



Spring 2009  
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# Strength in Numbers Colorado

<http://www.strengthinnumbers.org/>

The Official Newsletter for the Colorado Chapter of Strength in Numbers

## ORGANIZE! ORGANIZE! ORGANIZE!

*A message from "Benefits Guru" Michael J. Van Essen*



Two incontrovertible facts rapidly become evident when dealing with any questions arising Social Security and most of all the other sources of income and healthcare benefits available to the disabled:

1. You must have the paperwork/letter/documentation and;
2. The burden of proof it always on the consumer.

Whether a miscalculated change in the amount of an SSI payment, an overpayment notice because of allegedly unreported assets, or a mistake assigning an employed SSDI recipient's Trial Work Month count, without documented proof to the contrary the consumer is powerless to effectively challenge and rectify the situation to his or her advantage.

The best defense, then, is a good offense. There is one task that must be accomplished before anyone is well-enough prepared to navigate the treacherous waters of the public benefits bureaucracies:

### Get organized!

That having been written, one point must be emphasized: Getting your benefits-related stuff together doesn't usually happen overnight. It takes time to locate, sort, collate and store the voluminous amount of material that can be received over the course of a disabling condition. Take it slow and plod along. You'll get there. And you'll be so much better off in dealing with all your benefits stuff in the future.

*(Continued on page 11)*

### HeyDenver offers FREE & CONFIDENTIAL HIV and STD testing (Walk in only).

HeyDenver provides free sexual health services and testing by gay men for gay men. Free and confidential STD testing is available six days a week by a gay health counselor. We believe that all men should live healthy sexual lives. We believe that sex is good. And we believe that no one is better qualified to make healthy decisions about your sex life than you. To that end, HeyDenver is a resource designed to help men who have sex with men have healthy fulfilling sex lives.

### April/May Testing Schedule

- \* **Syphilis, Gonorrhea, Chlamydia and HIV Testing** (blood draw) Mon-Weds 3-6 P.M. Thursdays 12-3 P.M.
- \* **HIV ONLY Testing** (oral swab) Tuesdays 6 - 9 P.M. (bilingual testing avail every second and third Tuesday) Fridays 11-4 P.M., Saturdays 11-4 P.M. Closed April 25th

HeyDenver  
1720 Pearl Street  
Denver, CO 80203  
303-962-2880

[www.HeyDenver.org](http://www.HeyDenver.org)



## 2009 RETREATS AT SHADOWCLIFF



Registration is now open for the 2009 HIV Retreats at Shadowcliff, to be held July 9-12 and August 13-16. These annual three day weekends are held at the Shadowcliff Lodge, built on cliffs adjacent to Rocky Mountain National Park, overlooking a lake, a roaring stream, the mountains, and the town of Grand Lake (about two hours by car from Denver). The retreat is a full program of educational workshops & interactive seminars, body therapies (massage, chiropractic, reflexology, energy work & acupuncture), discussion groups, and various other sessions & social activities.

The purpose of the retreat is to provide an affordable mountain getaway with other poz folks at a beautiful lodge in an awesome setting, with a variety of educational forums, social activities, and various body therapies, as well as time for relaxation ...and... to offer a proactive environment where people can empower themselves with skills and knowledge about health, healing, and coping in a setting of friendship, safety, and acceptance.

The cost starts at \$80 for persons with HIV. This includes three nights lodging, all meals, body therapies, and all other activities. If needed, transportation is available from Denver through a carpool.

This year, registration will be available both online and by mail-in paper forms. To receive the online link or a paper form, request one in an e-mail to Shadowcliff@hotmail.com. Paper forms are also available at numerous agencies and clinics throughout Colorado.

Space is limited and everyone is encouraged to register as soon as possible.

For more information, visit:

[www.HIVretreat.blogspot.com](http://www.HIVretreat.blogspot.com)

## SEX AND STIGMA IN THE CITY

Welcome to the 2nd year of SINews. I am proud that we have made it through our first year. It is only with the help of so many HIV positive gay men, along with their supporters and providers, that we find ourselves here.

In looking around our fair city (and state), and in talking with many poz friends and acquaintances, it has become painfully clear that many of us feel that a potentially toxic stigma exists here. It seems that in many social circles it is not considered in good taste to discuss HIV or anything like it, unless it is around a fundraiser, or other times when people are feeling charitable.

One fundamental reason for producing this publication is to give ourselves the validation of reading about our own lives in print and taking some ownership of those lives. The hope is that in doing so we may begin to address some of the stigma that tries to separate us from our own community. In this issue, I hope you'll find some bold examples of Denver poz men who stand tall to challenge this stigma and bring unity back to gay culture. Please consider joining our efforts as no one will erase stigma for HIV positive citizens but ourselves.

Here are four questions from a website out of Ottawa Canada. [www.hivstigma.com](http://www.hivstigma.com)

### What is HIV stigma?

HIV stigma refers to the HIV-related shame, fear, prejudice, discrimination and guilt that exist in the gay community and the world at large. It affects the health and well-being of both HIV-positive and HIV-negative gay men.

### What does HIV stigma look like?

HIV stigma is putting 'clean, ub2' or 'disease-free' in your online cruising profile.

HIV stigma is rejecting HIV-positive gay men when they disclose their HIV status but having sex with them when they don't.

HIV stigma is an attitude that HIV-positive gay guys are lazy when they do not work or are guilty, or a failed person, when they become infected with HIV.

HIV stigma is gossiping about the HIV status of gay men in the community and avoiding them based on the knowledge that they have HIV.

### How does HIV stigma contribute to high-risk sex?

Because of HIV stigma, some gay men make silent assumptions about the HIV status of their sexual partners based on beliefs they hold about who has HIV, or how someone with HIV looks, or where someone with HIV has sex ...

