

THE GUARDIAN

The Newsletter of AIDS Network • Fall/Winter 2010



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Gift Baskets, Gift Drive, Make for Happier Holidays

The holidays can be a stressful time for those living with HIV/AIDS, many of whom can't afford festive food and gifts, or aren't physically able to shop for holiday fare. That's why, in partnership with generous organizations and individuals community-wide, AIDS Network again offered Thanksgiving baskets to clients and their families and is in the midst of our holiday gift drive.

Thanksgiving baskets

"For the Thanksgiving baskets we partner with Community Action Coalition, which provides free turkeys," says Alicia Bosscher, AIDS Network's registered dietician. "Volunteers pick up the turkeys the Tuesday before Thanksgiving and we complete our baskets with foods that complement the turkeys, including fresh potatoes, cranberries, milk, gravy packets, canned green beans and pumpkin, a pie crust, and a foil roasting pan. Interestingly, the pan is the most expensive part; Second Harvest

Foodbank supplies the other items at 18 cents a pound."

Clients do have to buy a couple of things, like a can of sweetened condensed milk, but Bosscher believes that's a good thing. "Then they feel more invested in the meal because they're contributing to it themselves."

When clients request a basket, they specify whether they'd like it delivered or if they can pick it up. "We've had about 50 requests this year, about half of which needed delivery," Bosscher says. "Last year we ordered 50 turkeys and got about 55 requests, so we bought five more turkeys."

Volunteers handle delivery of the baskets and help hand them out at AIDS Network office. "If people want to get involved next year, they can let us know as the holidays approach," says Bosscher. "If they want to pick up turkeys or deliver baskets they'll need a fairly spacious car, but they could also assemble baskets

or be available during pick-up hours on Tuesday before Thanksgiving."

Holiday gift drive

Our holiday food drive is still in progress. "It started with clients and their families sending requests for gifts," says Kevin Geary, AIDS Network case management program assistant who coordinates the drive. "People often want gift cards for groceries, gas, or stores like Target, so they can buy gifts. They also ask for warm clothing, or toys or books for their kids."

Kevin and network volunteers organize the requests and send them to generous sponsoring organizations, such as East Towne and West Towne Malls, United Way of Dane County, and Oscar Mayer. "The malls put the requests up, usually on their giving trees, and shoppers can buy the gifts and return them to the mall office, where we pick them up," says Geary.

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In the Loop

Thoughts from Executive Director
Karen Dotson

Thanks to our hundreds of supporters, volunteers and donors, AIDS Network is able to provide needed new services to our clients, such as our dental clinic and food pantry. In the 16 years I've worked assisting HIV-positive people, I've never seen a greater demand for critical services.

More than ever, we need to position ourselves to do even more, and that requires additional funding. We respectfully ask you as well as others to do what you can to step up your financial support of AIDS Network. AIDS Network receives tremendous financial support and in-kind donations from community organizations, businesses and individuals. That's what enables us to continue providing services at the levels we do, but there are definite challenges.

Our government funding for prevention services has been flat for about ten years. Further across-the-board cuts in government funding seem eminent. The long recession has pinched private foundations and their grants have fallen precipitously.

Recognizing the importance of our mission, AIDS Network staff has been wonderful in maintaining vital services to clients despite the financial challenges. They've gone without wage increases, taken on additional responsibilities when we've had to eliminate a position, and have shown their usual dedication as



we've prioritized our activities to continue meeting clients' needs.

Unfortunately, our clients have been affected by the current economy worst of all—87% percent live 200% below the Federal Poverty Level. Too often they are the first ones let go from jobs. Too many have had difficulty staying in their homes. It's raised the bar in terms of what they need from us.

Take our food pantry ... our dietician and case management staff have made great strides in providing the types of foods essential to our clients' health as well as foods they enjoy but cannot afford. Our dietician provides education about what foods will benefit them, and the importance of proper medication and maintaining a healthy weight.

The longer the pantry is open, the more people use it and the more pounds of food we distribute. We're fortunate to receive some donations of food from SecondHarvestFoodPantry, Community Action Coalition, and others. However, the success of this service demonstrates the need for more resources to support it. Each week our volunteers work tirelessly to organize and distribute the food.

Our community partners have also been a boon to our dental clinic. Rhinelander dentist Dr. James Mooney contributed two complete operatories, or exam rooms, complete with X-Ray machines. Dr. Doyle's office at UW – Madison donated dental chairs. Our landlord, Louis Fortis, provided in-kind construction services. Local artist Chuck Bauer lends us artwork to decorate the walls. We built the facility with a low budget, but it doesn't show because of the generous assistance we received. We offer clients a warm, welcoming atmosphere and advanced technology. We offer them a dental home.



