

NCAP - Caring for Our Community

Northwestern Connecticut AIDS Project is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to reducing the incidence of HIV transmission in Litchfield County and to assisting county residents affected by HIV in maintaining the highest quality of life possible.

Byline



HIV Testing by Christopher Ashe, Board Member

"Routine HIV tests urged for virtually every American" was the headline on a February 10th Associated Press article that was picked up by many papers across the nation. Since the early days of the epidemic the US government has recommended routine screening only in big cities with high rates of AIDS and even there they only recommend screening for the high risk populations such as gay men or intravenous drug users. This attitude may soon be shifting because of two large federally funded studies which just came out. Both studies reported that the cost of routinely testing all adults would be offset by a reduction in new infections and more effective treatment because of spotting the disease earlier. Nationwide about 40,000 new HIV infections occur each year. Experts estimate that about 950,000 people in the US are currently infected with the virus, but perhaps as many as 280,000 don't know it and are not getting treatment. "If you need proof that the current system is not working, look at all the people who have slipped through the cracks-280,000," said A. David Paltiel, lead author of the study conducted by the Yale School of Medicine's Division of Health Policy.

Here at NCAP we have an active testing program with two HIV Prevention Counselors. Deborah Becking, who is full time, provides testing locally, and James Hutchison, who is part time, tests in the Sharon and Winsted area. NCAP tests about 64 people each quarter. We have several ways of testing. Recently added are the Oraquick® and Oraquick Advanced® methods. One uses samples of oral fluids for the test, and the other a drop of blood. Both methods are commonly called a "rapid" test. "We can get the results from either test in about 20 minutes," says NCAP's Debbie Becking. Both methods are considered highly accurate with an accuracy rate of 99.97%.

The oral testing has the advantage of picking up both HIV I and HIV II, while the blood test is only good for HIV I. HIV II is not yet very prevalent here in the United States, but the risk is growing. The HIV tests do not test for the virus directly; instead, they look for the antibodies to HIV. Antibodies are the product of an immune system response to fight a specific infection. The antibodies for HIV may take up to six months after exposure to be detected in our testing methods.

NCAP has recently expanded its testing hours with walk-in hours on Wednesday afternoons at its office on 100 Migeon Ave., Torrington. The tests will be done on a first come, first serve basis, starting at 1:00 pm, with the last appointment at 5:30 pm. All tests are free and are done on an anonymous or confidential basis. The "rapid" tests are *only* done confidentially due to the need for a confirmatory test if the result is preliminarily positive.

It is obvious from the two recent studies that it makes sense to routinely test everyone for HIV. Currently 37% of those infected are not identified until after symptoms appear. It is estimated that with a policy of annual testing for everyone, that number could be reduced to only 8%. "The cost-benefit to individuals and society is worth widespread screening," said Dr. Lawrence Dayton, Chief of public health in the Department of Veteran's Affairs. He also stated that the VA is going to urge more people to get tested. Until annual testing becomes routine, NCAP will continue with our active program to provide screening for those who are concerned that they may be at risk.

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Focus on New Board Members by Faith Poliquin, Board President

We would like to thank former board members Sally Adams, Sue Fogarty, David Dean, John Weaver, and Lynn Ridgway for their past service on our Board of Directors.

We welcome five new members: Christopher Ashe, Bonny Ashe, Kathy Bentley, Gary Mercier, and Maureen Palmer. We will be introducing each new member in upcoming issues of *AIDScope*. Each brings his or her own unique experience and talents to the board.

Two new members of the NCAP board are husband and wife, Christopher and Bonny Ashe. Both bring a lifetime of experience and enthusiasm to the board.

Chris Ashe has been a resident of Connecticut since he was five years old, having been born in Ohio. He grew up in Weston, but at nineteen moved to Washington, Connecticut, and later to the greater Torrington area. He has spent twenty years in the real estate field and now runs a school for real estate agents and does consultant work in the field. He is also a co-founder of a newly established congregation, the Unity in the Foothills Church on Daycoeton Place in Torrington. His wife Bonny encouraged him to volunteer for NCAP. Not only did he volunteer, he also recently became one of several new board members. Chris brings his expertise in real estate and small business management to the board, along with many years experience volunteering for non-profit organizations, mostly in the field of entertainment.

