

# POSITIVE VOICES - December 2012

Your Newsletter by Positive People for Positive People

## The Importance of Support and Socializing

Socializing and support. They go hand and hand. Humans are social creatures. Most have an inherent need to socialize at different levels. Socializing has been proven that it actually scientifically makes us feel good. It actually releases a hormone called oxytocin. Oxytocin helps decrease our anxiety levels & calms nervous system. Support falls right in line with this, because in seeking support, we end up socializing. It, also, feels good to know that we are doing something for ourselves. It's a confidence booster and can increase our self-esteem. It gives us positive energy and helps us cope better with problems in our lives.

As a person living with HIV, it really is important to seek out support and to socialize. Many cannot talk about the everyday issues we have with living with HIV with others. Sometimes the side effects of our medications can get us down or we don't understand them. Sometimes it's difficult to live with the side effects of our meds. The psychological aspect of living with an HIV diagnosis can be rough as well. Often times we have to deal with stigma. What's worse is often we live with self-stigma. I call it self-stigma, not sure if it's really a term, but here's my theory about it. Many have lived in the times when stigma was very harsh. Seeing how others were treated, or even having to deal with harsh treatment themselves because of stigma, sometimes we are harder on ourselves than what we have to be. We self-stigmatize ourselves as we live in fear of discovery. Although, undoubtedly there is still stigma, it isn't as bad as it used to be. Yet, having to deal with disclosure to others can be traumatizing and scary. On top of this, often times those who are negative, but have been a great source of support, just don't want to talk about HIV. It serves as a constant reminder that their loved one do have an illness and that illness may one day take us from them. Sometimes, you can see it while talking to them. You can see the sadness, concern, and sometimes irritation. It can make us clam up and internalize our problems. Living with HIV isn't really easy and finding support and socialization is necessary for us to function well.

Every Tuesday, we meet for support group and then the Friend's Dinner. In one night you can find the socialization and support! I can't tell you how often I hear in support group, "Can I take a minute? I need to talk about something please. It's been a bad week." It's a wonderful place to vent to understanding people whom have either gone through the same thing or is going through it as you are. It's been a fantastic place to learn as well. "Hey, is anyone here taking Complera? I was wondering about a side effect?" Or, "My uncle and his friends were cracking jokes about AIDS. I was so mad. And he knows I have it too! What do I do?" (These questions are all fictional as anything that is said in group is completely confidential, even as to the people who are in the

group. Who goes and what is said stays within the group. Absolutely and completely confidential.)

The dinner is another way to socialize. Here we enjoy each other's company, at times learn about new things, other ways to socialize such as certain events such as pharmaceutical dinners, workshops, fund raisers, etc. The food is great too! Necessary? Yep! To have support will help us find the right answers, help us stay focused on getting the right medical treatment, to form friendships and provide an emotional outlet. It will keep us healthy and strong. It can be difficult to find support, but I have the answer for that too.

There is a key factor missing here. I am compelled to touch upon it. Humor, smiles, and laughter! We all know that smiling and laughing is healthy. Even Native American Indians knew this wisdom with this proverb, "Always remember that a smile is something sacred, to be shared." (Cherokee). And this we do have at our support group and dinner. Often times you can hear laughter ringing through the room and you see genuine smiles upon our faces.

Real quick, I will share my experience with the support group. I didn't go for a long time, even though I knew about it. After being pushed by one of our lovely medical advocates, I decided to check it out.

When I walked in, everyone was warm and inviting. They were already engaged in a conversation, but as soon as the conversation dwindled, they took a moment to introduce themselves. I have problems with anxiety, and I found my anxiety dwindle a bit. I enjoyed listening to everyone as I wasn't really ready to share. I looked around to each individual. I realized that everyone was completely different, but bonded by one factor: HIV. It was my first time being surrounded by folks who had HIV. First time I could be completely open without fear of judgment, having to explain myself, or educate a person so they felt comfortable with my status. What struck me was the compassion, love, knowledge, and understanding contained in one room. It suddenly was overwhelming. I had to step outside and take a breather. I was overwhelmed, but in a good way. I was actually happy. When I stepped outside I cried for a moment. I knew this is where I belonged and it felt great. I went back in and partook in the dinner. I mainly listened to the others. One person particularly stood out to me. I thought, "This chic, I'm either going to not get along with her or we are going to end up good friends." Our personalities were similar and sometimes you either butt heads or bond well with that sort of thing. Guess what? She is now quickly becoming a wonderful friend that I can count on for support outside of the group. We are crazy together and it's awesome. I've made other friends that I hold dear to my heart. Now, I look forward to Tuesday. Correction, I NEED it! I have an awful week if I miss it! I will say this; it took

