

# **POSITIVE VOICES-FEBRUARY 2010**

Your Newsletter by Positive People for Positive People

## **FROM THE MEDICAL ADVOCATE**

### **Staying Fit During the Winter and Year-Round**

Physical exercise doesn't just give your heart a workout; it also produces a cascade of chemical changes in your body that benefits your whole health. Exercise can help regulate blood sugar and reduce blood vessel inflammation. In HIV-negative people, it is well-known that regular exercise increases HDL (good cholesterol) levels. In a couple of small studies in people with HIV, regular exercise also decreased triglyceride (blood fat) levels to a modest degree.

There are two types of exercise: aerobic (think jogging) and resistance (think weight training). Both can help improve heart health and keep you fit into older age. Not only do aerobic and resistance exercises burn excess calories, but they also improve the way your body metabolizes food and processes cholesterol and blood sugar. Exercise also affects your mood. One study comparing a popular antidepressant drug to an exercise program found them equally effective at alleviating depression. At minimum, for heart health, the American Heart Association recommends 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most days of the week. And this type of exercise doesn't require a gym membership—simply take a brisk walk and keep up your heart rate for at least half an hour. Doing some sort of weight-bearing exercise two days a week is also recommended.

Examples of moderate-intensity activities include taking basic dance classes, actively playing with children, playing golf and walking the course, raking leaves, walking at a brisk pace or jogging/walking combinations. In winter months, you can still get your exercise in by walking in place, walking up and down stairs, or following along to a workout video in the comfort of your living room.

Examples of vigorous-intensity activities include jogging or running, swimming laps, playing tennis or bicycling at more than 10 miles per hour. Weight-bearing activities can include doing push-ups and lifting weights. Progressive resistance exercise (PRE), including weight and strength training, leads to healthy gains in weight and leg and arm size in people living with HIV. Improvements in heart rate, strength and psychological well-being were also seen among people who engaged in regular PRE.

Studies have also shown that exercise can help manage symptoms of metabolic syndrome, which increases a person's risk for heart disease and diabetes. It can also lead to improved circulation and nervous-system function in people living with HIV. Even small amounts of routine exercise, such as taking a walk every day, can increase blood flow to the brain to keep us mentally sharp as we age.

Here are some tips to help you get started and stay motivated:

- Tell your doctor (or your hot new personal trainer) that you are planning to start exercising. They can help assess how fit you are and what exercises will benefit you most.
- Work in increments, a step at a time, depending on your initial fitness level.
- Be specific. First, focus on one health goal—for example, improving your cardiovascular health by lowering blood pressure. Start with walking or biking at a nice steady pace, for 15 minutes three times a week. In two weeks, if you're doing well, raise the duration gradually, to 30 minutes.
- Pick the right moves. If you want to address lipodystrophy, strength training is a good choice. It adds muscle throughout the body, balancing—and drawing attention from—wasted limbs or a protruding belly. And extra muscle can protect your body when you get ill by substituting for essential fat lost to lipoatrophy.
- Make it routine. It's like taking your meds: Set a regular, convenient exercise time and stick to it.
- Do what you love. There's no one perfect workout. If you enjoy an activity—say, ice-skating—you can build a fitness regimen out of it. If you love it, you're more likely to stick with it.
- Remember “the three Ps” for safe, successful workouts: Proper form (do the exercise correctly), proper clothing (wear stuff you can move in and supportive, comfortable shoes) and proper nutrition (smaller, more frequent meals and eight daily glasses of H<sub>2</sub>O).

Keep in mind that some gyms, health insurance plans and AIDS service organizations offer fitness discounts to people living with HIV.

