



# A Positive Word

A Newsletter of LAAN, the Lansing Area AIDS Network

Winter 2004

*Dedicated to the delivery of services and programs designed to meet the needs of those living with HIV/AIDS, and to help prevent the further spread of the virus.*

## LAAN Hires New Executive Director

*By Audrey Matisoff, ACSW, Clinical Director*

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Staff of the Lansing Area AIDS Network (LAAN), it is a pleasure to welcome and announce the hiring of Jacob A. Distel, Jr. as the new Executive Director.

Mr. Distel has over twenty years of responsibilities in administration and supervision, as well as experience in management, budget and resource development. He has demonstrated extensive community service by serving on local and state boards and committees in the areas of public health, mental health, and criminal justice.

Known to many as "Jake", he is a former member of both the Michigan HIV/AIDS Council and the Region 2 HIV/AIDS Consortium. He has worked as a hospice volunteer and has served on numerous community Boards.

His most recent duties were as Administrative Lieutenant in the Corrections Division of the Washtenaw County Office of the Sheriff. He was responsible for the administration of security and management of inmate services throughout the facility. He was involved in grant writing, team building and management, as well as volunteer and staff development. Program development and implementation was also a major focus of his work.

He is a man of great warmth and sincere character and has clearly indicated a dedication to helping LAAN continue to grow and develop. The LAAN Board of Directors and Staff look forward to working together with him and encourage you to stop in and meet Jacob Distel, LAAN's new Executive Director.



LAAN Staff 2004 (from left to right): Patrick Lombardi, David Knechtges, Ligia Romero, Rachel Copeland, Mary Boudreau, Amanda Anderson, Tony Smydra, Jacob Distel, Cheryl Gildner, Patti Howland, Audrey Matisoff, Nabil Reyes, Daniel Kay, Kay McDuffie, Andre Truss; (not pictured) Audrey Makokha & Bryan Siddall

## The Executive Director's Corner

*By Jacob A Distel, Jr., Executive Director*

It is a tremendous privilege and honor to begin my work as the new Executive Director with the Lansing Area AIDS Network and the communities it serves. I am equally excited, challenged and humbled by the work and the history of LAAN that precedes me. Having served on the Michigan HIV/AIDS Council and the Region 2 AIDS Consortium, I have long been aware of the respect and regard this agency has earned throughout the state. I appreciate the opportunity to work at LAAN, holding this understanding of the charge with which I have been entrusted and the vigilance that that responsibility mandates.

I come to LAAN with a profound and deeply personal regard for, and commitment to, the work it does. On May 4, 1996, I lost my partner of 17 years, Jon, to

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## Clinical Update - Focus on Adherence

By Audrey Matisoff, ACSW, Clinical Director

The LAAN Clinical Team is as busy as ever. LAAN is still receiving new referrals on a regular basis, and as I have mentioned in previous articles, this is a mixed blessing. Of course we are forever grateful that people respect and trust us. It is also heartening to know that newly diagnosed clients are getting into case management when appropriate. However, the fact that there continues to be newly diagnosed people here in our community remains a source of concern for all of the staff at LAAN.

When a client comes to LAAN for the first time, there is much that needs to be discussed and as with most agencies, a great deal of paperwork that needs to be completed. As clients adjust and learn to incorporate a new sense of reality, there is often a bond that is formed with their Client Services Coordinator. These relationships sometimes last for long periods of time and as is in other relationships, they have their "ups and downs" and time of challenge.

LAAN staff is trained to deal with complex and multiple issues, but our focus, first and foremost, is always

the client's health. There are many factors which can influence a person's health such as; work, environment, relationships, and various hardships or stressors. As a result, there are times when people are more attentive to their medical needs than at other times. In recognition of the complexities of life in general, and the specific complexities of HIV/AIDS, LAAN has a specific component of our Care Services that focuses on medical adherence. It is well documented and accepted that medical adherence is absolutely essential for a client's well-being. Our program is designed to assist in a multitude of ways to help clients remain adherent to their medical protocols. Services include, but aren't limited to, help with transportation to appointments, pill boxes, planners, watches with beepers, and phone messages that are taped and delivered at specific times to remind people to take their medication. Staff also offer help for people to stop smoking with our smoking cessation patches and gum. Case managers also try to match newly diagnosed or "medication naive" clients with clients that have been living with and doing well with their medication protocols, for support.