When we make incorrect assumptions about the HIV status of the other guy in order to have unprotected sex and prevent HIV transmission, we can end up having unprotected sex with a guy whose HIV status is different than our own. This is when HIV transmission can occur. About 30% of HIV-positive men who have sex with men do not know they have HIV.

### Can HIV stigma exist between HIV-positive gay men?

Yes, HIV stigma can exist between HIV-positive gay men, particularly towards guys who are more recently diagnosed or are younger and expected to have "known better" how to avoid HIV infection in this day and age .



# DENVER PUBLIC HEALTH & UNIV. OF COLO., DENVER CLINICAL TRIALS

The following are studies for HIV/AIDS patients being conducted at Denver Public Health.

If you are interested in any study, please contact Julia Weise at 303-602-8742 or [julia.weise@dhha.org](mailto:julia.weise@dhha.org) -or- contact Graham Ray at UC Denver at 303-724-0712 or

[graham.ray@ucdenver.edu](mailto:graham.ray@ucdenver.edu)

## **Studies for Patients Who Have Never Been on HIV Medications (naïve studies)**

### **START**

*Strategic Timing of Antiretroviral Treatment (enrollment to begin in May 2009).*

This study will compare whether it is better to begin antiretroviral treatment immediately or to wait until CD4+ count declines below 350 cells.

Requirements to be in the study:

- \* HIV infection
- \* Age 18 or older
- \* CD4 cell count > 500
- \* No prior antiretroviral treatment

### **ACTG 5257**

*Comparison of three NNRTI-sparing regimens in naïve patients.*

This study is for people who are HIV infected but have never taken HIV medications. Each person will go into one of three groups. Each group will be taking a different set of HIV medications.

## **Studies for Patients Who Have Been on HIV Medications for Some Time (Treatment- experienced studies)**

### **ACTG 5241**

*The Optimized Treatment that Includes or Omits NRTIs (OPTIONS) Trial*

Compares new salvage regimens with and without NRTIs.

The study will test whether using spe-

cific types of medicines called nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs) are needed to treat HIV in persons whose current medications are failing. The study will also look at whether newer anti-HIV drugs are safe and effective in a group of HIV-infected persons whose current HIV medicines are not working. Finally this study will test whether a medicine resistance test score called the cPSS is able to predict which drugs will work best in people whose virus



is resistant to specific HIV medications.

### **Requirements to be in the study:**

- \* HIV-1 infected and at least 16 years of age
- \* HIV viral load (HIV level) currently 1000 copies/mL or higher
- \* Currently on an HIV drug regimen that includes a protease inhibitor (PI)
- \* Have resistance to multiple types of HIV medications
- \* Had exposure to multiple types of HIV medication

## **Studies for Prevention or Treatment of HIV-Related Illnesses**

### **ACTG 5240 [HPV/Women] -**

*A Phase II Study to Evaluate the Immunogenicity and Safety of a HPV Vaccine in females.*

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted disease in the United States and worldwide. There are over 90 types of HPV that infect humans. HPV infection may be more severe and harder to treat in people infected with HIV. The FDA has approved an HPV vaccine (called Gardasil), and it is directed against four types of HPV which are the most common causes of genital warts and cervical cancer. This study is the first of its kind to test the HPV vaccine in females infected with HIV. It will see if the HPV vaccine, when given in three separate doses, is safe and tolerable in females infected with HIV.

### **Key Requirements to be in the study**

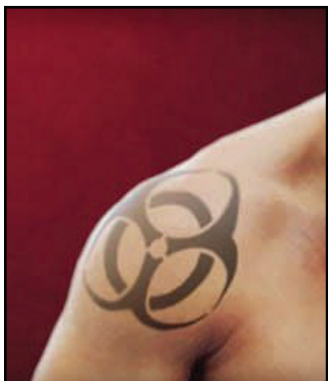
- \* HIV infection
- \* Female between the ages of 18 and 45
- \* Any T-cell count and any viral load
- \* If you are taking antiretroviral drugs, you must be on the same combination of medicines for at least 12 weeks before the study entry visit
- \* You do not need to be on antiretroviral drugs to be eligible for this study
- \* No cervical cancer, abnormal Pap smear, or genital warts within 180 days
- \* No prior vaccinations for HPV

For more information, click

<http://www.uchsc.edu/sm/caactu/>

# The Good News

By Jeremiah Andrews



I have always wanted a tattoo, as a sign of marking time living with HIV. I have yet to get that tattoo. It has been fifteen years since I was diagnosed and I have learned much about myself, my disease and the spiritual axioms that keep me faithful to God. My recovery from drugs and alcohol and my body's ability to produce t-cell numbers in the thousands, consecutively, over years, has only kept me coming back for more.

On the anniversary of my first year of sobriety, in 2002, I got a piercing. To remind me of the spiritual path I am on and to also reinforce just how blessed I am to be sober now 7 years later. Living with AIDS is a process that takes a lifetime to understand. It doesn't come over night, and it doesn't come for those who take life for granted. Just because you have been diagnosed does not give one the right to throw away their existence. Living with AIDS for me has been a process in self discovery.

I have written over the years that in the past when we read from the holy texts of the men who went before us, that not many people went to church, for some, the mere mention of God would cause one to convulse. Some of those men had a sense of spirituality if you read between the lines. I believe the one thing that saved me was my sense of faith in a God of my understanding. I had a number of men of faith in my corner that encouraged me to come to church and to participate in my faith community.

Over the last fifteen years, I got clean and sober. I went back to University at age 34 and graduated with a B.A. Degree in Religious Studies and I got married to a wonderful man and now I am working on a Certificate in Pastoral Ministry which I complete this fall.

