



NoFLAC News

The Official Newsletter of the Northwest Florida AIDS Consortium

Winter 2010

BRRRRRRRRR! WHAT A WINTER!!!!

We admit we're late getting the Winter newsletter out, but you can't tell it by the weather. It's still cold, cold, cold out there! Just a few weeks ago, we were the only state without snow. Thank goodness we live in Florida, eh?

Despite the weather, Winter has been a busy season and there's lots of news to share. Area agencies are gearing up for Spring events and it looks like Florida is going to make it through the ADAP crisis in the immediate sense. You can read all about it here. Grab a mug of hot chocolate and put on your fuzzy slippers and enjoy this issue of NoFLAC News.

Please remember, this is your newsletter. We want to know your thoughts, concerns, and ideas. To submit an article for future editions of the NoFLAC News, please refer to the information at the bottom of this page. We look forward to hearing what you have to say!



MEET OUR NEW HIV/AIDS PROGRAM COORDINATOR



I would like to take just a moment to introduce myself to everyone. My name is Jennifer Findley and I am the new HIV/AIDS Program Coordinator for Area 1 (Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties). I received my Bachelors degree in Social Work from the University of West Florida in 2002 and my Masters degree in Clinical Social Work from Florida State University in 2009. I have been working in the field of HIV/AIDS for approximately 9 years including employment at Escambia AIDS Services and Education (EASE) and Infectious Disease Associates (Dr. Barbara Wade's office). My HIV experience includes testing & counseling, case management (Ryan White, HOPWA, AICP, and PAC), medical adherence counseling, linkage and education, patient assistance program management, program development and evaluation, grant writing, and counseling. I am very passionate about the field of HIV/AIDS and truly look forward to serving in this new position.

Welcome Jennifer!

February 14th is not only Valentine's Day, it's also NATIONAL CONDOM DAY. As Cupid takes flight this month the American Social Health Association (ASHA) wants people everywhere to be smart and be safe. To that end, ASHA recognizes February as National Condom Month 2011 and February 14th as National Condom Day.



NoFLAC News is published quarterly by the Northwest Florida AIDS/HIV Consortium. Submissions may be sent via email to NoFLACNews@gmail.com or to staff@noflacweb.org.

NoFLAC News staff reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and content.

Florida ASCEND Program

My name is Thomas Taylor and I want to introduce you to the Florida ASCEND Program and its challenge. The Florida ASCEND Program is a group of consumers from all over the state who have been trained by AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth, and Families out of Washington, DC. They are a non-profit organization that educates, trains, and advocates to improve the quality of life for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs) and to stop the spread of HIV.

AIDS Alliance came to Florida, picked 21 PLWHAs who are active in our area in stopping the spread of HIV and working to improve our lives as well as others. They trained us to do public discussions concerning bringing Florida's PLWHAs who have dropped out of treatment and other services back into care to preserve their health.

We have put together a great resource guide and will be presenting this at our discussions. We need you and your organizations to allow us to have these 10-15 minute discussions so we can give you the tools that will empower you to help loved ones, friends, neighbors, co-workers and your community in general. If you are interested in learning more, I plan to introduce the program at the upcoming Positive Living Conference, March 11-13, 2011 or you may contact me by e-mail at confedr8angel@cox.net.



ADAP UPDATE *Submitted by Jennifer Findley, Area 1 HIV/AIDS Program Coordinator*

We are truly in a precarious place in regards to HIV funding in Florida. The Florida AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), which provides antiretroviral medications to those individuals who are uninsured or underinsured, is currently facing a funding crisis. As of Jan 28, 2011 there were 3,008 people on Florida's ADAP waitlist. In addition, due to a funding deficit of approximately \$14 million dollars, the Bureau of HIV/AIDS has had to look for creative solutions for assisting those who are already enrolled in the program with continuing to obtain their HIV medications.

On February 3, 2011, ADAP signed an agreement with a program called Welvista to help provide HIV medications to approximately 6,500 people currently being served by ADAP until the program receives yearly Ryan White funding on April 1, 2011. Without this assistance there was the chance that individuals would not have access to HIV medications during this time period. Welvista is a non-profit organization which partners with pharmaceutical companies to provide medically necessary medications to individuals who are uninsured. The goal of this agreement is to make sure that during this funding crisis no client will be without their HIV medications. Local ADAP staff will be assisting consumers during this transition and all those individuals who are currently receiving ADAP will be re-established on the program beginning April 1st – they will not be placed on the waitlist.