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Bryan Siddall, *LAAN Intern*

## HIV/AIDS Prevention Update

*By Kaye McDuffie, LAAN Prevention Specialist*

### **MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

During the spring and summer of 2003, LAAN hired a diverse staff of contractual workers to help meet funded objectives, as well as to respond to growing requests for prevention services from the community. Prevention Team members continued to provide weekly testing at the Listening Ear, the African American Health Institute, and the LAAN office. LAAN HIV/AIDS test counselors provided monthly testing at two area bars (Club Ex-Cel and Esquire) with volunteers providing outreach to encourage bar patrons to consider HIV Antibody testing and to increase their awareness of risk reduction for HIV/AIDS infection. LAAN Staff and Volunteers also conducted educational, skills building and counseling and testing services to residents of local substance abuse treatment centers. In addition, they also organized a statewide effort to provide HIV Antibody testing at the 2003 Michigan PRIDE Festival, the African American Family Reunion and Parade, and community-wide testing on National HIV/AIDS Testing Day in June. More effective targeting of testing, education and outreach services resulted in an increase of positive test results.

Prevention team members work closely with LAAN clinical staff to ensure that when a person receives a positive test result, he or she has immediate access to a LAAN Care Coordinator, who can help them access medical care, explore options for medical treatment, identify psychological support services, and become more informed about other assistance options. If the person is from another area, staff helps them make contact with HIV/AIDS service organizations in their area. Early diagnosis provides many more options for slowing down the disease process and allows planning in a more deliberate way.

Through a series of strategically planned house parties, prevention team members provided skills building activities and HIV/AIDS education and information to young African American men, whose behaviors (or their partners' behaviors) put them at higher risk for HIV/AIDS infection. LAAN's outreach efforts to young African American and Hispanic women will also remain a focused challenge in the year ahead. Prevention Staff will continue these outreach efforts in spite of the stigma and discrimination factors that impact people's decisions regarding testing or seeking treatment.

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## HIV/AIDS Medical Update

*By Mary Boudreau, Client Services Coordinator*

When one considers the many social, economic, and political aspects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, it is possible to forget that it is a medical condition. The medical aspects of HIV infection continue to change. Amazingly enough, there are now twenty-three anti-viral medications available to treat HIV/AIDS! Selection of the correct treatment requires a skilled medical specialist to accurately prescribe these medications, and excellent communication to coordinate other medications used to treat other conditions. Most important, HIV/AIDS treatment is at its best when it is controlled by the person living with HIV/AIDS. In order to make this possible, constant education and self-care is important in helping each person live a longer, healthier life.

The following is a brief medical update that explains some basic principles and issues with medical treatment for HIV/AIDS in 2004.

### **Deciding When To Start Meds**

This is probably the most difficult choice that people with HIV/AIDS face. Unfortunately, the recommendations have changed significantly over time, leaving many people to wonder what the right answer is. To be honest, no one really knows due to the vast variables from individual to individual. Current guidelines recommend that patients *consider* medication therapy when their CD4 count drops below 350 or their viral load is above 35,000. However, people can develop resistance to a certain medication (or an entire CLASS of medication if their adherence to that regimen is below 95%. This is a very demanding adherence requirement (a person would have to miss less than 3 doses of a twice a day medication regimen every month) , and many factors prevent people from being that adherent: side effects, forgetting, inability to access meds, disrupted sleep, mental illness, substance abuse problems, etc. Even positive events such as vacations, houseguests, or new relationships can throw off schedules and therefore, adherence. It is important that people make an insightful, honest decision about starting medications, or they may soon be unable to use a number of medications in each class.

### **Tailoring A Medication To The Individual's Needs**

Today, more than ever, people with HIV/AIDS work with their entire treatment team, including their care coordinator, to decide on a medical regimen that is

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## HIV Testing Schedule

LAAN offers free, anonymous HIV counseling and testing at various locations throughout the Lansing area. LAAN uses the ORASURE testing method, which does not require blood to be drawn.