Here in Montreal, I am part of a treatment clinic and for the last six years I have been testing medications for the general public. I am amazed at the availability of services open to you there in Denver, so you are all blessed to be able to tap resources that many people do not have access to. We do not have this kind of comprehensive coverage here in our city.

This is a huge part of living with AIDS, that you find a community to belong to, that you take root, and you prosper. Recovery is a huge part of my survival plan. Faith is the backbone from which everything else stems. I encourage you to find a path that works for you where you are loved, respected and made to feel worthy of the life you inhabit. Everyone on the path has a story. Every story is important, because we are here and that we matter to God. And that is the good news.

You can find Jeremy most days at [www.jeremiahandrews.wordpress.com](http://www.jeremiahandrews.wordpress.com)



## C a m p i n g !

It's nearly summer ... it's mountains ... it's Colorado ... it's camping. As Coloradans with HIV (not just persons with HIV), we have great camping opportunities relatively close at hand in our mountains and wilderness areas. However, the

season is short, so we shouldn't procrastinate. It is easy to organize an outing. Simply figure out when and where, then post an e-mail to the SIN yahoo group, and ask people to reply to you to coordinate and work out details. Remember, outings can be a few days or longer; it could be a weekend or weekdays; it could be just an hour or two away or much farther. In addition, you could just keep it all simple and mellow, or you could try to book a group site with a set minimum number of people (hence an RSVP in the SIN database etc). Just remember it won't happen unless someone organizes it ... and that someone could/should be you!

FYI: "Rendezvous" (the annual gay camping event in Wyoming) is August 5-9.

It runs Wednesday thru Sunday, and you can attend some of it or all of it.

Held in a large area of Medicine Bow National Forest between Cheyenne and Laramie, there are usually 250-350 people, with a full agenda of events (all optional of course). There is a fee (which varies on the number of days) and pre-booking is advised for the best rates. More information is available by visiting [www.wyomingequality.org](http://www.wyomingequality.org) and clicking on "Rendezvous"



a u t u m n  
MounTEN SIN  
w e e k e n d

September 10-13 2009

Shadowcliff Lodge \* Grand Lake Colorado

Arrive Thursday afternoon or early evening

Depart Sunday late morning

- \* Half-day hike to the Cascades in Rocky Mountain NP
- \* Road excursion on Trail Ridge Road in RMNP
- \* Rocky Mtn Repertory Theatre "The Andrews Brothers"
- \* Fishing
- \* Putt-Putt Golf
- \* Bicycling
- \* Bowling
- \* Campfires
- \* Group games and activities
- \* Hot Sulphur Springs

(all activities are optional)

More info: [www.MounTEN-SIN.blogspot.com](http://www.MounTEN-SIN.blogspot.com)

Organized by SIN Colorado and TEN (Treatment Education Network)

(Not to be confused with The HIV Retreat at Shadowcliff)



**TEN** stands for **Treatment Education Network** and our mission is to educate and empower individuals living with HIV through peer-led programming, linkage to care, support services, information dissemination, and advocacy. We also provide services to the broader community to increase HIV knowledge and sensitivity, and to reduce the risk of infection.

On The Ten is a newsblog affiliated with TEN and posts facts and fun relevant to living with HIV. [www.ontheten.com](http://www.ontheten.com)

## Nurse Practitioners Demystified

By Tara Kennedy



As the nurse practitioner at Denver Infectious Disease Consultants (DIDC), I assess, diagnose and treat patients at our clinic. Nurse practitioners are registered nurses who have additional education and certification that enables them to work under this scope of practice. In Colorado, the Colorado Nurse

Practice Act governs nurse practitioners. Under the current Act, nurse practitioners have independent licensure and are able to practice under a collaborative agreement with a physician. At the present time the Colorado Nurse Practice Act is being revised and will be changed slightly in the next few months.

At DIDC, I care for my own patient population who are HIV positive. I also do "urgent care" visits for the physician's patients when they are off, traveling or doing rounds at the hospital. I, along with a research nurse and a research assistant schedule and conduct the research visits for our CDC "SUN" study. I also help facilitate enrolling patients in our pharmaceutical studies by not only identifying them as potential candidates, but by doing physical exams and examining patients if there are any problems, questions or concerns while they participate in the study.

When I started my job at DIDC, I became a member of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC). ANAC is a national organization for nurses who take care of persons living with HIV infection. The Denver chapter is identified as the Rocky Mountain ANAC chapter. ANAC's mission is to promote professional development for nurses in HIV care, create networks between nursing professionals in this role, be leaders in the nursing community for HIV related issues and advocate for persons living with HIV infection. As an organization we are also interested in preventing the further spread of HIV infection. Many nurses and nurse practitioners that work in HIV care in the Denver area belong to ANAC.

The Rocky Mountain ANAC chapter has several upcoming events planned in an effort to reach out to our community. We are participating in the 9NEWS Health Fair on April 20<sup>th</sup> at "The Center" and on April 25<sup>th</sup> at St John's Cathedral. We plan to work with Rick Smith on his newly diagnosed "The Net" support group by providing educational information on the nights when they discuss treatment options. We have also had discussions with "HeyDenver" to offer a health fair that we hope will take place sometime in 2009.

Tara Kennedy

## SOCIAL SECURITY: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY



### THE GOOD

\$250.00 !! If you receive SSDI or SSI, you will receive a check for \$250.00 in May. This was part of the economic stimulus package. You do not need to fill out forms or do anything special to receive this. Please do not contact the SSA about this, unless you do not receive it by the middle of June.