With this information in mind, please remember that if you are HIV+ and need to be on medications there are resources available to assist you, even while on the ADAP waitlist. Please let your doctor or case manager know if you are having any difficulties with obtaining your HIV medications so that they are able to help link you to available resources. For more information on case management and HIV resources available in our area, please contact the Area 1 HIV/AIDS Program office at 850-595-6345.



FLORIDA HIV/AIDS ADVOCACY NETWORK (FHAAN)

The Florida HIV/AIDS Advocacy Network is a statewide effort comprised of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA's), community advocates, HIV/AIDS and industry professionals, and anyone wanting to be involved to coordinate HIV advocacy efforts for all Floridians living with HIV and AIDS. Join HIV/AIDS advocates from communities throughout Florida as we plan for the future of HIV/AIDS advocacy. This is your chance to stay involved or get involved. We need you! Visit <http://www.theaidsinstitute.org/node/113#>



POSITIVE LIVING— An HIV Education and Prevention Conference

Positive Living is an HIV Education & Prevention Conference sponsored by Okaloosa AIDS Support & Informational Services. With presenters from all over the U.S., Positive Living provides a relaxing, comfortable, and enjoyable HIV-relevant educational experience, which is both nationally and internationally recognized. This three day event is one of very few remaining conferences of its kind offered in the United States. The conference will be held at the beautiful Ramada Plaza Beach Resort in Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

The cost for PLWHAs is \$50 and \$125 for HIV negative participants. You can do an online or printable application at: http://www.aidsoasis.org/AIDSoasis/Positive_Living_Application_Preference.html or contact OASIS at (850)314-0950.

Heartsong Retreat 2011 *Submitted by Shirley Boughton*

As you are all aware, medical treatment is critical to extending the lives of those challenged with HIV/AIDS. It is our belief that the quality of life requires equal attention; nurturing the mind and spirit and giving relief from the psychological and emotional pressures of living with HIV/AIDS. **Heartsong Southeast** is an annual retreat to educate, enlighten and empower 60 PLWHAs from five states. This year the retreat will take place from May 11th to 15th, 2011. 33% of the retreat team (5) and 25% of the participants (11) will be from Florida. The retreat will take place at Beckwith Camp & Conference Center near Fairhope, Alabama.



Applications will be available at the Positive Living Conference and will be provided to Area 1 case managers by early March. **Applications are due to OASIS no later than March 31st**. Upon notice of selection each applicant is expected to pay a one time non-refundable registration fee of \$50 (8 hours of documented volunteer service for an Area 1 HIV/AIDS community based organization may substituted in lieu of cash). Tax deductible donations are most welcome and may be addressed to Heartsong Southeast in care of OASIS. OASIS continues to serve as primary sponsor for Florida team members and participants. Heartsong Southeast welcomes the participation of persons from all denominations and persons without affiliation to an organized religion or faith community. Heartsong Southeast does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, gender identity, economic status, or sexual orientation. The Red Ribbon Charitable Foundation, Inc. continues to be a major sponsor of Heartsong Southeast.

Arts for AIDS Awareness (A4AA)



The Arts for AIDS Awareness, Inc. was honored with the success of the first batch of \$10.00 gas cards donated in 2010 to help more consumers attend NoFLAC meetings. As a result, A4AA presented NoFLAC attendees with 20 more gas cards at the January consortium meeting.

We hope to do more. Please join us for our monthly meeting on the first Thursday of each month at the Downtown Library, 200 West Gregory Street at 6:30pm. Monthly board meetings are held preceding the monthly membership meetings beginning at 5:30pm and are open for all to attend. All are encouraged to become a member and help make a change. Follow us on Facebook—The Arts for AIDS Awareness.

What We Do: raise awareness, support education, promote advocacy and equality affected by HIV/AIDS.

How We Do It: we cultivate a cohesive network of individuals to raise awareness through art-related fundraisers and special public events.