Representative Mark Pocan cuts the ribbon on September 27 to officially open AIDS Network's new dental clinic.


Since the clinic's grand opening in September, we've been able to help over 80 clients who had issues such as significant gum disease that hadn't been appropriately treated—or treated at all. Here's how our dentist, Dr. Jeffrey Wilton, puts it:

“Previously, HIV-positive patients had very limited options for treatment, and often had to wait months or travel to Milwaukee to see an oral health care provider. Having a dental clinic where all the patients have HIV or AIDS creates a unique situation where patients don't second-guess the quality of care based on

their status. Moreover, good oral health is critical to the overall well-being of persons who are living with HIV/AIDS.”

AIDS Network continues to fill serious gaps in locally available services, and with additional funding we will be able to close even more. We now have sufficient funds to open our dental clinic two days a week, but the need is there for clients to use the clinic the other days if we could stay open more often.


Additional financial support would also allow us to expand our mental health service. We have a specialist available once a week at our location, but clients often have real issues with their day-to-day health that make it difficult to keep to schedules. With more availability, they could come in when they're able.

Once a year we make an appeal directly to our friends and supporter for your financial help. You should have recently received a letter from me asking for your donation to AID Network. Please take time today to send us your tax-deductible contribution, or donations may also be made on our website: www.aidsnetwork.org/donate. I thank you in advance for your continued generosity and caring about those in our own community who face the very day challenges of living with HIV/AIDS. 

Chuck Bauer's Work on Exhibit at AIDS Network



Over the years, AIDS Network frequently benefits from the generosity of our local arts community. Each year, many individuals and organizations donate artwork and performance tickets to

Red Ribbon Affair as well as making cultural events available to our clients at a reduced rate or even free of charge. When our new dental clinic was completed, it was perfect except for the bare walls. Local artist Chuck Bauer came to the rescue. Bauer who owns The Soap Opera with his partner Chuck Beckwith studied art at Ohio Wesleyan University and the University of Wisconsin. An accomplished painter, he's probably best known for his landscapes which he likes to execute en plein air (“in the open air”). If you would like to learn more about Chuck and see examples of his work, go to his website: www.ctbauer.com. AIDS Network is very grateful to him for loaning us his beautiful artwork, appreciated by staff, clients and visitors alike. 

Two of the many paintings Chuck Bauer loaned to the AIDS Network on display at our new dental clinic.



We Celebrate Our Outstanding Volunteers



At least one day a week, if you visit AIDS Network's Madison office, volunteer Suzanne Schmidt will greet you at the front desk and answer your questions. She'll be the supportive voice on the phone if you call us during her shifts. In addition, she takes as many extra shifts as she can when we ask her.

Schmidt lost her husband Jim to HIV/AIDS two years ago and she volunteers at AIDS Network and at the Great Lakes Hemophilia Association to keep his memory alive. "It helps me carry on his legacy," she says.

She's also working toward her Master's degree in counseling at Lakeland College, and volunteering gives her the experience that she'll be able to use in her field. With her positive attitude, she makes contacting AIDS Network a reassuring experience for clients who might be anxious about life challenges they face.

Dana Crumpton has volunteered for over five years. "A friend asked me to be a day volunteer for the ACT ride," he remembers. "The next year I was on the steering

committee that planned the ride and on the crew for the entire ride."

Crumpton helps out at AIDS Network in many ways, as often as he can, and organizes our annual holiday gift drive. "I get other organizations involved, and we collect money and gifts for network clients," he says. "Last year we collected enough to help everybody who provided wish lists, about 275 people."

Schmidt and Crumpton are just two of the many valued volunteers we'll recognize during this year's Annual Volunteer Award celebration at First Congregational United Church of Christ on Tuesday, November 30. "It's so important to recognize our outstanding volunteers and show our appreciation with these awards," says Katie Childs, AIDS Network's development and volunteer coordinator. "We as an agency couldn't provide the services we do without the hundreds of volunteers who support us and our clients.

When she looks at the list of award winners, the diversity strikes her. "We want to highlight the many and varied ways volunteers support us," says Childs. "Staff and clients may not see volunteers like Club 5, our media partners, or our volunteer attorneys every day, but the work they do is so incredibly vital and we want to be sure everyone knows what constant, wonderful supporters of the network they are."