### THE BAD

The annual cost-of-living increases that occur each year will probably be non-existent in 2010, 2011, and 2012. So, if you are on Social Security disability income, your current monthly income will remain the same for the next 3 years or so.

### THE UGLY

If they increase the cost of Medicare (deducted from your monthly income), your social security check could actually go down.

# P.A.W.S.

Pets Are Wonderful Support

What would you do if you had to choose between food for yourself or for your pet?

P.A.W.S. Colorado (Pets Are Wonderful Support) started as an idea in 2007, now that idea has come to life and P.A.W.S. Colorado serves over 30 clients which includes almost 50 pets. The idea was simple “what happens to the animals of people with HIV/AIDS when they can no longer afford or are physically unable to care for the animals in their lives. Animals that have provided years of unconditional and non-judgmental love are suddenly given away or taken to a shelter.

P.A.W.S. Colorado is 501(c) (3) registered non-profit tax-exempt organization serving low income individuals with HIV/AIDS and other disabling illnesses. 90% of all money raised for P.A.W.S. Colorado goes directly to the clients as the organization is completely volunteer-based. To date no federal or state monies support the organization so we reach out to the community to keep our dream alive.

It wasn't very long ago when Dr's told patients with weakened immune systems to “get rid of their animal(s)” they did not know about the healing

benefits of companion animals. Times are changing however and Physicians are seeing study after study that show the healing benefits both mentally and physically companion animals can have for persons who have disabling illnesses.

P.A.W.S. Colorado has a simple mission “Caring for companion animals of low-income individuals with HIV/AIDS and other disabling illnesses. We provide supplemental food, supplemental veterinary care, and in-home care such as dog walking, litter box cleaning, nail trimming and in 2010 the introduction of foster care services so a loving companion animal will not be sent to an overburdened animal shelter.

We want to make a difference in the lives of the people who need our services and what is better than keeping a loving friend and companion where they belong, at the side of their owners.

People can help P.A.W.S. Colorado with our goals by donating \$25, \$50 or even \$100.00 to our cause. Not only is the donation a tax write off but some companies have em-

ployee donation matching programs. P.A.W.S. currently receives no state or federal money and we are currently reaching out to the community to help support our programs. Each client animal brought into the program costs an average of \$50 to care for. Donations do not have to always be money, your time whether you walk a dog or foster an animals and donated items such as food, new pet carriers, cat litter and general supplies are also welcome and make a huge difference. Some employees also host a food/pet drive at their place of employment and these programs have been very successful.

P.A.W.S. Colorado will continue to grow and the need is great. We look forward to reaching our goals and continue being a positive difference in the lives of our clients and the pets they love so much.

For more information about P.A.W.S. Colorado (Pets Are Wonderful Support) please visit our website: [www.PAWSColorado.org](http://www.PAWSColorado.org).



# Nutrition and HIV

Hi, My name is Bethany Melaga, Registered Dietitian with the Denver Health Early Intervention Clinic. As Spring and Summer arrive in Colorado, we are blessed to have access to some of the freshest, most delicious local produce. You may not be aware of the many farms Colorado has and all the benefits of purchasing locally. There are many great farmers' markets where this produce is available, check this website for a list of all markets in Colorado:

<http://www.coloradofarmers.org/>



## *A few great reasons to purchase locally*

1. Local produce is at its peak nutritional form. When you buy from a supermarket, you don't really know how long it has been sitting. The longer produce sits, the more vitamins, such as, C, E, A, and thiamine begin to deteriorate.
2. Because local produce was just picked, it will last longer. There is plenty of life left in it.
3. The average grocery store's produce travels nearly 1,500 miles between the farm it was grown and your refrigerator. A large amount of fossil fuel is used to transport food such long distances. Combustion of these fuels releases pollutants into the atmosphere, contributing to global climate change and air pollution.

## *A sample of Colorado produce*

Although there are many produce choices available in Colorado in Spring and Summer, I will highlight just a few, including their health benefits:

- \* **Asparagus:** High in Vitamin K and folate, great for your heart, helps menstrual cramps, and helps treat depression.
- \* **Romaine lettuce:** Contains beta-carotene which helps fight cancer, heart disease, and cataracts.
- \* **Strawberries:** Full of anti-oxidants which help fight cancer, heart disease, inflammatory disease, and birth defects.
- \* **Cherries:** Helps fight cancer and diabetes, helps ease the pain of arthritis and gout.

## Great recipe to try!

Penne with Asparagus and Cherry Tomatoes

### **Ingredients**

8 ounces whole wheat penne pasta  
 3 tablespoons olive oil  
 2 garlic cloves, minced  
 1 1/2 pounds thin asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces  
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
 2 cups (about 9 ounces) cherry tomatoes  
 1 cup shelled fresh peas  
 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken stock  
 1 cup grated Parmesan  
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil leaves

### **Directions**

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the pasta and cook until tender but still firm to the bite, stirring occasionally, about 8 to 10 minutes. Drain the pasta, reserving about 1/2 cup of the pasta water.

In a large saute pan, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the asparagus, season with the salt and pepper, and cook for 3 minutes until slightly soft. Add the cherry tomatoes and peas. Cook for 2 minutes. Pour the chicken stock into the pan and bring the mixture to a simmer. Cook until the tomatoes start to burst and the stock is reduced by half, about 3 minutes.

Transfer the asparagus mixture to a large serving bowl. Add the cooked pasta and 1/2 of the Parmesan. Toss well, adding reserved pasta water, if needed, to loosen the pasta. Garnish with the remaining Parmesan and chopped basil. Enjoy!