Spanish speaking service may be scheduled at some locations by calling LAAN. Counseling and testing is available weekly at these times and locations:

### **2nd & 4th Monday, 8:30am – 10:30am**

CMH – Substance Abuse Services  
812 East Jolly Road, Suite G-14, Lansing  
(Between Pennsylvania & Cedar)

***Walk-in, no appointment needed***

### **Tuesday, 5:00pm – 9:00pm**

Listening Ear  
313 West Grand River, East Lansing  
(West side of Gumby building)

***By appointment only***

### **Wednesday, 6:00pm – 9:00pm**

African American Health Institute  
513 East Grand River, Suite C, Lansing  
(Young's Landing Building, between Cedar & Larch)

***Walk-in, no appointment needed***

### **Thursday, 3:00pm – 9:00pm**

LAAN – Main Office  
913 East Holmes Road, Suite 115, Lansing  
(Southwind Office Building, Kroger's Parking Lot)

***By appointment only***

For more information, schedule and appointment, or to request bilingual services, please call (517)394-3560.

## National Black AIDS Awareness Day

*By Kaye McDuffie, Prevention Specialist*

For the first time, Lansing was part of national events to increase awareness of HIV/AIDS among African Americans. Although February 7<sup>th</sup> is the official National Black AIDS Awareness Day, most local activities were conducted Friday, February 6, 2004 at the Black Child and Family Institute, 835 W. Genesee, in Lansing. LAAN and its African American Task Force organized local educational activities at area schools and community organizations to highlight the event.

HIV/AIDS constitutes a "State of Emergency" in the African American community. AIDS related complications are now the leading cause of death of African-American men aged 25 to 44 in the United States. Among African-American women in the same age group, AIDS claims more lives than diabetes or cancer, with African American women comprising 63% of all AIDS cases reported nationwide. Although African Americans make up only 13 percent of the U.S. population, they account for more than half, or more than 20,000, of all new HIV infections each year. In 2000, 64% of all U.S. AIDS cases reported among youth aged 13 – 19 were African American. Around the world, more than 14,000 people are infected with HIV every day, more than two-thirds of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

The number of HIV/AIDS cases per 100,000 in nearly ten times higher for African Americans than for white Americans (76.8 for African Americans, 8.1 for white Americans). The rate of HIV/AIDS cases among African American women, as well as for African American children under 13 is 23 times higher than for white women and children.

Lansing-area observances included: speakers and workshops providing information on HIV/AIDS, refreshments, music, free anonymous HIV testing, blood pressure and diabetes screening, educational materials, and proclamations from the Mayors of Lansing and East Lansing, Lansing City Council, Ingham County Commissioners, and state officials.

For information about HIV/AIDS in the African American community or National Black AIDS

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## National Volunteer Week

### *LAAN Volunteers Take Spotlight*

*By Patrick Lombardi, Director of Volunteer Services*

National Volunteer Week is a special time set aside in April to honor the people who donate their time and energy to their fellow citizens. The Week also raises awareness of the vital contribution volunteers make to our communities and to the identity and values of our country.

Across America, volunteers are involved in their communities, helping to make a difference, not only in their own lives but also in the lives of those who benefit from their actions. Volunteers serve on the boards and committees of local agencies and associations; volunteers mentor peers and youth, organize cultural and recreational activities, help neighbors and strangers, provide food and shelter, staff hotlines, clean up rivers and parks, coach teams and so much more. Volunteers help build and strengthen our communities by responding to the needs of the community, without compensation for their work. They truly enrich a community and make it a better world to live and work in.

In recognition of National Volunteer Week, and in gratitude for the countless contributions made by 125 volunteers at the Lansing Area AIDS Network (LAAN), the Board of Directors and Staff will hold a special reception in their honor. All LAAN Volunteers who attend will receive a special volunteer award for contributing to LAAN's efforts to provide quality care and prevention services.

Since 1985, volunteers have served LAAN on the frontlines of our community's fight against HIV/AIDS. They are woven into the fabric of LAAN's culture, identity and history. Nineteen years ago, when LAAN was first organizing and forging a community response to HIV/AIDS, it relied on solely on volunteers. Today, volunteers continue to contribute to the overall mission of LAAN, with the same energy, commitment and spirit that inspired the first volunteers. Incorporated in the LAAN Mission Statement are the core values that give LAAN direction, guidance and purpose in all that it does. A tribute to the importance and value of volunteerism are one of the cornerstones that makes LAAN a truly remarkable organization.