Want to avoid getting a cold? Just exercise! People who exercise at least 45 minutes four or more days each week take off 25 to 50 percent less sick time from work, according to a study by the American College of Sports Medicine. But if you're already sick, don't risk worsening your condition by forcing yourself to exercise. Follow these guidelines for a healthy workout when you're under the weather:

- Exercise only if your head cold hasn't reached your chest.
- Choose walking instead of running. Research shows that moderate exercise doesn't worsen colds.
- Stay in bed if you experience anything beyond mild cold symptoms, such as severe aches and pains and fever.
- Rest is best when you are recovering from anything other than a mild illness. Opt for time off before you start workouts again.
- Participating in moderate levels of physical activity before you get your flu shot improves your immunity in the future.

So, keep up the good work if you are already exercising, and if you haven't started yet, get a jump start now so you're ready to enjoy the great outdoors when it gets warmer!

## **BECOME A TRAINED OVERDOSE RESPONDER**

While heroin is the most popular opioid among STAP's syringe exchange clients, more and more people are using and abusing prescription opioids like Percocet, Vicodin, OxyContin, Roxicodone, Opana, and Dilauded. However, these painkillers aren't always bought on the street or injected into the body by injection drug users - doctors prescribe them all the time for temporary and chronic pain. It is more than likely that you or someone you know has taken or is taking an opioid. Did you know that between 1999 and 2006, prescription opioid painkillers were involved in 13,800 deaths in the United States? That's more than triple what it was in 1999. In 2006 alone, opioid pain medications were involved in 40% of all poisoning deaths. After a lot of hard work and a bit of time, STAP received approval from the New York State Department of Health to provide training and overdose prevention kits to people through the Opioid Overdose Prevention Program (OOPP). Each Trained Overdose Responder (TOR) is trained to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose with rescue breathing and Narcan, a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose. The goal of the OOPP is to prevent more of these opioid related deaths. Anyone who is interested in becoming a Trained Overdose Responder is invited to attend a brief training session with one of STAP's Harm Reduction Educators and meet with the Clinical Director to receive the OOPP kit. If you have any questions about this exciting new program or want more information, please call Lillian Fan, Harm Reduction Educator and OOPP Coordinator, at 607-272-4098 or you can e-mail her at [lfan@stapinc.org](mailto:lfan@stapinc.org). Lillian Fan/SEP Assistant/Southern Tier AIDS Program/501 S. Meadow St., Suite B./Ithaca, NY 14850/Phone: (607) 272-4098 ext. 309/Fax: (607) 272-0079

## **SPECIALTY WOMEN'S APPAREL SHOP CATERS TO TRANSGENDERED COMMUNITY**

The Frock Spot is a formal/bridal wear store designed to meet the needs of everyone in need of girls/women's apparel. The store carries used and new blouses, skirts, dresses suitable for cruises or special events like proms, parties, and weddings. Accessories include shoes, evening bags, hats, hand blown glass pendants, and trinket boxes. I attempt to carry all sizes, from infant to plus. The store is open to the public most Saturday afternoons, 12:30-4pm. On other evenings I am happy to schedule appointments for private and comfortable shopping. I would like to provide this service to the transgender community and am committed to positive shopping experiences for all. I am also attempting to stock larger size shoes.

The mission of The Frock Spot is to provide a fun, leisurely shopping experience where the shopper feels beautiful and spends a fraction of what they would spend at a boutique or department store. If I can provide any other information, please give me a call! The Frock Spot/6 Whig Street/Newark Valley, NY/13811/427-4430/Sue Connelly

## **ALBANY AIDS AWARENESS DAY 2010**

Save the Date!!!..Be an AIDS Services Advocate!! Join the New York AIDS Coalition on February 23<sup>rd</sup> for the Albany AIDS Awareness Day 2010. Represent your District and make your voices heard with hundreds of people living with HIV/AIDS, AIDS activists and community organizers. Convince your State Legislators to continue and INCREASE support for HIV/AIDS related services. There will be two preparation meetings in Binghamton before the Albany event. They will be held before the Friends Dinner at Trinity Memorial Church, entrance on the Oak side. The cross street is Main. The first meeting will be held by STAP and the Network on February 2 and the other on February 16<sup>th</sup>. The meetings are on a Tuesday and will be held from 4:30 - 5:15 PM in the left corner of the dining area. All are welcome to stay for the Friends Dinner.