You Can Help: join a committee such as fundraising, volunteer in producing events, donate art, join the membership or simply support our organization. Email us at: A4AAINC@yahoo.com Membership information: A4AAMEMBER-SHIP@yahoo.com

Announcements & Events

- **March 6th - 12th** - The **National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS** is the coming together of all people of faith to unite with purpose, compassion and hope. Through the power of God's love we will educate every American about HIV prevention facts; encourage and support HIV testing; advocate for the availability of compassionate care and treatment for all those living with the disease in every community in America, and unconditionally love all persons living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Link to their webpage for more information. <http://www.nationalweekofprayerforthehealingofaids.org>
- **March 10th** - **National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** is a nationwide observance that encourages people to take action in the fight against HIV/AIDS and raise awareness of its impact on women and girls. It is coordinated by the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health (OWH) which helps organizations across the country come together to offer support, encourage discussion and teach women and girls about prevention of HIV, the importance of getting tested and how to live with and manage HIV/AIDS. For more info, go to: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/nwghaad>
- **March 20th** marks the fifth annual **National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NNHAAD)**. HIV continues to increase among Native people as it has over the past decade. This day will challenge us to work together in harmony to create a greater awareness of the risk of HIV/AIDS to our Native communities, to call for resources for testing and early detection and increased treatment options and to eventually decrease the occurrence of HIV/AIDS among Native people. Please visit their website. <http://www.nnaapc.org/news/awareness-day.htm>
- **Beginning February 18th, 2011** An **HIV Support Group for PLWHAs** will be facilitated by Chris Bailey, M.A., M.P.H. Licensed Mental Health Counselor at Lutheran Services Florida, 14 West Jordan Street in Pensacola from 4:00pm until 5:30pm. This group is open to anyone with HIV/AIDS regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation or age. A referral from your Case Manager, Physician, Nurse or Physician Assistant is required. Group size will be limited to the first 15 referrals. Please ask your case manager for more information. To register, contact Mr. Bailey at 850-261-8566.
- Join the **Women's Life Group** for Ryan White Part C clients and their families at the Okaloosa County Health Department on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays at the Fort Walton Beach location and on the 1st and 3rd Mondays at the Crestview location. The meeting time is 10am to 11:30am. A **Men's Life Group** is also available on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays in Fort Walton and on the 2nd and 4th Mondays in Crestview. For more information, contact the group facilitator, **Annetta Davenport at (850)833-9074**.
- **April 28, 2011** OASIS, in sponsorship with the nationally-recognized **Dining Out for Life** foundation, brings you a unique opportunity to help those affected by HIV/AIDS. Restaurants throughout our four-county area will generously donate a portion of the sales obtained during this event to OASIS. All funds raised will be used locally to help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and provide humanitarian support and services to those affected by HIV. Visit the Dining Out for Life website to learn more about this event, including how to participate as a restaurant, sponsor or volunteer. <http://www.diningoutforlife.com>
- **WELCOME** The Ryan White Part C Clinic at Okaloosa County Health Department welcomes new staff: Betty Dudley, Administrative Assistant, Hattie Brannon, RN and Annetta Davenport, LMHC.



NoFLAC Election Time

The NoFLAC Nominating Committee will convene this spring to prepare for the upcoming election in September. Since there are quite a few new members, I thought I would put together some important information about the NoFLAC election process. Every two years, a new Chair and a Vice-Chair are elected from the membership at the September meeting. As it states in the NoFLAC Bylaws, "The Nominating Committee will prepare a slate of officers to nominate for each duly held election by seeking qualified applicants from among current active voting members in good standing." An active voting member in good standing is someone who has attended at least two of the last four meetings. Minimum qualifications include being a resident of Area 1 and participation as an active voting member of NoFLAC for at least one year. Other desired qualifications: the ability to lead, excellent verbal and written communication skills, above average interpersonal skills and prior experience in an administrative leadership role. So if you fit that description or know someone who does and would like to participate in the process, please contact the chair or vice-chair of the consortium. A nominations committee will be forming soon.

In his book *Welcome to the Board*, author Fisher Howe identifies several characteristics of **successful, happy, and effective board members**:

They are honest
They are enthusiastic
The keep an open mind
They are team players
They tackle complex problems with relish
The take an orderly approach to decision making
They are competent
They have a sense of humor

Common traits among "problem" board members include:

Obsession with a single issue
Always taking the "contrarian" view, just for show
Expounding on strongly held opinions that are rarely back up by fact or research
"Board-hopping" or sitting on many boards or committees, but serving none well

We are all very grateful to James Talley and Shirley Boughton who have diligently served our area well by going above and beyond in both volunteering their time and contributing to the objectives of the NoFLAC consortium. Together with the Steering Committee and Subcommittee members, they have worked hard to bring the Consortium to a new level of collaboration and teamwork within the local HIV community. Despite these difficult economic times, we can all look forward to an even greater year of progress for NoFLAC and Area 1! If you have never attended a NoFLAC meeting or haven't attended one recently, we strongly encourage you to do so. NoFLAC always welcomes new members!