This year's volunteer reception will be held on **Thursday, April 15, 2004** in the LAAN Conference Room from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm. A special evening of recognition will include a personal thank you from the LAAN Board of Directors and Staff, volunteer awards and certificates, light refreshments and an overview of volunteer accomplishments in 2003.

## LAAN Mission Statement

### **MISSION**

Dedicated to the delivery of services and programs designed to meet the needs of those living with HIV and AIDS and to help prevent the further spread of the virus.

### **PURPOSE**

To respond effectively, knowledgeably and compassionately to the challenges brought about by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

### **VALUES**

- A client-centered focus encompassing education/prevention advocacy and care
- The integrity of our services and the use of our resources
- Everyone's right to have their basic needs met
- The importance of Volunteerism
- The belief that everyone has the responsibility to respond to the pandemic
- Facing the unknown with hope
- The affirmation of diversity: in our Board, Staff, Volunteers, Clients and Community

## **LAAN BOARD OF DIRECTORS SEEKS NEW BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2004-2005**

The Lansing Area AIDS Network is currently seeking to fill five vacancies on their Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is a working board that helps to provide stability, strategic planning, organizational and financial management, and leadership to the Lansing Area AIDS Network. If you are interested in being considered for a board position, please contact the Director of Volunteer Services for a Board Application.

The current Board of Directors is comprised of a cadre of professionals from the Greater Lansing community who serve as volunteers and activists in the fight against AIDS and who are committed to LAAN's mission to provide a competent and quality response to the spreading health crisis. In serving on the Board, members are also asked to serve on special committees to help champion specific aspects of the current strategic plan.

The current LAAN Board of Directors are: Ted DeLeon (President), Max Thome (Vice President), Bob Shaw (Treasurer), Cynthia Dennis (Secretary), Bill Shipley, Jim Fasel, and Bob Hoffman.

## AIDS In Africa Update

*By Patrick Lombardi, Director of Volunteer Services*

Unlike any disease ever known to humankind, HIV/AIDS infections have claimed the lives of over 20 million people, worldwide. With over 42 million people currently living with HIV/AIDS, the pandemic continues to threaten and challenge the lives and economies of countries across the globe. Last year alone, over 5 million new infections were reported by UNAIDS. The hardest hit region of sub-Saharan Africa is now home to 29.4 million people living with HIV/AIDS, where 3.5 million new infections occurred there in 2002, while the disease claimed the lives of an estimated 2.4 million Africans over the past year. 10 million young people, aged 15-24, and almost 3 million children under 15 are currently living with HIV/AIDS.

The impact that HIV/AIDS have had on our world community has been devastating. The scope of the pandemic and its affects on those whose lives have been directly touched by HIV infection is unimaginable and horrifying. To comprehend the ramifications of such a disease is nearly impossible. In four countries in southern Africa where, Botswana Lesotho Swaziland and Zimbabwe, national adult HIV prevalence has risen higher than thought possible, exceeding 25% in adults.

HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care efforts have failed to keep up with the rate of new infections and UNAIDS predicts the death toll in Africa will continue rising before peaking around the end of this decade. The worst of the pandemic's impact will be felt in the course of the next decade and beyond, according to UNAIDS. They also indicate it is not too late to introduce and augment measures that can reduce that impact, including wider access to HIV/AIDS medicines and socioeconomic policy steps that genuinely buffer the poor against the worst of the pandemic's effects.

UNAIDS indicates there are hopeful signs that the pandemic could eventually be brought under control, and are visible in some countries. In Uganda and Rwanda, there is now increasing evidence that national adult prevalence has fallen. In Burundi and Kenya, the prevalence among pregnant women seems to have leveled off. However, these positive trends do not yet offset the severity of the pandemic in these countries. All of Africa faces monumental challenges not only in sustaining and expanding prevention successes, but in providing adequate treatment, care and support to the millions of people living with HIV/AIDS or orphaned.