a couple times before I felt completely comfortable. So, if you do decide to check it out, keep coming a few times. Every meeting is different and we try to cater it to our needs at the moment.

I hope to see some new faces. If you have come before and it's been awhile; give it a try again!

See you Tuesday!  
-CK

### Looking back helps looking forward

As we come to the end of 2012 I was reminded of the words that were written by Jeff Berry @ PositivelyAware.com from earlier this year, Wow! Look at the power "WE" give this virus and how we can let it affect our lives.

I personally consider myself a "newbie" (only knowing/having since 2009) and in those short 4 years 'it' has changed my life in so many ways. I have heard it said many times and I too have said it over and over.... HIV is no longer a burden and for some a blessing. A second chance or is it a wakeup call or does it make you open your eyes to what is really important in life and show you just how strong you really are - trust me the "tests" will be hard, they will drop you to the floor in tears before you can find your way to stand again.

All that I have been through and I consider myself "Lucky".

Lucky because: the drugs & doctors saved my life; STAP saved my mind at first and then my soul with time; the brothers and sister who passed before us and paved the way for today's HIV/AIDS treatments and successes. I may not believe in all they do....but the drug companies for their endless efforts in so many forms of help. Most of all the "TRUE" people who are in my life, who I can depend on & they can depend on me.

\* the following are bits and pieces of his "editors note" back in August 2012.

I have no doubt that a similar conviction exists for countless others when it comes to their HIV status. We live in fear – fear of losing our jobs, our family, our friends, our place to live, our very safety. So we wish HIV away.

We take our pills in hiding, so others won't ask questions.

We drive hours to visit a doctor or clinic in another town, rather than be recognized at "that clinic" at home. We wish HIV away.

I'm sure we all have that one friend who has never been tested, and refuses to, because they would just rather not know. They wish HIV away by pretending it doesn't even exist.

There is the family who hides the cause of death of their son or daughter by saying they died of cancer.

The church that preaches that AIDS is God's punishment for being gay.

The legislators who slash budgets and funding and deny lifesaving medications to people with HIV.

They all wish HIV away, and sweep it under the rug, erroneously believing it can't happen to them, attaching shame and stigma to simply having a virus.

Let's stop the fantasy. Let's stop pretending that HIV can be wished away. Until there is a cure, HIV is unfortunately here to stay. Just like that uninvited guest at the party, it can either be shunned, merely tolerated, or it can be embraced.

Remember, you are the host, and it's your party—what happens is up to you. So shine your light brightly, hold your head up high, don't be ashamed, and refuse to live in fear. It's only when we finally decide to embrace and rejoice in our own truth, that we can begin to see the truth and light in others. And by joining together, we create a force and a light so bright, so strong, that its presence is undeniable and it cannot be extinguished or ignored.

**Take care of yourself, and each other.**

### What's New in the News: from Poz online December 2012

Dec 2012 - Home Alone

by Trenton Straube

#### *Over-the-counter HIV tests: helpful or harmful?*

The first at-home rapid HIV test kit became available over the counter in October. Is this a treat, or a trick? Depends on whom you ask. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the OraQuick test in hopes of reaching people who wouldn't get tested in other situations. It costs about \$40 and gives results in 20 to 40 minutes after you swab the inside of your mouth (no blood is involved). OraSure, makers of the test, has set up a bilingual, 24/7 support center to direct referrals and answer questions. The home tests don't always detect HIV during the first three months of

infection—the so-called “window period”—and there will be false positives (one out of every 5,000 tests of people who are actually negative) and false negatives (about one out of every 12 tests of people who are in fact positive). This is called 99.98 percent specificity and 92 percent sensitivity, respectively.