On February 2nd, there will be a discussion in detail about the event, what is expected to occur that day and there will be a short role playing session to make people who are interested in participating and have not been before, comfortable with the talks. On February 16th, the meeting will be about last minute questions, transportation information and a final count of those participating. Also, for those that cannot attend the event. There are other ways you can show your support. Writing a letter to your District Legislators is a good way to express your feeling about the risk of losing HIV/AIDS related services due to pending budget cuts and how that will affect your quality of life. Also, you can just share your life experience with HIV/AIDS as another way of participating. Robin, the Medical Advocate, will be the point person for this event and you can contact her if you would like to write of support if you cannot attend the Albany AIDS Awareness Day 2010.

Transportation is being arranged through the HIV Network out of Syracuse and potentially locally in the Southern Tier. There will be medical attention available at the event. Since it is a long day, approximately from 7AM - 6PM, make sure that you take your medications that you need with you. Please call Robin at STAP for transportation assistance and other information about the event. The number is 607-206-3418. Anyone from the Southern Tier who is interested outside of Binghamton, please also call Robin to see if any transportation arrangements can be made.

## **EVERYONE IS INVITED TO SAY FAREWELL TO DR. BARBARA CHAFEE**

Dr. Barbara Chaffee of Binghamton Family Care Center is officially retiring. Dr. Chaffee has been the lead Physician in the fight against HIV/AIDS locally since her early days working with the Department of Health HIV services. Then she moved to open the only dedicated HIV/AIDS medical service in the Binghamton area. Providers and clients are welcome to bid her farewell at a Retirement Party on March 12 in the Russell Room at Binghamton General Hospital from 3PM - 11PM at her official Retirement Send-off. All are welcome to attend. More information to follow in *Positive Voices* next month.

## **FROM THE CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)**

### **HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT ABOUT POOR HEALTHCARE OR SERVICE**

(Compiled and Distributed by the Consumer Advisory Committee)

This document was prepared for distribution to STAP clients and case managers in order to assist people who have experienced poor healthcare or service and want to file a complaint about it. This comes about from an experience a CAC member had during a healthcare visit and the difficulties they encountered voicing their concerns and finding resolution. This is a sample of the questions you should be asking yourself when thinking of filing a complaint and what content should go into your complaint letter if needed.

#### **BEFORE YOU COMPLAIN**

Be clear in your mind why you are dissatisfied. Was it the way you were treated? Long waiting time for care, a wrong decision, poor service by a healthcare professional or staff, what actually went wrong?

#### **BE CLEAR IN YOUR OWN MIND WHAT YOU WANT TO HAPPEN AS A RESULT OF MAKING A COMPLAINT!**

Do you want an apology, do you want a different opinion, do you want the proper care and attention that should have been provided in the first place, do you want to be notified of any corrective action concerning service or care issues?

#### **WHO TO COMPLAIN TO**

This will be different depending on the facility, care center or service organization that you are complaining to. The following three steps are guidelines you can use when addressing your complaint in the initial stages or when compiling your complaint. Depending on your comfort level of speaking directly with the parties involved, you might choose to skip steps one and two and proceed with step three.

1. You should attempt to resolve your complaint directly involved with the parties involved.
2. You should contact the relevant senior management or patient advocate. It may be necessary to communicate with them several times before taking the next step. Most good hospitals and care facilities will have charge nurses or department managers that have internal complaint procedures and complaints are often resolved using these. However, sometimes they aren't and that is when you should use the third step.
3. You should contact the Patient Services Director or the Patient Advocate by written letter who will be able to start an internal investigation into your concerns. Your letter will be distributed to all departments that are mentioned in your letter for their response back to the Director or Patient Advocate. Usually, they are given two weeks to respond. Then the information is collected from all areas by the person you addressed your concerns to and a decision is made either by that person or it goes to a medical or service review board that is made up of employees, healthcare professionals and senior management.