AIDS Network always welcomes new volunteers, and we're so appreciative of existing ones. "We have four main categories of volunteers," Childs notes, "and then others like attorneys that do

pro bono work for clients, that don't really fit in a category."

Client services volunteers work directly with network clients. "Sometimes we match a volunteer with a client for an extended period of time, other volunteers assist different clients as needed, taking them to doctors' appointments, for example," says Childs. "Marilyn Jacobsen, our 2010 Outstanding Client Services Volunteer, works in our food pantry, organizing and packing food."

Outreach and prevention volunteers help the network's outreach specialists spread the word about AIDS Network's services, attending fairs and other events to talk with people. They also help educate people about HIV testing, helping to explain why it's important and how it works.

Special events volunteers help plan and carry out our fundraisers. Including front desk volunteers, like Schmidt, greet visitors to our office and handle phone calls. If you're interested in volunteering, e-mail Katie Childs at volunteer@aids-network.org.

We all live hectic lives, but we can still find time, even if it's just an hour or so, to help out." says Crumpton. "That's what it's all about." 

2010 Annual Volunteer Awards

Outstanding Outreach & Prevention Volunteer
Nathaniel Don Abrams, Jr.

Outstanding Client Services Volunteer
Marilyn Jacobsen

Outstanding Volunteer Attorney
Susan Parsons

Outstanding Special Events Volunteer
Brandon Kufalk

Outstanding Office Support Volunteer
Suzanne Schmidt

Outstanding Business Leadership Award
Club 5, Dave Eick, and Matt Couper

Outstanding Corporate Sponsor
Hilton Madison Monona Terrace

Outstanding Media Partner
Leigh Mills, WMTV

Outstanding Volunteer Organization
Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus

Volunteer of the Year
Dana Crumpton

Executive Director's Award
Chuck Chvala and Louis Fortis

President's Award
Dr James Mooney and Patricia Mooney


Gift Baskets, Gift Drive, Make for Happier Holidays

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One of the drive's biggest sponsors—which in fact started the entire gift drive—is the Shamrock Bar. “Longtime community activist and AIDS Network supporter Felicia Melton-Smyth, who was cruise director for the Shamrock Bar, visited the mall about six years ago and saw the giving tree with very few requests fulfilled,” explains Dan Guinn, AIDS Network’s director of client services.

“Along with others at the Shamrock she started a gift drive there,” he continues. “They asked people to bring in toys and gifts and distributed them to our clients. She passed away in 2008, but Shamrock staff started the Felicia Melton-Smyth fund, which has its own steering committee and benefits AIDS Network and other causes.”

AIDS Network now plays a more active role in coordinating the holiday gift drive with many generous sponsors, but the Shamrock component remains an important element. The bar posts clients’ requests, collects the gifts, and delivers them to us. Volunteer Dana Crumpton coordinates, helping Felicia’s memory live on and giving our clients happier holidays. “It’s what Felicia would want,” says Guinn.

AIDS Network staff and many volunteers organize the gifts that pack our office in December. “We’ll wrap gifts if clients specify, and deliver them if needed,” Geary says. “Our goal is to make sure each requestor gets at least one gift, and we’ve succeeded so far. Last year 245 individuals received gifts.” 

NOT Your Grandmother's Bingo



NBC15's The Morning Show Co-Anchors Christine Bellport and Sara Carlson at The Morning Show Bingo in February, 2010.

Camp Bingo's sixth season kicks off in January 2011, and once again, it's NOT your grandmother's bingo. It's held the last Sunday of the month in January, February and March at the Edgewater Hotel, where for the past two years we've had capacity crowds of 260-plus bingo players.

The doors open at 1 p.m.—there are usually people waiting to get their favorite seats—and the first ball is called at 2:30 p.m. For the second consecutive year, Smart Dental is our presenting sponsor.

Celebrity ball callers will join hostess Cass Marie—our diva of the balls—for each game. Our theme on January 30 is “Bingo's A Drag,” and, accordingly, a couple of fabulous drag queens will join Cass. On February 27, NBC15's Christine Bellport and Leigh Mills will call the balls at “Sconnie Bingo (You Betcha!),” and Brian Olson from WKOW TV will assist with “Fantasy Island Bingo” on March 27.

Don't forget to wear costumes that reflect Camp Bingo's themes. We'll give out three best-costume prizes at each event this year—the most ever. Remember some of our most popular past themes? “Disco Inferno Bingo,” “Bingo at the Prom,” “I Love the 80s Bingo,” “B.H.S. (Bingo High School),” and “Bingo in Oz”? Good times.