What happens if people use the tests to screen their hookups? To find out, Columbia University researcher Alex Carballo-Diequez, PhD, gave home HIV tests to 32 “high, high risk” men who had unprotected anal sex with multiple men. Of their nearly 140 sexual partners in New York City, 72 percent agreed to the tests and 10 tested positive; there were seven verbally aggressive reactions but no physical violence. The men liked having the testing option and said it helped them curb their risk-taking.

POZ online readers expressed their own thoughts on the subject. An edited sampling:

This absolutely gives a false sense of security and is the wrong direction.

—Chris, Tampa

Do we care about people once they’ve tested positive, or is any cost OK so the bareback party crowd can decrease their risk?

—Horried

People have a right to know the positive status of their sexual partners.

—Jeton, Harlem, NY

This test will create more prejudice toward us. People should know that condoms work for them, not against them.

—Mike

Testing and treatment of HIV should be left up to the professionals.

—Keith, Portland

This provides people the choice to get tested in the most comfortable surroundings they can make.

—SoulAsylum, Minneapolis

## Back to School

by Trenton Straube

### Californians Sue for Better Sex Ed

The Golden State requires public schools to teach about HIV/AIDS, and it prohibits abstinence-only education. But Clovis Unified School District is playing hooky; a lawsuit from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Gay-Straight Alliance Network and students' parents alleges the school textbooks still promote abstinence and fail to mention condoms. That's bad because, as the complaint spells out: "Clovis adolescents live in...a region with limited access to reproductive health care and...with high rates of teen pregnancy."

### Abstinence-Only Linked to HIV Rates

Researchers in New Orleans linked abstinence-only sex ed to high HIV rates among Louisiana youth—specifically low-income African Americans. Youth ages 13 to 24 make up nearly 25 percent of new infections in the state, the only age group to see an uptick from 2009 to 2010. Lawmakers need to get schooled. They voted down a measure to teach comprehensive sex ed.

### Oral Sex Less Common Among Youth

Nearly two-thirds of 15- to 24-year-olds have had heterosexual intercourse, according to a CDC survey, but only 26 percent of girls and 24 percent of boys engaged in oral sex first. This challenges the idea that most young people have oral sex before vaginal sex. What's more, fewer teens have intercourse today (43 percent in 2010 versus 51 percent in 1988) and more use condoms. Sound good? Not so fast: In 2010, half of sexually transmitted infections occurred among 15- to 24-year-olds. Clearly, comprehensive sex ed is in order. And let's include same-sex activity in these surveys; our LGBT students count too!

### Hershey School Settles HIV Suit

After Milton Hershey School in Pennsylvania allegedly denied an HIV-positive teenager admittance because of fears he might have sex with other students, the boy fought back in court. The school apologized this summer, changed its policy and invited the student to attend, but he didn't drop the case. Good thing: In September, a \$715,000 settlement was reached. Sweet.

## Upcoming Activities from Candace

I have 24 tickets to the BU Bear Cats Men's Basketball on January 9, 2013 7:00pm. It is a Wednesday night.

These are "First come first serve."

If someone wants them they need to call me at 1.800.333.0892 ext 225.

I also have tickets to the Madrigal Choir of Binghamton. They are "*choice tickets*." The concerts are "Ceremony and Celebration for Twelfth Night", Saturday - January 12, 2013 OR Sunday - January 13, 2013.

-and/or -

"Yin Yang" Sunday April 21, 2013.

To get some you just need to call me on the 1-800-333-0892 extension 225 number!

Thanks,

Candace Phelan  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Southern Tier AIDS Program  
Phone: 607.798.1706 ext. 225

### \*\*Update: "New" Retreat/Camping Weekend has been offered.

One of the churches that attend our Friends Dinner became aware of how our yearly "Sky Lake" retreat had come to an end. They have the ability to offer us a weekend camping trip (tent camping) at their place in Windsor. (\* This is not a S.T.A.P. event, some things will be different.) They will have a Nurse for us, just like all the other times. Details are being worked out. The dates would be June 28/29/30 (Friday @ 3pm → Sunday @ 12noon) and they need to have a "headcount" no later than March 2013. Vickie Traves # 607-669-4039 for additional information or any questions  
R.S.V.P. Vickie with your interest to attend A.S.A.P.