Once a decision is made about your complaint, you should receive a letter back from the facility advising you of the outcome of their investigation. They will not tell you if any disciplinary action has taken place and to whom that might have occurred to. If practices or procedures were found to be at fault, they might let you know what steps they have taken concerning your experience. Save the letter and put with your copy of your complaint letter for future use should an occasion arrive that you need them.

### WHAT INFORMATION YOU NEED TO INCLUDE IN YOUR COMPLAINT LETTER

1. Keep a record of events. If you speak to someone on the phone, make a note of who you speak to, the date/time and what was said. If you use an email, retain a copy.
2. Keep the evidence or discharge paper or test results. Retain all information, letters, emails and service paperwork that you might have used or received. Remember the date of the incident, what time it occurred, the name of the person(s) involved. If there is one, use your medical record number and ID number if in an ER or outpatient setting. Try to be as accurate as possible and state the facts in the order that they occurred. Try to keep the tone of the letter as calm as you can, even though the experience was emotional for you. Avoid writing an angry or threatening letter, as this will usually put the other party on the defensive. Remember that the person who you are writing to was not responsible for your negative experience.

### SAMPLE COMPLAINT LETTER CONTENTS

1. In the letter make sure that you include in the beginning the date you wrote the letter, the name of the person you are writing to, their title in the organization, the name of the organization, the street address and zip code. Leave a few spaces under the end of that section and put your name and medical record or ID number if you have one. Then start the letter out by addressing it to the person ( Dear.....).
2. Start out with the date of the incident and start to outline your experience. Next, let them know that this medical care or service was disappointing to you and how it made you feel.
3. Next, let them know how you think they could resolve the problem to your satisfaction. Outline the copies of the documents that you are including and what they pertain to. Never send originals. End the letter with a statement that says that you are looking forward to their reply and a resolution to your problem. Leave a space at the end of the letter and type in Sincerely, leave three spaces and write in your full name as it is listed on your medical documents.

Underneath your name, write your full address, city/state and zip code. Then if you are agreeable to being contacted, write in your local contact number. Your letter should be addressed to the Director of Patient Services or the Patient Advocate, depending on the facility you are addressing. You should make a copy for your files and send your letter by certified mail, if possible, so you have a receipt that your letter was sent and you can track to see when it was received.

It is good to work on this process with a friend, partner, your case manager so that they can be a back up to review your documentation and see that you have addressed all the necessary points.

You can also contact the Consumer Advisory Committee and a member will be assigned to work with you on the entire process. They can be contacted by calling STAP and they will forward the message to a committee member.

Correcting inappropriate or negative experiences are self empowering and also help other clients who find themselves in similar situations. If your complaint is taken seriously and resolved, then you have done an admirable deed.

## **WOMEN AND HIV: PART ONE**

Liz Highleyman/POZ.COM

Between the job, the kids and the partner, you have plenty on your plate. But when you're living with HIV, your body needs extra TLC. From keeping your CD4s up to protecting your heart, here's how to stay healthy for the long haul.

It's hard to believe today. But in the beginning, experts thought that HIV affected gay men exclusively. Between its short-lived first name, gay-related immune deficiency (GRID), the high-profile disclosures and activism of gay men and the blatant homophobia of key policy makers, many Americans continued to think they were immune to HIV well into the epidemic.

Today, women make up half of the AIDS cases worldwide and 26% in the United States. Heterosexual intercourse is the source of 80% of new HIV diagnoses among American women. Women of color are at the eye of the storm, with African-American women accounting for 61% of new cases and Latinas for 16%.

Fortunately, various studies have increased our knowledge about how HIV specifically impacts women, with new trials getting underway to explore the effects of treatment on the female body. For example, last September, Tibotec Therapeutics initiated the Gender Race and Clinical Experience (GRACE) study, to date the largest clinical trial comparing how men and women respond to an HIV drug. About 70% of GRACE participants will be female.