Keep in mind that NoFLAC is....

- An advisory board that works to plan an effective network of HIV/AIDS services.
- A place to work with others to plan how to best deliver HIV/AIDS services to the people who need them most
- A place to share new programs, ideas, and information about HIV and AIDS services
- A place to network with representatives from HIV/AIDS services organizations and other community-based agencies.

NoFLAC is not....

- A place to highlight conflicts between clients, agencies, providers or members
- A place to gain public audience to grieve or complain about individual cases or providers
- A support group
- An authority over any agency, provider, individual, or funding stream

Debbie Carty, Area I HIV/AIDS Contract Manager

Syphilis Is Back!

Submitted by: Scott Mickley, BSEd—Area 1 HIV/AIDS Surveillance Coordinator, Escambia County Health Department.
Reviewed by Patty Dwiggin, RNC, BSN—Area 1 STD Program Manager, Escambia County Health Department

Escambia County is experiencing a resurgence of syphilis cases (60 reported in 2010—compare to 17 in 2009, a more than 250% increase). There is no particular link between cases that has been identified (such as age, race, gender or sexual orientation). The relationship between cases by geographic area is currently under study.

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) that is completely curable. However, if the infection is not identified and properly treated, it becomes progressively worse and is ultimately fatal - invading organs, bones, the central nervous system and the heart and circulation. It begins with a primary lesion or sore called a chancre. A syphilis chancre usually appears about 3 weeks after infection, is painless and goes away without treatment. The chancre may not always be evident; especially if it is inside the vagina, on the cervix or in the rectal area. At about 4 to 6 weeks, secondary symptoms may appear such as a generalized body rash which may involve the palms of the hands and soles of the feet in about 1/3 of cases.

Syphilis is transmitted through contact with the fluid that leaks out of the primary and secondary lesions. Syphilis can also be transmitted from a mother to her unborn child causing very serious complications including: stillbirth, abortion, premature birth, low birthweight, deafness, serious birth defects and generalized systemic disease. Syphilis can also be transmitted via contaminated blood, but this is rare since all donated blood is tested for syphilis. The infection is cured with specific antibiotics. **Persons with HIV infection may require repeated treatment to completely cure the infection.**

The risk of serious complications is higher for persons with HIV infection. Syphilis also increases the risk of acquiring other STD's including HIV. The key to preventing serious complications of the infection is early detection and treatment. ***Persons with HIV infection and men who have sex with men should be tested for syphilis at least annually*** regardless of the absence or presence of symptoms. Persons who are sexually active with multiple partners may want to get tested more frequently. More information can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/2010/>

Source: Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, James Chin, MD, MPH, Editor, American Public Health Association, 17th edition, 2000. 2010 Sexually Transmitted Diseases Treatment Guidelines, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

NOTE FROM THE CHAIR



As we emerge on the springtime side of Winter and into 2011, it is worthwhile to take note of our last year. From the shock of the oil spill disaster to the scramble to handle the ADAP crisis, we would find ourselves wishing for a dull moment. Seems like one thing is certain....uncertainty.

In this year we are faced a renewed need for advocates to communicate with national, state, and local government decision makers. The cup is half full. With a large number of new legislators, we have a great opportunity to educate and inform newer lawmakers whose understanding of our issues is in the learning curve. We are needed to help them become more aware of the ongoing need of continued lifesaving HIV/AIDS services and programs. Getting them accurate and well placed visits, calls, letters and e-mail on their website forms help them see the cost effectiveness of continued funding of these vital services.

That said, you've made a good first step. Reading the NOFLAC newsletter (and visiting NoFLACweb.org) helps you stay informed and know where you can match your time, abilities and interests to have a 'positive' effect in this unique time in our struggle. Don't be worried, be informed and empowered for positive living.

Thank you for your continued interest and support!

James Talley chair@noflacweb.org