Source: [www.foodnetwork.com](http://www.foodnetwork.com)



# The Power of Positive People

*“Never underestimate the power of a few committed people to change the world.  
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”*

Margaret Mead, anthropologist

Interesting, how one thing leads to another. I was born an adorable baby in Colorado in 1953. As fascinating as the intervening years are, let me jump ahead to joining SIN functions, which in January of 2009 led to hearing about an exciting, new, POZ outreach program, **HIV 1 on 1**.

I’ve been a trainer for 17 years, a spiritual coach for eight, POZ for over 27. My need to be of service had been unfulfilled for a few years, so on many levels, I was jazzed!

Quicker than you can click your ruby slippers, I applied for a slot, attended the training, and am involved in its current planning stages. All of this led to a request to write about my experience.

The courseware was excellent and covered the two parts of the program:

1. Self-Management – for POZ people who need information and skills in order to better care for themselves; and
2. Peer Mentoring – for volunteers who wish to counsel those who have completed the Self-Management training.

The dynamic facilitators from New York, and the state-wide attendees, gave so much value to the training because we’re all POZ. Our collective experience will fuel the services we desire to provide to anyone else who is POZ. We can share our collective knowledge because we all know the overwhelming burdens involved, what got us through tough times, what worked, what didn’t, what we wished had been in place, what talents we can offer – all of which makes us collectively very wise.

Our collective camaraderie permitted emotions to flow and tendered mutual support. There was drama – how could there not be! – a lot of laughs, some tears, learning, acknowledgement. We remembered much: loved ones gone, family struggles, economic nightmares, personal journeys, both deadly dark or drenched in the light of gratitude. That gratitude permeated our collective desire to “pay it forward.” I am who I am (no, that’s not a song cue, stay with me here) because of those who were active when I was not. I don’t minimize my achievements; I haven’t exactly been mute the past 27 years. However, I believe all of us looked upon the HIV 1 on 1 program as a way to be of service, to walk our talk, to come out of more closets of fear, to replenish those who tired or passed on. Look around you; there’s much work to be done.

For five days, power reigned through this group of a few, committed, POZ people. Each of us will be a unique example of overcoming great odds, not to claim superiority, but as examples of how to reclaim one’s personal authority. Reaching out to anyone POZ – the disconnected youth, the newly converted, the under-served minorities, the ignored, rural communities – we can let them know they are not alone, assistance is available, others care and will listen. We can provide additional resources to stressed case workers and under-staffed agencies. We can all be examples to Colorado because when we as POZ people are visible, we’re hard to ignore. In his or her own way, every POZ person is gutsy. Ignorance has a chance to die, and human dignity flourish.

Other attendees may be asking, “Did we attend the same training?” But I do not underestimate this small group of committed people in the HIV 1 on 1 program. We will prove Ms. Mead’s quote accurate. We will change many lives, including our own, for the better, forever, in Colorado and eventually, the world. After all, one thing leads to another. That’s the power of POZ people.

—Rick K.

**HIV** **ONE**



# Community without walls

As of October, 2008, I became the new CRCS/Counselor for the Community Without Walls program at It Takes A Village. Graduating with a bachelor Degree in Criminal Justice and Criminology, I started working with HIV positive individuals without really knowing much about the virus. However, after a few months of training my knowledge began to develop and I now realize that there are a many factors that can destroy someone's health. The purpose of the Community Without Walls program is to assist African-American men living with HIV who are currently incarcerated, or have been recently released and. Even though the mission statement seems to target only one race, the program really is beneficial for any HIV-positive men who have spent time in the correctional system.



Dealing with people who have been incarcerated has always interested me, and now that I am able to work with this population I truly feel rewarded. In addition to working with people who have spent time in the system, I now work with people who are struggling to transition back into society as well as deal with the consequences of being medically affected.

Living with HIV is not an easy task for anyone, but for individuals who have trouble staying outside correctional facilities it can be especially challenging. Maintaining healthy relationships with families and friends, and accessing medical help can really affect the change of habits. This is why the Community Without Walls program was created—so that people who are positive and have a criminal history have a better chance of finding their way back into the community and can learn coping skills to prevent further transmission of HIV. Community Without Walls also helps clients access food, clothing, medical, housing, and financial resources. In addition to those services, the program also offers financial assistance and confidential HIV and STD testing. Overall, I really enjoy my job because I am able to use my skills and improve my knowledge on how to help individuals living with the virus.

—Cinzia Ayite

# ORGANIZE! ORGANIZE! ORGANIZE! (CONT.)

(Continued from page 1)

Don't panic if you don't have everything right off the bat. Start with the easy stuff first. For instance, make copies of your:

- \* **Driver's License.** That's easy enough. No brainer.
- \* **State Identity Card** —Takes the place of a driver's license for those of us who don't drive.
- \* **Social Security Card** — Almost everyone has a Social Security card displaying their Social Security Number. If you need a replacement card call 1-800-772-1213 and request a duplicate.
- \* **Birth Certificate** —This means the official State Birth Certificate, not the frilly one that usually ends up in Baby's First Scrapbook with the footie prints and lock of hair.
- \* **Passport** —Not everybody has one but if you do — even if it has expired, it can still be valuable as it reduces the time required to secure an extension of the expiration date or its replacement.
- \* **Health Insurance Card**—Make a copy of your Health Insurance Card(s)—medical, dental and/or vision and anything else you can think of — and keep it in a safe and accessible place.
- \* **Health Insurance Policy(s) Documentation** —Any paper that was issued at the time your health insurance coverage was first purchased.
- \* **Medicare Card**
- \* **Medicaid Card**
- \* **Medical Records**
- \* **Checking Account Number**— Void a check and keep it in the storage section of the book. That way you'll always have it and your bank's routing number in case you need them for direct deposit information.
- \* **Savings Account Number.**—Keep this with your other banking information.