### Upcoming Events

The LAAN staff, volunteers, and Board have been busy planning out the calendar year for events that are upcoming. There will also be other festivals throughout the year, with information passed along as we become aware of the dates. Call (517)394-3560 for more information.

**March 7-13**

Black Church week of Prayer for Healing of AIDS

**March 10**

Community and Agency Reception:  
Welcome LAAN's new Executive Director  
4:00 PM – 6:00 PM – LAAN Conference Room

**April 7 and 14**

Buddy Training Program  
6:00 PM – 9:00 PM – LAAN Conference Room

**April 15**

LAAN Volunteer Appreciation Reception  
4:00 PM – 7:00 PM  
LAAN Conference Room

**June 21 - 25**

National HIV Testing Day

**July 16 – 17**

Life Ride 2004

**August 28**

LAAN Picnic  
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

**September 26**

AIDS Walk Michigan – Lansing (Valley Court Park – East Lansing)

**October (dates to be announced)**

HIV Educator Training

**October 15**

National Latino HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

**November – December**

Buddy Brigade Holiday Gift Project

**December 1**

World AIDS Day

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right for them. With so many treatment options, it is important to consider the many co-factors that each individual brings. Do you operate on a fairly regular schedule? When are your meal times? Do you have a private place to store and take medications, even at work or school? Do you like to drink water? Do you use alcohol and other drugs? *This is especially important when the medications are processed through the liver or can cause pancreatitis.* Are you pregnant or trying to become pregnant? Are you ready to commit to taking a particular medication regimen, and if you become resistant, what other options will be available? What other medical conditions are you dealing with? Do you have a family history of any medical conditions? Have you clearly discussed this issue with your doctor?

#### New Medications Now Available

In 2003, five new medications for treating HIV/AIDS became available, making this a banner year! The new medications represent new options for people who have been infected for many years and may have developed resistance to multiple drugs, and also offer easier treatment options for anyone taking medications.

· **Fuzeon** is the first drug to be approved in the fusion-inhibitor class of meds. This new class provides an entirely new option for people with multi-drug resistant virus. It has been shown to successfully suppress viral replication, however, it does have its drawbacks. Because it is a large protein molecule, it must be injected twice a day. It is also very expensive to produce, at a cost of as much as \$25,000 per year per patient. Some individuals develop an adverse reaction at the injection site. This class of drugs is certainly "one to watch" as many individuals enter their second decade of HIV infection.

· **Reyataz** is a new azapeptide protease inhibitor that features many of the best aspects of viral suppression of the protease inhibitors without the negative side effects that they may bring. The standard dosage is only 2 pills, once a day, and it does not seem to raise cholesterol and triglyceride levels the way many protease inhibitors do.

· **Emtriva** is a new nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor that is very similar to Efavirenz. It also seems to be effective in treating Hepatitis B, as well as HIV/AIDS. It is owned by Gilead Sciences, which also produces Viread, so there is speculation that the two drugs will be offered in combination in a once a day pill.

· **Lexiva** is a "prodrug" of Agenerase, which is a protease inhibitor. The best part of this new drug is in the

dosing—it requires only two pills twice a day, instead of the 16 pill dose of Agenerase.

· **Viracept** is not a new drug, but the new formula reduces the dosing from ten pills a day down to 4 pills a day—a big improvement to anyone who "fills up" on pills before the meal is even served.

#### Dealing With The Lack Of Resources To Meet Medical Needs

This factor may become more of an issue in the near future. Already, almost 90% of the world's people do not have access to any medications for treatment, due to the expense of the drugs and the strain on the world's human services budget. In the United States, waiting lists for Drug Assistance Programs to help pay for meds have become a grim reality (fortunately, this is not the case in Michigan). Budget experts predict the shortfall for Drug Assistance Program needs this year may be as high as \$900 million! Clearly there are many demands on this already taxed system. Preventing future HIV infection is necessary if there is going to be enough resources to treat those already infected. In addition, making these treatments very effective through judicious use of medications and excellent adherence will make treatment more cost effective. Finally, programs to bring down the cost of these medications, as well as to ensure that private and governmental insurance programs will pay for them, is incredibly important.