Updates will be available and posted in the newsletter until the March deadline, after that only those attending will get updates.

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

### **Join/ Attend: 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 at any Tuesday night Friends Dinner; the floor is always open so that any concerns can be addressed as soon as possible. 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 during the Friends Dinner @ 5:45 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.

### **Friends Who Care Support Groups**

Broome County: "Friends Who Care" meets every Tuesday at 3 pm - 4:30/5:00 pm at Trinity Memorial Church located at 44 Main St. in Binghamton... Come join us for Binghamton's HIV/AIDS Support Group \*(open to clients only). Also stay for a good (free) meal afterwards at the "Friends Dinner".

\* Recently we have had some new members starting to attend, let me say again - "Welcome". This group of Friends started up 4 years ago when we were unhappy with the "canned" therapy we were getting at our local mental health. Trinity came to our rescue and allowed us to hold our meetings prior to the Friends Dinners on Tuesdays. The bonds we have formed over time have us calling each other "family" - this is truly a "support group". We consider ourselves "Lucky" to be part of something so special. New members are welcome.

Chemung County: Men Living with HIV Support Group; 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month; 6-7:30pm; Ivy Clinic, 600 Ivy St., Suite 206, Elmira. For more information people can contact: Lynn Bassler, LMSW Treatment Adherence Counselor, Ivy Clinic, 737-8188.

Tompkins County: The Ivy Clinic is pleased to let all HIV+ men in the Ithaca and surrounding area know there is a support group that is held the third Tuesday of every month at the Ithaca STAP office. Time for the group is 6-7:30 pm and topics vary. If you are interested in attending please e-mail Shannon Sprague at [ssprague@aomc.org](mailto:ssprague@aomc.org) for further information.



## Friends Dinner

“Friends” meet every Tuesday for a time of fellowship and food. Join us at Trinity Memorial Church (corner of Main & Oak St. - across from the High School) in Binghamton. Doors open at 5PM and dinner is served @ 5:30. No charge, just come with a smile and a friendly attitude - ready to meet friends and have a hearty meal. Parking is on Oak St. behind the Church Annex. Use the Oak St. entrance for the cafeteria. Call your case manager for info. Free bus passes available for transportation to/from the dinner (STAP clients only). For more info about the “Friends Dinner”, call STAP and they will get you in touch with Bill.

## Free Anonymous Rapid HIV Testing

Walk-in *Anonymous* testing is available in the STAP Johnson City office Mondays from 1:00-4:30PM and Thursdays from 1:00-3:00PM. *Confidential* testing is available in the Johnson City office Thursdays from 9:00AM - 12:00PM at 122 Baldwin Street, Johnson City, NY 13790. Walk-in *Anonymous* Testing is also available Tuesdays from 9:00AM-11:30AM, and *Confidential* testing is Thursdays, 9:00AM-11:30AM at STAP's Ithaca office located at 501 S. Meadow Street, Ithaca, NY. For more information and other testing opportunities available throughout the month, please call (607)798-1706.

## Free EDUCATIONAL Lunch: December 2012

NEXT EVENT: December 5th 2012 @ 12 noon (Wednesday)

A guest speaker will be present.

From this point on, all these “lunches” will be held at Grandes’ on Vestal Ave. If anyone is unsure where this is - Martha will help with that....

\* As usual seating is limited (you & a guest only) and must be reserved with Martha at least a week before the event. *R.S.V.P. - Martha # 607-644-7586.*

***These are “learning events” - please respect everyone’s right to learn.***

**\*\* Please turn off your cell phones / Important calls ? Vibrate !**

Leave the room if you take the call.

## Ask the Medical Advocate

Get your flu shot now, if your not due to see the doctor this month - call and make an appointment, be pro-active when it comes to your health !