Create an inventory list and check off each item as you put it in the book. That inventory also might include:

- \* **Bank Statements**—You may want to replace the oldest with the most recent on a monthly basis, just to stay up to date.
- \* **Pay Check Stub or Disability Payment Documentation**—You may want to replace the oldest with the most recent on a monthly basis, just to stay up to date.
- \* **Individual Retirement Account (IRA) information.**— 401k, 403b, stock, bonds, etc information (as applicable)
- \* **Copy of Employer Benefit Plan**—A document detailing coverage provided by your employer.
- \* **List of Elected Benefits** —These are the benefits that you chose when you were hired. This may include expanded health insurance, Short Term Disability (STD), Long Term Disability (LTD), Life Insurance Policy, etc.
- \* **Automobile Title**
- \* **Automobile Payment Statement**
- \* **All letters from Social Security, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the local Medicaid**

administering agency, your private health and income coverage resources etc. Stack these according to date so that it becomes relatively easily to create a brief timeline or history of events involving benefits. Stack them in chronological order with the most recent date on the top.

- \* **Anything else that might come to mind** as being valuable and/or difficult to replace.

Store it all a safe, easily accessible place. A three-ring binder with a three-inch spine works well. Use tabbed sheets or hanging files (if using a file cabinet or desk drawer) to organize documents in separate categories.

As you locate these items, make copies of them. There are certain items, such as copies of your driver's license, Social Security Card and/or insurance cards that should be easily accessible when submitting applications for benefits, for billing purpose as well as filing claims. You might also consider scanning everything and storing those images on your computer. This makes them easy to fax or attach to e-mails eliminating the cost of postage or trips to deliver documents in person. You can also write the files to a CD or a flash drive. It is easy to make duplicates of those files, too. Store one electronic copy with the notebook and the 2nd electronic copy in a different location —another drawer or a safety deposit box or with a family member or friend — just in case your computer crashes or the binder is somehow lost or destroyed.

Having both printed and electronic copies available elsewhere will make your life — and the lives of any and all who might someday need to sift through this stuff — a lot easier.

So, simply put:

- \* Find what you can.
- \* Continue to incorporate documents as you find them or as they arrive.
- \* Make paper copies.
- \* Compile them in a book.
- \* Make electronic copies.
- \* Store them on a disk.
- \* Have it all readily available.
- \* Show someone you trust where stuff is.
- \* Get on with your life. **You're now prepared to do so.**

*Michael J. Van Essen*

## QUESTIONS FOR THE BENEFITS GURU?

Write to:

[mvanessen@gmail.com](mailto:mvanessen@gmail.com)

# Tidbits from the CROI

## (CONFERENCE ON RETROVIRUSES & OPPORTUNISTIC INFECTIONS)

CROI is the large HIV conference that was held this year in Montreal February 8-12. There were over 4000 attendees (mostly doctors and clinicians from all over the world); over 250 young investigators; 44 international scholarships; 33 community educator scholarships; and a healthy handful of community press. Sessions were held from 8:30am til 6pm for 4 days, with a huge amount of data, reports, and findings from a plethora of research, presented in Oral Abstracts, Plenaries, Seminars, and Posters.

Here are a few tidbits from the conference (which was the 16th CROI):

Two new “boosters” (like ritonavir aka Norvir) are in the pipeline, one from Gilead and one from Sequoia. Initial studies indicate a low level of side effects, and both companies are looking at co-formulation with other drugs.

After years and years of IL-2 studies, it appears that although T-cells rise, there isn't a strong improvement in overall health. Many are now questioning the utility of IL-2 to boost the immune system.

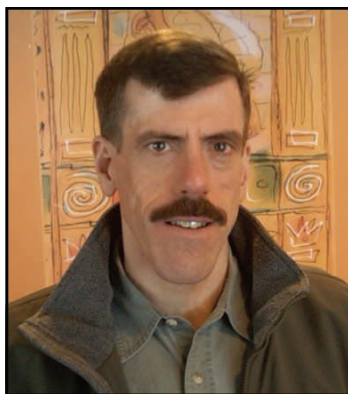
There were a number of reports indicating that HIV drugs should be started sooner. One study implied starting above 500 T-cells. Many people are now thinking at least above 350.

There were also some alarming studies indicating that a lot of new infections are occurring between two people who are neither in care nor on meds, and who don't necessarily even know they are positive. The concern is that mutated virus is being passed numerous times between multiple HIV positive individuals, indicating a strong need for testing and getting into care.

There were a number of presentations and posters about “elite controllers” (people who are positive but do not progress). Many researchers are trying very hard to figure out what is going on to see if we can apply that to control the virus.

Several reports indicated the need for poz folks to supplement with Vitamin D (800-1800iu) and Calcium. This is not only to prevent bone disease, but also energy and other positive health outcomes.

Last, there was news regarding the interaction of HIV with aging, heart disease, kidney disease, bone disease, and cognitive impairment. More studies indicate that HIV (in and of itself) is a risk factor for all of these. Doctors will need to better diagnose and treat these conditions. And of course, there was even more evidence of the serious health risk from smoking, particularly in people with HIV. Studies also indicate that persons with HIV age faster, which makes it all the more imperative that individuals counter these with healthier lifestyles such as better diet and exercise.



### *ARTHUR W POWERS AWARDED THE FIRST ANNUAL SIN CARL FRAZIER MEMORIAL AWARD FOR SERVICE TO THE HIV COMMUNITY*

Arthur W Powers has been awarded the 1st annual SIN “Carl Frazier Memorial Award” in 2009. Arthur has worked tirelessly to enhance the quality of living for PLWH/A for over 20 years in the city of Denver and the State Of Colorado. Each year, throughout the entire legislative session, he spends most of his waking hours in the capitol attending sessions, committee meetings, hearings, and interacting with state senators, and representatives. He

lobbies for the interests of not only the HIV community, but the larger LGBTQ community as well as society at large. Strength In Numbers Colorado proudly acknowledges these efforts and graciously thanks him for his time, his insight, and the tenacity he brings wherever he goes.

