted and CDPH are co-sponsoring HIV and Syphilis blood draw testing and Chlamydia and Gonorrhea urine testing. This free testing will occur at the Center from 3p-9p.

Noteworthy statistics:

Nationally, Cook County's rank in number of STD cases:

- ◇ #1 for Gonorrhea
- ◇ #2 for Chlamydia
- ◇ #3 for Syphilis

Most statewide callers to the Hotline, 800.243.2437 (800.AID.AIDS), ask questions such as "Where can I get a free HIV/STD in my area?" "What are the symptoms someone would experience if they contracted HIV or an STD?" and "How are STDs transmitted?" After HIV, the most common STDs that spur questions from callers are Herpes and HPV. All Hotline counselors are highly trained and able to explain in understandable terms the specifics of each STD. All counselors are fluent in English and Spanish.

The State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline is open 7 days a week from 8am-10pm. Please feel free to call us with any HIV/STD related questions or concerns. You will find knowledgeable and

compassionate counselors to listen to you.

Jill Dispenza

State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline Director

Mental Health Services

April is Volunteer Appreciation Month and an opportunity to celebrate the talents of our exceptional team of volunteer psychotherapists. Volunteers have been an integral part of the Mental Health Program since its very inception. In 1981, Horizons Community Services (as the organization was then called) formally launched a psychotherapy program. This program was staffed entirely by volunteers, totaling 9 in number. Twenty-seven years later, the Center is still partnering with volunteer psychotherapists to meet the mental health needs of Chicago's LGBT community.

From humble beginnings, the Mental Health Program has expanded its ranks to include almost two dozen volunteers. Our volunteers truly reflect the diversity of our consumers and include Latino Spanish-speaking providers, African American providers, addictions specialists and one clinician fluent in sign language (ASL). Some of these volunteers have provided almost a quarter century of service to the organization. It is gratifying to me that they continue to be challenged, motivated and fulfilled in their work here.

The relationship between the Mental Health Program and the volunteer psychotherapists is a mutually enhancing one. The Program and its clients benefit from the collective expertise of these established clinicians. All of the volunteer therapists are licensed professionals with a minimum of five years post-graduate experience. They bring important skill sets and unique training that would otherwise not be available to our clients. In addition, they work with clients in their own office settings, scattered throughout Chicago and the neighboring suburbs. This allows us to serve clients in a wide geographic range, thus eliminating difficult logistical barriers to LGBT affirming care.

In turn, the Center provides a valuable outlet for mental health providers who wish to give back to the LGBT community. We provide regular clinical consultation groups and in-service trainings on current trends and issues in mental health care. These forums also create networking opportunities at the Midwest's largest LGBT community center.

I never cease to be amazed at the capacity of the volunteer therapists to absorb the collective trauma, oppression and despair of our clients with unwavering compassion. They embody hope for the hopeless and provide a level of caring generally not available to our clients. They revive dormant strivings and shape the realization of important life goals through encouragement, guidance and support.

Recently, I had the privilege of attending consultation with the volunteer team. The case presentation involved a client who died suddenly-right at the point in her therapy where she had resolved to leave a loveless relationship and create a better life for herself. The therapist was understandably devastated and was struggling to make sense of this unexpected loss. Another volunteer suggested that if the therapist had facilitated even a brief experience of authenticity for the deceased client, an important piece of work had been accomplished. It was a powerful moment of reflection for all of us. Therapeutic success cannot be measured in fairy tale endings or magical outcomes. It is measured in the meaning our clients construct out of their complex experiences and the role we as therapists play in that life-changing process.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all of our volunteer psychotherapists, both past and present, for their invaluable contribution to our program.

Jason T. McVicker, LCSW, RDDP

Director of Mental Health Services

Community and Cultural Programs

Spring has sprung with the opening of our Spring Art Exhibit appropriately titled, "Sprung." The collective of visual artists includes their interpretation of spring, bringing an array of fabulous color to the second-floor main gallery space. We also celebrated national poetry month with a screening of *Tongues Untied*, a full documentary of Marlon Riggs' performance poetry; a collaboration with the Guild Complex and the Poetry Foundation featuring the work of internationally acclaimed poets, Lorna Dee Cervantes and Rigoberto Gonzalez; and will close the month with Rhythm and Flow, when instrumentalists from Lakeside Pride team up with local Chicago poets for an evening of call and response.

Next month into Pride we look forward to more art exhibits, the First Annual LGBT Pre-Gospelfest celebration and "A Pride Family Affair," a month of fabulous pride events celebrating one year of being in our new home.

C.C. Carter

Community, Cultural and Legal Programs Director

To support Center on Halsted programs and services, please visit our Web site at www.centeronhalsted.org.