Doctors, who once used a one-size-fits-all treatment approach, now address female HIV patients' distinct needs. And positive women are being reminded that wellness doesn't stop at suppressing the virus. "As HIV treatment has improved, HIV positive women have undergone a transition," says Vicki Cargill-Swiren, MD, director of minority research and clinical studies at the National Institutes of Health's Office of AIDS Research. "The question is no longer 'How can I survive HIV?' It's 'How can I live with it?'"

This *POZ Focus* will show you how to maintain your overall health throughout the different stages of your life. Since a woman's work is never done, you'll also learn how to protect your partner and unborn children. You've got a full life to live. It's time to treat your body accordingly.

## Sexual Matters

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), it's harder for a woman to transmit HIV to a man than the other way around. But even if your negative partner wants to skip latex condoms (or dental dams), use them. Although the chances are slimmer, you can still infect your partner with the virus. And having HIV doesn't make you immune to other STDs, such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes and syphilis—infections that dramatically increase the odds of acquiring or spreading HIV. If you're taking birth control pills and HIV drugs simultaneously you should still use condoms for extra pregnancy prevention. According to Rodney L. Wright, MD, director of HIV programs at New York City's Montefiore Medical Center, HIV drugs can impact how well the pill works. "There are many possible interactions between birth control pills and antiretroviral drugs," he explains. "It's very difficult to predict how they'll respond in the presence of one another. Patients should discuss possible interactions with their health care providers."

## Baby Talk

If you're trying to get pregnant or there's a chance you might try in the future, talk to your doctor about treatment options. With the right meds for you and your baby, there's less than a 2% chance that you'll transmit HIV to your son or daughter. And if you have a low viral load, you may be able to deliver vaginally.

Before you start trying to get pregnant, ask your doctor if any of the HIV drugs in your HAART (highly active antiretroviral therapy) cocktail can cause birth defects. You and your partner should also consult your doctor about the safest way to conceive your baby.

## Gender Differences

Early studies seemed to indicate that HIV disease progressed more rapidly in women than in men. But further research revealed that women were getting sick more quickly because they were often diagnosed later than men and received medical care only when their immune systems were severely damaged. "Women still walk into the hospital with extremely low CD4 counts," says Dr. Cargill-Swiren. "Many have sought care for repeated [gynecological problems], but the doctor didn't bother to test them for HIV. And women are often caregivers. They're so busy taking care of others that they put off their own health care until they get so ill that everything comes to a stop." When you're not diagnosed with or treated for HIV early enough, you're at high risk for opportunistic illnesses (OIs), potentially serious conditions that healthy immune systems keep at bay. Most OIs occur at the same rate in women and men, but there are a few differences.

Women are much less likely to get Kaposi's sarcoma, a form of cancer. And while most HIV positive men carry cytomegalovirus (CMV)—a form of herpes that can cause blindness if the immune system becomes too weak—CMV is less common in women. Keep this in mind should you ever need a blood transfusion. Blood banks don't test most donations for CMV. If you're CMV negative, your doctor needs to find a blood source that is as well.



## KAREN'S PHARMACY CORNER FROM THE MEDICINE SHOPPE

This month I decided to feature a relatively new addition to our arsenal of medications to treat HIV. The drug I selected is called Intelence and it is in the class of medications we know as NNRTI's or Non-Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitor's. This is a fancy way of saying that Intelence blocks an enzyme that HIV needs in order to make more virus. However, that being said, Intelence alone will not control the infection and must be taken in conjunction with other HIV meds. Intelence comes in a 100mg tablet and the normal dosage is 2 tablets taken twice daily after a meal. Taking it immediately after a meal is very important because on an empty stomach studies have shown that your body absorbs 50% less medication! Intelence has a nice feature for those people that have trouble swallowing pills. If you are unable to swallow, the tablet can be put in to a glass of water and it will dissolve quickly. The water must then be consumed right away. The glass should be rinsed, and that should be consumed as well. Because the tablet is made this way, it is important that you keep it in the original bottle that you get it in from the pharmacy. I know I have recommended using pill boxes in the past, but this is the one pill that you want to keep separate, because when it is exposed to moisture it will begin to get mushy and disintegrate.