#### Lifestyle Changes Can Enhance Medical Prognosis

The medications for HIV/AIDS are not the only way to treat this serious pandemic! Despite the tremendous problems the disease causes, many people are living longer, healthier lives with HIV/AIDS, whether or not they are taking medications. What's their secret? They follow the basic rules that many of our grandmothers tried to teach us: eat right, get enough sleep, exercise regularly, drink plenty of fluids, and *avoid tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.* Unfortunately, many of the people who have died recently with HIV have actually succumbed to illnesses caused by unhealthy lifestyle choices. The new year is a great time to make healthier choices about our lives.

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In an effort to offer the highest level of services, LAAN is always rethinking and reviewing our programs, relying a great deal on staff input, while understanding that the clients are really the experts. They tell us what works for them and what does not. Armed with that information, we fine tune our programs.

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LAAN Prevention programs will receive slightly decreased funding for their prevention activities in the year ahead. However, a newly funded program called Prevention for Positives will provide individual and group counseling sessions for those living with HIV/AIDS. Additionally, a greater reliance on volunteers to assist with LAAN's prevention measures will continue to be one of the strategies LAAN will employ to meet the challenges of the year ahead.

#### **THE FRONTLINES**

Twelve Lansing area residents participated in three-weekends of LAAN Volunteer Educator Training this past October to prepare volunteers to provide education on HIV prevention and AIDS related care. Participants included those living with HIV/AIDS, people who have lost and/or have family members living with HIV/AIDS, volunteers who want to provide education to their peers, those wanting to work on the global AIDS Pandemic and those wanting to engage faith-based communities. LAAN's diverse cadre of Volunteer Educators will continue with additional training and networking opportunities during 2004.

The LAAN Volunteer Educator Training sessions included: HIV/AIDS 101, HIV/AIDS Trends and Statistics, personal accounts from those living with HIV/AIDS, an overview of LAAN and its services, community resources, a historical perspective of HIV/AIDS in the United States, and cultural competency. The goal of this training was to prepare community volunteers for the work they will be doing in the community on behalf of LAAN:

- ◆ Assist with LAAN HIV/AIDS counseling, testing and referral services;
- ◆ Provide information and training for community businesses, human service workers, community groups, classrooms and those at high risk for HIV/AIDS infection;
- ◆ Informational outreach at conferences, health and resource fairs, resource centers, community events: to promote services, provide information and encourage testing
- ◆ Educational display tables at schools, agencies, substance abuse treatment centers, domestic violence centers, and homeless shelters.
- ◆ Assist with promoting LAAN's HIV/AIDS educational services and direct care programs.

It is recognized that accurate, updated and culturally sensitive and age appropriate information and awareness about HIV/AIDS are essential. The interest and commitment of our Prevention Volunteers will help make a difference in LAAN's efforts to meet this chal-

lenge. A well-educated community can only make a difference in the struggle to prevent new infections of HIV/AIDS.

#### **PREVENTION TEAM TRANSITIONS**

The LAAN Staff bids fond farewell to two excellent employees, Ronald Jordan and Michael Lee. Both Ron and Michael served LAAN as HIV/AIDS Test Counselors and provided much needed energy, creativity and commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS in our community. They were both outstanding professionals and will be profoundly missed by their colleagues.

Amanda Anderson and Nabil Reyes (former volunteers) have joined the LAAN Prevention Staff, working part time to assist with testing and referral services, administrative support and LAAN prevention activities. Also joining the LAAN Prevention Staff is Bryan Siddall, who recently accepted an intern position at LAAN while attending Michigan State University. His future plans include graduating and serving in the Peace Corp.

#### **BUDDY BRIGADE HOLIDAY GIFT PROJECT**

The 2003 holiday season was made brighter for the clients of LAAN by the wonderful contributions of the organization's Buddy Brigade. Each year the Buddy Brigade invites LAAN clients to make a wish for the holiday season. The wish lists are compiled and organized for the special holiday campaign, and Buddy Brigade volunteers work tirelessly to fulfill each and every wish that is made.