Presentation is planning to be made at the May Forum at Hamburger Mary's. RSVP is necessary.

Carl Frazier was a member of SIN and a contributor to the SIN newsletter. He was murdered in 2008 and SIN will now give an annual award to recognize HIV community advocacy in Carls memory.



# THE POSITIVE PROJECT

The Positive Project is an innovative nonprofit venture bringing together advances in digital database technology and the ageless wisdom of first person stories. The Positive Project's mission is to use the stories of persons infected affected by HIV/AIDS to reduce stigma, raise awareness, promote prevention, encourage testing, and enhance care and quality of life.

## PROCESS

Persons living with HIV/AIDS who are "out" about their HIV status are interviewed on film answering questions about a range of issues including coping, prevention, testing, medical adherence, disclosure, substance use, etc. Video clips are archived and housed in a digital database searchable by demographics, topics, or both. The overall collection currently houses over 150 interviews representing a broad range of socio economic and ethnic diversity. The interviews collectively total over 5000 video clips. New stories are added in an ongoing basis.

## APPLICATIONS

Video clips from The Positive Project are easily accessed via the website at

[www.thepositiveproject.org](http://www.thepositiveproject.org)

All video clips may be viewed free of charge. Video clips may be downloaded at minimal charge for educational, prevention, and care efforts. Specific video clips may be utilized to



tailor interventions for targeted audiences (such as MSMs younger than 30, women of color, IDUs, persons over fifty, etc.)

Video clips have been used for national applications such as Our Dignity (a joint venture of The Positive Project, NAPWA and POZ), the American Psychological Association's Office on AIDS, and The Body. Other more localized applications have been numerous including many reported by ASOs, CBOs, and community efforts nationally and internationally. Researchers at Purdue University are currently investigating the efficacy of utilizing the first person video clips of The Positive Project compared to more traditional HIV/AIDS educational video materials.

Additionally, The Positive Project has recently received funds from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to utilize the stories of HIV+ rural residents. Eight interviews were filmed and formatted into an educational DVD for use in prevention and care efforts throughout rural areas of the state.

## CURRENT NEEDS

The Positive Project is in need of funds for further archive development, to increase technological capacity, to disseminate materials, and to underwrite operational costs.

## YOUR SUPPORT

1) Any HIV+ person who is completely "OUT" about their status is invited to call to discuss the possibility of adding your story to the archive. Participation is voluntary and unpaid.

2) Community statements of support are always helpful for us to have on file. If you think this endeavor is a good idea, please send us a statement, in your own words, stating why you think it is.

3) The Positive Project is the grateful beneficiary of the Argonaut Wine & Liquors 2009 Wine Tastings. The tastings are held the second Thursday of every month at the Park Hill Golf Course with 150 wines each month representing different geographical regions from around the world. The event is the largest wine tasting in the Denver metro area, with great deals and food – and for a great cause! Call Sheila at 303-831-7788 for reservations. Tickets range \$25-30.



# Community Educational Forums

The Community ... For The Community"  
(pz4pz)

The Community Educational Forums are monthly informative presentations on HIV and HIV-related topics. They are organized and conducted with the belief that "knowledge is power". The forums also afford an opportunity for poz people to socialize and network in a comfortable environment. They are usually held on the second or third Tuesday of each month in the community room at Our Saviors Lutheran Church, 9th & Emerson in Capitol Hill (enter on the side from Emerson St). The church is just a block from "Queen Soopers", and parking is available in the lot behind the church, the lot on the northwest corner of 9th & Emerson, and on the street. Bus lines 2, 6, and 12 provide service within a block or two.

A free catered dinner is served at 6pm and the presentations begin at 6:30pm, usually lasting about an hour with time for Q&A. The educational forums are coordinated each month by a small group of individuals (also living with HIV) through TEN (Treatment Educat1On Network). We need volunteers to help with these events. If you would like to help with planning (or have suggestions); or you are able to help out at the forums (either regularly or just once in a while), please contact Michael at: [forums.colorado@gmail.com](mailto:forums.colorado@gmail.com)

Also, if you would like to get on the list to receive a forum notification email each month, please request this by sending an email to: [forums.colorado@gmail.com](mailto:forums.colorado@gmail.com)

## Upcoming Educational Forums \*

### Tuesday, May 26:

Annual Tim Gill Endowment Forum  
Hamburger Mary's (17th & Washington)  
RSVP required (restaurant space is limited)  
(For more info, email: [forums.colorado@gmail.com](mailto:forums.colorado@gmail.com))

### Tuesday, June 9:

"HIV Treatment Guidelines"

### Tuesday, July 14:

Cognitive Impairment and HIV Dementia

### Tuesday August 18:

Annual BBQ in Cheesman Park

\* All forums are subject to change

September 15:

October 13:

November 10:

December 8:

- topics to be announced -

*All events are subject to change. Check the online calendar to confirm times, dates and locations*  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SINColorado/cal///group/SINColorado/?v=2&t=1214812800>

# HIV RESOURCE PAGE

## CLINICS AND/OR CLINIC REFERRAL:

**Denver Health Medical Center**

303.602.8710

fax: 303.602.8754

<http://www.denverhealth.org>
**Howard Dental Center**

303.863.0772

fax: 303.832.7823

<http://www.howarddental.org>
**University of Colorado Hospital**

720.848.0191

fax: 720.848.0192

[www.uch.edu](http://www.uch.edu)
**HIV Primary Care Clinic**

303.436.4727

**AIDS Drug Assistance Program**

303.692.2716

<http://www.atdn.org/access/states/co/co.html>
**ARTS (Addiction Research and Treatment Services)**