The most common side effects with Intelence are rash, peripheral neuropathy, (which is numbness or pain in your hands or feet. People often describe it as a burning or tingling sensation) elevated liver enzymes, elevated cholesterol, elevated triglycerides, and high blood sugar. Many of these side effects can be treated with other medications, but the rash can actually be life threatening in some cases. If you develop a rash shortly after starting this, or any new medication, alert your physician right away! Only they can examine you and determine if the medication needs to be discontinued.

Intelence has an almost endless list of medications that it interacts with, due to the way your body metabolizes the drug. The list is too extensive to list for this article, but I will say that there are medications it is contraindicated with (meaning you should absolutely not take them together), there are medications that it would be better to avoid or use an alternative, *if possible*, and then there are medications that we can still use, but would want to monitor or possibly modify the dose, because Intelence may make these other medications more or less powerful. Having all your prescriptions filled at one pharmacy can help us as health professionals to monitor *all* your prescriptions and alert your doctor if necessary. Always feel free to ask your pharmacist about medications you had filled at another pharmacy, or over-the-counter drugs (that you buy without a prescription) and find out if they can be taken safely with this medication, or any others that you are taking. If we don't know the answer, we have the information at our fingertips and can check it out for you. See you next month!

## **ON-GOING MEETINGS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

### **JOIN CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE [CAC] MEETINGS**

The STAP Consumer Advisory Committee is a committee facilitated by and made up of consumers (STAP clients) who welcome other consumers and their significant others, caretakers and family members to join them on the second Tuesday of each month. This collaborative effort provides a confidential space for clients to make recommendations regarding STAP client services and other programs in a non-judgmental environment.

The meetings are held following the Friends Dinner at 6:15 at Trinity Memorial Church (on the corner of Main & Oak Streets) in downtown Binghamton. Call 1-800-333-0892 for directions or more details. If you cannot attend these meetings, mail your opinions or suggestions to STAP, 122 Baldwin Street, Johnson City, 13790, Attention CAC. CAC is encouraging consumers in other counties to organize monthly meetings in their area. Contact your case manager or Brian Wieder at 607-724-1272 to discuss developing CAC in your community.

### **THE DRAGON SLAYERS**

Hepatitis C and Co-Infection Support Group. Meetings at 6:00 - 7:00PM on alternate Tuesdays at Trinity M, 44 Main Street, Oak Street Entrance in Binghamton. For information, call (607) 798-1706.

### **FRIENDS DINNER**

Friends meet every Tuesday evening for a time of fellowship and good food. Join us at Trinity Memorial Church (on the corner of Main & Oak Streets) in downtown Binghamton. Doors open at 5PM and dinner is served between 5:30 & 5:45. No charge, just come with a smile and a friendly attitude - ready to meet and greet friends and have a hearty meal.

Parking is available on Oak Street behind the Church Annex. Use the Oak Street entrance for the cafeteria. Free bus passes are available for STAP clients! Call your case manager for details. Bus passes available for transportation to/from the Friends Dinner only. For more information call Bill at 607-724-0103.

### **FREE ANONYMOUS RAPID HIV TESTING**

Walk-in Anonymous testing every Monday from 1:00 - 4:30PM and Thursday from 1:00 - 3:00PM at STAP's office, 122 Baldwin Street, Johnson City, NY.

For information and other testing times available through the month, please call (607) 798-1706. Confidential Rapid Testing is also available Friday 9AM- Noon & by Appointment.

## ONEONTA SOCIAL GROUP

Oneonta Social Group every Saturday at the First Methodist Church, 66 Chestnut Street in the Dolly Room from 12:30PM-1:30PM. HIV/AIDS and affected welcome - Brunch is between 11:30-1PM. This is not an official STAP Group.