Bonny Ashe moved extensively as a child and also during her first marriage to a military man. She started out in the restaurant business, and then moved to the data processing profession, becoming a computer program trainer. In 1995, she moved into her third career, completing ministerial school, and later becoming a member of the first graduating class of the Unity Minister's Executive Institute. During her preparation for the ministry, one of her classmates contracted AIDS. She and several other classmates helped to care for his physical and spiritual needs throughout the months before he died. This experience emotionally tied her to the AIDS cause. She also became involved in an AIDS fundraiser called the Night of a Thousand Stars in Omaha, Nebraska, because the church she was affiliated with welcomed a large gay population to worship in its congregation when other establishments were turning it away. In 1997, Bonny accepted a calling to a Norwalk church, and in 2000, she moved to the Torrington area where she, along with her husband Chris, co-founded the Unity in the Foothills congregation in Torrington. Soon after that, she became a NCAP volunteer and then a recent board member.

Both Chris and Bonny bring a myriad of talents and experiences to the NCAP board along with an abundance of commitment to help HIV/AIDS clients and to educate the general public about AIDS.

AIDS Life Campaign



AIDS AWARENESS DAY AT THE CAPITOL

**Wednesday, April 20, 2005
10am - 3pm**

State Capitol in Hartford

Rally

Press Conference

Visits with your State Senators and Representatives

It's time for you to help raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in Connecticut while telling legislators to raise funding for HIV/AIDS prevention and education and HIV/AIDS housing! In 2003 Connecticut had the **fastest growing rate of AIDS in New England** and ranks 8th in the nation in AIDS cases. ***AIDS is still a crisis in Connecticut.***

For more information or to sign on as a co-sponsor, please contact:

Alycia Santilli

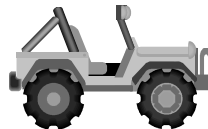
Connecticut AIDS Residence Coalition

860.231.8212

alyciasantilli@ctaidshousing.org

Sponsored by AIDS LIFE Campaign

Please wear red for the day so legislators can see how many of us care about HIV/AIDS in Connecticut.



**Northwestern Connecticut
AIDS Project**

2005 JEEP Show

Sponsored by Northwest Hills Dealership

Sunday May 22, 2005

11am - 4pm

Northwestern Region #7 High School, Winsted

Whether it's a classic, customized or just your special JEEP, join us at the 1st Annual JEEP Show in northwest CT.

This is your chance to show off your JEEP, connect with other JEEP enthusiasts, and even take a chance on winning a new 2005 JEEP Wrangler Rubicon.

We are actively seeking vendors and entrants for the show. Please call Debi at 860.482-1596 for more information on showing off your JEEP or being a vendor.

All proceeds from the JEEP Show go to benefit the Northwestern CT AIDS Project.

From the desk of.....

Debi Thibeault, Executive Director



I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and I am sure many of you, like me, are looking forward to birds chirping and flowers blossoming.

I would like to send a special thanks - again - to all who helped out with World AIDS Day and the 2nd Annual Silver Sleigh Ball.

We have many exciting things to look forward to and could use your support:

JEEP, JEEP, JEEP.....

We will be having a JEEP Show on May 22 from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Northwestern Region #7 High School. Whether you have a JEEP or not, you will be sure to have a good time...JEEPS and food and other vendors. Our primary sponsor for the event is Northwest Hills Jeep Dealership.

AND... we will be selling Raffle Tickets for a Brand New JEEP Wrangler Rubicon.

We have started planning for our annual Tea for 200. The Tea will be held on Saturday, July 23rd.

We have new support groups starting: an evening Open Support Group in New Milford; an evening Open Support Group in Torrington (both of which I will be facilitating); a Women's Support Group in Torrington (facilitated by Liz Davis); and a Gay Men's Support Group in Torrington (facilitated by former NCAP Case Manager Gerry Gardiner).

Counseling and testing will be available at NCAP on Wednesdays from 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

The AIDS Life Campaign at the Capitol will be held on April 20, 2005 where you can address legislators about issues including funding, housing, prevention and education.

We will be at HEALTHWISE 2005, a Health Fair sponsored by Noble Horizons and Sharon Hospital on Sunday, March 20, 2005 at Housatonic Valley Regional High School.

We will be at the Northwest Chamber of Commerce Spring Home and Business Expo on April 1 and April 2 at the Torrington Armory. This is when the JEEP Raffle ticket sales will begin.

And... the list goes on but I am almost out of room.