### \*\* DO YOU Know What the C.H.O.I.C.E.S. Program Is?

C.H.O.I.C.E.S. is a self-paced educational series designed specifically for YOU to learn and understand HIV and your body. Whether you take one quick course or decide to go through the entire program and take charge of YOUR HIV, ask a Medical Advocate about C.H.O.I.C.E.S. today...

Medical Advocacy Coordinator: Stacy # (607) 798-1706 Ext. 210

Medical Advocate: Autumn # (607) 426-9445

\* Every 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 4:30 pm \*(new time) - just before the Friends Dinner come join us for our monthly C.H.O.I.C.E.S. module (open to everyone). We have found that we get more out of the program when we learn the modules as a group. Informative questions and discussions are raised.

## FREE LAWYER? GOT IT!

Have you had the opportunity to meet Rob Lukow or Lyndsey McKinstry of the AIDS Law Project at Legal Services of Central New York (LSCNY) out of Syracuse? If not, you will have many more chances in the future! Beginning in November, the AIDS Law Project will host a regular schedule of clinic hours at STAP offices in Johnson City and Ithaca. To qualify for this free legal service you must be HIV+ or an individual with AIDS. Sign-up sheets will be provided at STAP locations for you to schedule to see an attorney during the clinic hours. You may bring any legal question or problem that you have to the attorneys, and they will do their best to help you. For further information, contact Stacy Nickerson at STAP, 607-798-1706, or Rob Lukow at LSCNY, 315-703-6529.

## Client Satisfaction Survey

The annual Client Satisfaction Survey is still in process and will be going on through the end of December 2012. Please complete one and give STAP feedback about all of their programs and services. You may put your name on it if you like, but it is optional. You can drop it off at any office location or you can turn it in directly to Michelle McElroy.

# Mix it Up Monthly

Thursday, 12/6/12  
7:00-9:00 pm

Join Binghamton Pride Coalition at our  
next monthly social event.

Mingle with friends, get to know others  
in the LGBTQ communities, and learn  
more about Binghamton Pride Coalition.  
Allies welcome! A \$10 gift card will be  
given away at the event.

If you'd like, bring a friend or colleague  
along, and help us spread the word.

For more information about BPC and this  
event, please like us on Facebook at  
"Binghamton Pride Coalition"

*Burger Mondays  
hosts Binghamton  
Pride Coalition*

Burger Mondays Bar and Grille  
23 Henry Street, Binghamton, NY





## Beef and Bean Chili Over Rice

**Number of Servings: 4**

**Calories per Serving: 482**

**Preparation Time: 20 Min.**

**Total Time: 55 Min.**

### Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/4 Recipe  
Servings Per Recipe 4

Amount Per Serving

**Calories** 482    **Calories from Fat** 72

% Daily Value

**Total Fat** 8g    12%

**Saturated Fat** 3g    15%

**Cholesterol** 52mg    17%

**Sodium** 384mg    16%

**Total Carbohydrate** 72g    24%

**Dietary Fiber** 11g    44%

**Protein** 30g

**Calcium** 27mg    3%

### Ingredients

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 3/4 lb ground beef (10% fat)
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 2 minced garlic cloves
- 1/2 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 1/2 cup chopped green bell pepper
- 1 cup water
- 3/4 cup chopped carrots
- 1 cup chopped zucchini
- 1 (15-oz) can low-sodium kidney beans, drained
- 1 (8-oz) can tomato sauce, no salt added
- 1 (14 1/2-oz) can tomatoes, diced, no salt added
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp salt-free Mrs. Dash® Original Blend Seasoning
- 1 cup brown rice, cooked according to directions without salt or fat
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro

### Directions

1. Spray a large saucepan with nonstick cooking spray. Place saucepan over medium-high heat and add ground beef, onion, and garlic. Cook 5 to 6 minutes or until beef is cooked through.
2. Add peppers and cook 1 to 2 minutes.
3. Add water, carrots, zucchini, beans, tomato sauce, tomatoes, salt, chili powder, onion powder, cumin, and salt-free seasoning.
4. Cook for 5 minutes, then reduce heat to low. Cover. Simmer for 25 to 30 minutes. Serve over hot rice. Sprinkle with cilantro.

Makes 4 servings.

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