303.355.1014

<http://www.artstreatment.com>
**Children's Hospital HIV Program**

303.764.8233

<http://www.chipteam.org>
**It Takes a Village**

303.367.4747

[info@ittakesavillagecolorado.org](mailto:info@ittakesavillagecolorado.org)

Resource for HIV+ former inmates

Contact Cinzia Ayite

**Servicios de la Raza**

303.458.5851

<http://www.serviciosdelaraza.org>
**Denver Infectious Disease Care**

303.393.8050

[www.didc.us](http://www.didc.us)

## VETERAN'S SERVICES

**The American Legion Department of Colorado**

John McCartney, Department Service Officer

E-mail: [aldso@coloradolegion.org](mailto:aldso@coloradolegion.org) Office: 303.914.5587, Toll Free: 1.877.917.5381

## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES:

**Mental Health Corp of Denver**

303.504.6649

fax: 303.757.5245

[carlclark@mhcd.com](mailto:carlclark@mhcd.com)
**Denver Health Outpatient Behavioral Health Sciences (OBHS)**

303.36.5690

<http://alcoholism.about.com/od/txco/qt/dhmc.htm>

HIV emotional support for HIV positive people between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. local time.

<http://www.hivnightline.org/>

800.628.9240

**Project Inform's Treatment Question Line**

1.800.822.7422 open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. mountain time

**Cameron Gridley Psy D.**

303.557.0824

**Keith Swain, counselor**

720.252.9575

**Tony Miles PhD**

303.282.4483

## REGIONAL AIDS PROJECTS:

**Boulder County AIDS Project (BCAP)**

303.444.6121

fax: 303.444.0260

<http://www.bcap.org>
**Northern Colorado AIDS Project (NCAP)**

800.464.4611

fax: 970.4848.4497

<http://www.ncaids.org>
**Western Colorado AIDS Project**

(800.765.8594

fax: 970.243.5791

<http://www.westcap.info>
**Colorado AIDS Project (CAP)**

303.837.1501

fax: 303.837.0388

<http://www.coloradoaidsproject.org>
**Southern Colorado AIDS Project**

800.241.5468

fax: 719.578.8690

<http://www.s-cap.org>

The intention of the Resource section is to provide a concise practical HIV guide for the community to reference. If you have a resource, or have accessed an HIV resource that has been beneficial, please submit it to the SIN website, message section, so that it may be added.



# SIN COLORADO

## LIST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

May	June	July
<b>Community Educational Forum</b> <b>5/26/09 6:00 pm</b> Annual Tim Gill Endowment Forum Hamburger Mary's (17th & Washington) RSVP (see p. 14)	<b>Community Educational Forum</b> <b>6/9/09 6:00 pm</b> (topic on p.14) Our Saviors Lutheran Church, 9th & Emerson	<b>Community Educational Forum</b> <b>7/14/09 6:00 pm</b> (topic on p.14) Our Saviors Lutheran Church, 9th & Emerson
<b>HEP-C / HIV Co-infection Support Group</b> <b>5/26/09</b> 1660 South Albion, 3rd Floor 5:30–7:00 pm	<b>HEP-C / HIV Co-infection Support Group</b> <b>6/23/09</b> 1660 South Albion, 3rd Floor 5:30–7:00 pm	<b>HEP-C / HIV Co-infection Support Group</b> <b>7/28/09</b> 1660 South Albion, 3rd Floor 5:30–7:00 pm
		<b>Shadowcliff Retreat</b> <b>7/9–7/12/2009</b> See p.2 for details
Recurring Events:		
<b>HIV Support Group</b> <b>5/13/09</b> Rose Medical Center 4545 E. 9th Ave.	<b>HIV Support Group</b> <b>6/10/09</b> Rose Medical Center 4545 E. 9th Ave.	<b>HIV Support Group</b> <b>7/8/09</b> Rose Medical Center 4545 E. 9th Ave.
<b>The NET</b> <b>5/6/09 and 5/20/09</b>	<b>The NET</b> <b>6/3/09 and 6/17/09</b>	<b>The NET</b> <b>7/1/09 and 7/15/09</b>
Sunday Coffee Talk / Brunch		
<b>5/3/09 11 am – 1 pm</b> <b>Panera (13th and Grant St.)</b>	<b>6/7/09 11 am – 1 pm</b> <b>Panera (13th and Grant St.)</b>	<b>7/5/09 11 am – 1 pm</b> <b>Panera (13th and Grant St.)</b>
<b>5/17/09 11 am – 1 pm</b> <b>Mozart's</b> (1417 Krameria St.) <b>RSVP</b>		
<b>Free SIN Yoga</b> Tues. 4:30 pm (2670 S Gilpin) Wed. 5:15 pm (770 S Broadway) Sat. noon (770 S Broadway) Questions? Call Phil @ 303-358-3563	<b>Free SIN Yoga</b> Tues. 4:30 pm (2670 S Gilpin) Wed. 5:15 pm (770 S Broadway) Sat. noon (770 S Broadway) Questions? Call Phil @ 303-358-3563	<b>Free SIN Yoga</b> Tues. 4:30 pm (2670 S Gilpin) Wed. 5:15 pm (770 S Broadway) Sat. noon (770 S Broadway) Questions? Call Phil @ 303-358-3563

All events are subject to change. Check the online calendar to confirm times, dates and locations  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SINColorado/cal///group/SINColorado/?v=2&t=1214812800>