I hope to see you at any or all of the above events. If you are interested in volunteering, we could definitely use your help, so please give us call.

Peace and Blessings

A Special Thanks to Special People

We would like to thank all those who volunteered their time to make this year's **World AIDS Day Memorial Service** so special - first, the Trinity Episcopal Church for the use of their beautiful church and their community room; Joseph Firecrow, Tommy Hansen & Standin' Ground for their music; our fact presenters Julia Jacobs, Samantha Bate, Jessica Williams, Sarah Corey, & Lacy Ann LaMer; moderator Bonny Ashe; and all our volunteers and board members for their hard work - Faith Poliquin, Les Williams, Jane Van Nostrand, Denise Bate, Ellen Hoover, Roger Wilcox, Julie Griswold, Suzanne Risley, Matthew Williams, Chris Williams, & Becky Williams.

Thank you to our **2nd Annual Silver Sleigh Ball** committee. Volunteers Janet Jacklin, Carol Pathe, Connie Mahan, and board members Faith Poliquin & Richard Glavin, M.D. hard work and dedication to the ball made it another success this year. And a special thank you to the ball's Honorary Chairpersons Sharon Dante and Robert Rovezzi for their contributions to the event, and to First National Bank of Litchfield for underwriting it.

The holidays this year were made special for our clients and their families due to the contributions of so many generous Litchfield County residents. Thank you to the people of Torrington for their generosity at our Stop & Shop food drive for the client's Thanksgiving dinner, and to our New Milford Teen AIDS Awareness Group for making a wonderful Thanksgiving basket for an area family living with HIV/AIDS.

Thanks to the Center Congregational Church of Torrington and its congregation for their wonderful contribution of Christmas gifts and toys for clients children, and to Sandy Behan and the Women of Canterbury for their generosity in donating Stop & Shop gift cards to our clients for the holidays.

Client's pets weren't forgotten either due to the generous work of Community Systems Inc. in collecting pet food for NCAP's Pet Program.

We'd also like to thank all the people who so generously responded to our November **AIDScope** wish list.

Last, thank you to all the board members and volunteers named and unnamed whose contributions of time allow us to accomplish our program goals and continue our mission in Litchfield County.

AIDScope is published quarterly (February, May, August, and November) by Northwestern Connecticut AIDS Project (NCAP), 100 Migeon Avenue, Torrington, CT 06790.
Editor: Debi Thibeault, Graphic Design: Joyce Luddy,
Contributing Writers: Christopher Ashe, Bonnie Ashe, Faith Poliquin, Proofreader: Denise Bate



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February 2005 Newsletter

Volunteer a Volunteer!

- ◆ Know someone who would make a great volunteer?
- ◆ Have a family member or friend who is always talking about joining a volunteer program but just hasn't picked up the phone to make that call?

Give us a call, give us their name and number, and we'll contact them!

The volunteer roster has gone through some change here at NCAP this year. Some volunteers have had to say farewell, and others have changed their roles to board members.

Volunteers play a critical role in helping us achieve our mission of preventing the further spread of HIV in Litchfield County while assisting those living with HIV disease in maintaining the highest quality of life possible.

Our "busy" season is coming up and we're going to need more volunteer help in the coming months. We've got our annual appeal letter, a brand new fundraiser in the spring with our JEEP Show, a Jeep Raffle, the annual Tea for 200, and we're planning on expanding the number of our community outreach booths. We'll also need help with planning the CT AIDS Bike Tour, and we can always use assistance in the office with bulk mailings and keeping the place clean. So if you know that perfect volunteer, give Joyce a call at 860 482-1596 and volunteer them (even if it's yourself!)

Our annual **Appeal Letter** will be in the mail soon. Your support has allowed us to continue our mission and expand our services.

We sincerely appreciate your past generosity and ask that once again you will make that important decision to help us continue to reach out to all the county residents afflicted by HIV/AIDS.

Every donation, large or small, helps in the fight to reduce the spread of this worldwide pandemic.

Debi Thibeault, Exec. Director & friend Michael Gurecka



Jamel Bonello, Support Group Facilitator & Liz Davis, Case Manager



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Connie Mahan, Carol Pathe & Janet Jacklin
Volunteers, Silver Sleigh Ball Committee



Alissa Hyres, NCAP
HIV Educator



Michelle Cossette, Education
Coordinator & Chris Ciampi