Along with bingo, again this year we'll start off with “Onion Rings,” sponsored by The Onion. Bingo players get seven clues and the current issue of the *The Onion*, where they can find answers—numbers between zero and nine. Put them in the order of the clues and you have Cass's cell phone number. The first person to call Cass wins a gift bag from the *The Onion*.

There's free indoor parking; a full selection of drinks and food available for purchase. Of course, our popular 50-50 raffles will return—last year one winner took home more than \$600. During intermission, you'll enjoy entertainment

by Cass and other local performers.

Your entrance fee gets you a bingo book with six cards for each of an event's seven games—three have \$250 cash jackpots and one a \$500 rollover jackpot. (If no one wins that game after we call a specified number of balls, the jackpot rolls over to the next game). Our March 2010 rollover jackpot winner took home \$1,500! Prizes for the other three games are donated merchandise—an overnight “Sweet-heart” package at the Edgewater valued at \$250, from Capitol Centre Market and services and products from StyleFX salon valued at \$300.

Every player also gets a program detailing the games. Each has a different arrangement of squares you need to cover to win—no straight line ever wins in this game! Businesses can advertise in the program and many offer special discount coupons.

Celebrating a birthday? We can arrange reserved seating for parties of eight or more if you contact us by the Friday before Camp Bingo. Bring a birthday cake if you want, but no other outside food.

Before the close of 2010, you'll be able to register online at www.madcapbingo.org—check out the discount for buying passes to all three events. And join our Camp Bingo group on Facebook—you just might find some special promotions. By the way, Wisconsin law says you have to be 18 to play, and (obviously) 21 to purchase alcoholic drinks.

Each year, bingo gets bigger and we give away more donated prizes. It all adds up to more funds AIDS Network can use to serve our valued clients. **⋈**

World AIDS Day 2005: “Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise”

Camp Bingo 2011 at the Edgewater:

Doors open at 1 p.m.; the games begin at 2:30 p.m.

Register at madcampbingo.org.

January 30 Bingo's A Drag

February 27 Sconnie Bingo (You Betcha!)

March 27 Fantasy Island Bingo

Entrance fee: \$19 in advance, online (credit or debit card)
\$45 for all three events;
\$20 at the door (cash or personal check only)



Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus performs at the annual AIDS Network memorial service held at First Congregational Church on November 30. Earlier in the evening they were the recipient of the Volunteer Organization of the Year Award.




Started on December 1, 1988, World AIDS Day is about raising money, increasing awareness, fighting prejudice and improving education.

Every World AIDS Day has theme; this year it's "Act Aware." World AIDS Day is important in reminding people that HIV has not gone away, and that there are many things still to be done.

According to UNAIDS estimates, there are now 33.4 million people living with HIV, including 2.1 million children. During 2008 some 2.7 million people became newly infected with the virus and an estimated 2 million people died from AIDS.¹ Around half

of all people who become infected with HIV do so before they are 25 and lose their battle with AIDS before they are 36.

The vast majority of people with HIV and AIDS live in lower- and middle-income countries and over 87% of our clients are 200% below the Federal Poverty Level. But HIV today is a threat to men, women and children on all continents around the world. 



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Mark Your Calendar



- December 1** World AIDS Day
- December 3** Remembrance Tree Lighting, *AIDS Network*
- December 4 -5** Benefit Days, *Borders Books, Madison and Walden Books, Janesville*
- 2011**
- January 30** Bingo's A Drag, *The Edgewater*
- February 17** National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- February 27** Sconnie Bingo (You Betcha!), *The Edgewater*
- March 27** Fantasy Island Bingo, *The Edgewater*
- April 1** Red Ribbon Affair, *Monona Terrace*
- August 4 - 7** ACT 9, The Wisconsin AIDS Ride

Karen Dotson
Executive Director

Mary Vasquez
Board President



Stay Connected

AIDS Network uses Facebook and Twitter to keep our friends up to date about the latest news at the agency, volunteer opportunities and fundraising events. We also continually update our website which is useful resource for information about HIV/AIDS/HCV and the services we provide. Back issues of *The Guardian*, *Consumer Quarterly* (our client newsletter) and annual reports can also be found there.

www.aidsnetwork.org



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With offices in Janesville and Beloit

For more information about these and other events visit the AID Network website: www.aidsnetwork.org