## ASK THE MEDICAL ADVOCATE

Have general questions or concerns regarding HIV?  
Want to better manage side effects of your HIV medications?  
Concerned about interactions between your HIV meds and other meds that you take?  
Want to better understand the results of your blood work or other lab tests?  
Concerned about HIV exposure risks to your negative partner?  
Interested in alternative or complementary therapies for HIV?

STAP's Medical Advocate, James Elrod, is available to answer your questions—by phone, email, or in person—you choose! It's a great way to get a direct, individualized answer to your questions. Contact James at (607) 426-9445, or by email: [jelrod@stapinc.org](mailto:jelrod@stapinc.org)

## HOPE DISPENSARY OF THE SOUTHERN TIER

The Hope Dispensary of the Southern Tier, a service provided by Lourdes Hospital, is a new program designed to provide medications to those that are uninsured or underinsured and have a limited income. Here is how you qualify:

1. You must have no prescription coverage
2. Have a photo ID or Social Security Card
3. Bring one of any of the following as proof of income: Pay Stubs or Bank Statement, SSI/SSD paperwork or Unemployment or Pink Slip form from employer.
4. Bring proof of residency - one piece of mail with your name and address, such as a phone bill, NYSEG bill or cable bill.
5. Bring the prescription with you

If you need assistance with providing this information to determine eligibility, they have an onsite Social Worker who can help you with the process. There is a monthly income level that you cannot exceed. The information is listed on the next page.

### Family Size and Monthly Income

1 = \$1,805	2 = \$2,428
3 = \$3,052	4 = \$3,675
5 = \$4,298	6 = \$4,922
7 = \$5,545	8 = \$6,168

The Hope Dispensary will verify your information onsite and the Social Worker that is present each day they are open will also provide screenings for financial assistance to access 50% discounted up to possibly free healthcare in the Lourdes network. This is great information!!!

Hope Dispensary does not carry all medications. They do cover HIV medication as well as antidepressants. They do not carry any controlled substances or birth control. If they do not have the medication that you need, they have programs developed so that you might qualify for free medication directly from the pharmaceutical corporations. They use medication samples and generic medications. They are located at 477 State Street in Binghamton and their number is 607-584-9376. They are open Monday through Friday from 10AM - 6PM.

### **New LGBT Information Site Launched**

[www.asaging.org/larc](http://www.asaging.org/larc)

The American Society on Aging has created a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Aging Resources Clearinghouse that holds information related to and resources for people aged 50 and older. The site's searchable resources span several categories: education and training; health and mental health; housing and support services; populations and communities; and public policy, advocacy, and legal issues. Also available are annotated listings for service providers, community and professional organizations, information sites, reports and articles, and links for ordering DVDs, books, and other useful products.

### **FREE CELL PHONES**

There is a government sponsored program available that can provide you with a free cell phone and 68 free minutes per month. Eligibility is based on your participation in one of several State or government programs like PUBLIC HOUSING, FOOD STAMPS, MEDICAID and more. There is also a limit to the amount of income you receive each month. This program is called LifeLine Assistance and you can find out about it through safelink.com or calling 1-800-378-1684. If you need help with the application process, please call your STAP case manager for assistance.

### **FREE TAX PREPARATION SERVICES**

Cynthia is able to do taxes for clients again this year. I am hoping that if I let you know now more will take advantage of it... She says it is easier this year with her new program they loaded on her computer and that more clients can be served this year for free...yes, for free. I am currently checking to see if she is able to do tax preparation outside of Broome County and will let you know in the next Positive Voices. Please contact me at the information below if you would like to be scheduled for Cynthia's free tax preparation services. Candace Phelan/Volunteer Coordinator/Southern Tier AIDS Program/Phone: 607.798.1706 ext. 225/[www.stapinc.org](http://www.stapinc.org)