



PAPATF-PERSPECTIVES e-Perspectives

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Dear Susan,

Welcome to ***e-Perspectives!***

Welcome to the first issue of ***e-Perspectives***, a monthly e-newsletter that highlights current and upcoming Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force events, accomplishments and programs, as well as national and international HIV/AIDS information. Through ***e-Perspectives***, we plan to keep you posted on all that PATF does to improve the health and quality of life for people living with HIV/AIDS in southwestern Pennsylvania. A sincere thank-you for your support and interest in PATF.

NOTE: ***e-Perspectives*** has replaced the quarterly "hard copy" publication, *Perspectives*.

Have questions or comments about ***e-Perspectives?*** Please contact editor Susan Orr at sorr@patf.org or 412-345-0596.

World AIDS Day and PATF's 25th anniversary

PATF plans to commemorate its 25th anniversary on World AIDS Day, Wednesday, Dec. 1, with a tribute luncheon directly following a mayoral press conference at the City-County Building.

The luncheon will take place at the Rivers Club, One Oxford Centre. Highlighted speakers include Dr. Marty St. Clair, one of the researchers who discovered AZT, and Dr. Ron Stall from the University of Pittsburgh.

This will mark the second year that organizations throughout Pittsburgh have joined forces to promote World AIDS Day. More than 30 organizations are expected to participate this year. So far, planned highlights include:

- Free, confidential HIV testing in Allegheny County Health Department vans outside the City-County Building.
- Highmark spire will become red the night of Dec. 1.
- The AIDS Memorial Quilt -- also known as The Names Project -- will be on display in numerous locations throughout Pittsburgh during that week.
- An annual memorial service will take place the evening of Dec. 1 at Heinz Memorial Chapel in Oakland.

--1,000 information cards will be distributed prior to and during that week.

For more information about PATF's 25th anniversary or World AIDS Day, please email sorr@patf.org

Fighting AIDS Inspires The Heart (FAITH)

New program to kick off in October

Since the onset of the HIV/AIDS pandemic nearly 30 years ago, faith has often played a fundamental role in the lives of people with HIV/AIDS and their families. Faith has been an inspiration and source of encouragement, helping people live their lives with dignity, hope and value.

Faith is also why the Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force recently created FAITH (Fighting AIDS Inspires the Heart).

This faith-based initiative's goal is to further PATF's mission by building relationships with the southwestern Pennsylvania ecumenical communities, according to Tony Anderson, project coordinator.

"Our goal is to address stigma, awareness, education and prevention, all while keeping in mind the unique needs of the faith community," Anderson said.

A 12-person advisory board will help guide PATF while focusing on objectives such as:

- Creating an HIV/AIDS 101 curriculum for spiritual leaders and lay persons
- Encouraging and promoting testing
- Planning and promoting awareness and educational events and campaigns
- Implementing prevention and referral services
- Raising awareness to reduce stigma
- Providing technical assistance to faith institutions.

The Oct. 14 kickoff of FAITH will include a 9 a.m. Prayer Breakfast at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. The FAITH breakfast is open to the faith community. Upcoming programs include the second annual FAITH conference on May 12. For information, contact Tony Anderson at 412-345-0585 or aanderson@patf.org

"Shared Memories"

PATF welcomes former staffers to October reunion

For nearly 25 years, PATF staff members have answered a calling to help those living with HIV/AIDS.

In the early days of the virus, when little funding or support of any kind was available, staff members banded together to support their comrades on a shoestring budget (on a good day), but with much volunteer support. Many of the early staffers witnessed HIV/AIDS during a different era, when no medications were yet discovered to help people live longer and better lives.

PATF staff member Alan Jones, who has worked at PATF for nearly 20 years, is coordinating "PATF: Shared Memories," a reunion for all former PATF staff members (circa 1988 to 2000). "Shared Memories," which will help to launch the commemoration of PATF's 25th anniversary, will take place Saturday, Oct. 2, 6-11 p.m., at PATF. Everyone is asked to bring a covered dish. For information, please contact Alan Jones at 412-345-0577 or ajones@patf.org .

PATF Annual Campaign

Still Here. Still Caring. Still Fighting.

PATF is "still here, still caring, still fighting," because there is still a desperate need for HIV/AIDS support and prevention services in our community. With that in mind, 2010 annual campaign chairman and co-founder of PATF, Anthony Silvestre, Ph.D., PATF staff members and its board are looking for your support. To find out how you can help, please visit www.patf.org

Spotlight on...Anthony J. Silvestre, Ph.D.

Anthony J. Silvestre, Ph.D., works at the University of Pittsburgh in the Department of Infectious Diseases & Microbiology. Silvestre also is serving as this year's PATF Annual Campaign Chairman. However, for PATF, Dr. Silvestre's most important role is that of being a co-founder of our organization 25 years ago. This month, we highlight his reflections on the birth of PATF in "Spotlight On..."

News of the first cases of a strange viral disease among gay men was passed over with little notice by nearly everyone in Pittsburgh. Virtually no one imagined that more than 50 million humans would be infected and that millions would die. A few scientists at the University of Pittsburgh knew differently. In 1982, they watched the mystery virus destroy the first Pittsburgher it infected.

A few activists in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) community were also troubled and began raising the alarm. Few heeded it. With little fanfare, the scientists and community activists joined hands to submit a grant to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to begin looking for this virus in Pittsburgh. In 1983, the NIH awarded the grant to create the Pitt Men's Study and the activists became members of its Community Advisory Board (CAB).

Within weeks, Study staff began receiving calls from people affected by the disease. A sister called wanting to know if her brother with this strange illness posed any health threat to her newborn child. A mother called wanting to know how to care for her son who was being released from a hospital. A niece wanted assistance after being fired when her boss found out that her uncle died of this strange new disease.

When the calls became too numerous for staff to handle, the CAB contacted local governmental and private organizations to help. None did. Some did not return calls, one official said the problem wasn't serious enough, and others just did not have the resources.

The CAB decided to form a new organization to care for infected people and to educate the public. They put out a call for a public meeting and more than 40 people showed up. These 40 learned that no one knew the cause of this disease or exactly how it was transmitted. They learned that infected people, their families and caregivers were shunned and discriminated against. They learned that there were no funds, nor the expectation of any funds, from foundations or the government. Nevertheless, the group elected a Board of Directors and formed committees to begin the work.

Without the expectation of public approval or guarantees of personal safety, 40 people stood up and said enough! They began an organization -- the Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force -- which continues to stand up and work to lessen suffering, increase knowledge, and affirm human dignity.

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