The Buddy Brigade Holiday Gift Project fulfilled over 270 individual wishes this past holiday season, making this the largest and most successful holiday project ever. LAAN would like to acknowledge and thank the Buddy Brigade volunteers and 48 donors who contributed over \$6,000.00 to the success of this campaign. The holiday season was once again given deep meaning and made memorable by everyone associated with the LAAN Buddy Brigade Holiday Project.

The Buddy Brigade Holiday Gift Project was established in 1989 to help provide individuals and families with a meaningful holiday season. For many, the added financial demands and burdens that so often accompany HIV/AIDS infection create a shortfall during the holiday gift-giving season. The Buddy Brigade Project is an attempt to respond to those needs and to the well being of those individuals and their families. The project matches each wish list with a business, organization or individual in the community who will provide the requested gift.

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AIDS. A few months before, he had started protease inhibitors but, unfortunately, was well beyond the point of any significant benefit. In my grief, and the irrationality and selfishness that often goes along with that most debilitating of emotions, I remember feeling that Jon would, sadly and brutally, be the last person that would ever die from the disease. After all, friends of ours, who had been just as ill, continued to survive.

*Unfortunately*, and obviously, I was wrong. In the last year, alone, I have lost three very close friends to the disease. Two of them were well known and regarded in the community of people living with HIV/AIDS and, like Jon, had served on the Region 2 Consortium. They deeply involved themselves in the struggle and, also like Jon, were among the voices that needed to be heard. What most signifies these two persons loss for me is that they were also husband and wife. They died within weeks of each other to the disbelief and devastation of family and friends. As Jon had been a beautiful and vibrant voice for the gay community, Crystal and Jimmy had been eloquent, impassioned voices for the black and recovering communities. All three of them, like all of those who are loved and lost to this epidemic, are sorely missed not only by family and friends but by the larger communities they had represented with such humbling and steadfast strength, dignity, and most importantly hope.

*Fortunately*, many of those who were winning that fight back in 1996 continue to fight and win. It is the hope that I hold onto. It is the hope that we must all hold onto. People are surviving. Lessons are being learned. The work continues. That is the legacy of Jon, Crystal, Jimmy and all of those who have valiantly fought the struggle but lost. That is the voice I continue to hear.

My first moments as Executive Director of LAAN involved attending a staff meeting. At the beginning of that meeting I was asked as Executive Director to participate in a candle lighting ceremony and moment of silence. As a volunteer with hospice, I have participated in many candle lighting ceremonies but they are always in memory of those we have loved and lost. This was a bit different in that not only was it a lighting of memory, but it was articulated as lighting a flame for hope.

As Executive Director of the Lansing Area AIDS Network, I see it as my job to help keep that hope alive. It is my responsibility to maintain the high regard and respect with which LAAN is held throughout Michigan. It is my job to be a part of the team that accepts the new challenges, identifies the opportunities, and secures the resources to continue the work that needs to be done in our community. And, it is all of our jobs to maintain the vigilance for those voices that have in some ways been silenced. They continue to resonate, however, in the legacy that they have left behind.

## Food Pantry Needs Donations

We are looking for donations of canned goods, other non-perishable foods, or personal need items.

We are interested in individual donations, or perhaps your group or organization would like to sponsor a donation drive for our pantry.

Call Patrick Lombardi at (517)394-3719, Ext. 14 for more information.

## AID for AIDS Campaign for Life

Many of us are overwhelmed by the sheer numbers—millions of people are living with HIV/AIDS and are receiving no medical treatment. It is important to keep hope alive and DO SOMETHING to help. One option is to participate in the AID for AIDS Campaign for Life. This non profit group provides medications and laboratory tests to people living with HIV in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa. They receive donations of unused meds from people who can no longer use them (due to changing regimens, etc.) and send them to people in other countries who would have access to no meds. For as little as \$15 per month, you can sponsor an individual to receive a year of medicine delivered to them. If you would like to contact this group about helping save lives internationally, please contact them at [www.aidforaids.org/campaignforlife](http://www.aidforaids.org/campaignforlife) or call them at (212)337-8043. This is a small step but remember that small steps are often the way to change the world!

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Awareness Day activities around the state or nationally, visit:

<http://www.cdcpin.org>

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/od/nchstp.html>.

<http://www.blackaidsday.org>.

LAAN extends an invitation to become a part of the LAAN African American Task Force. The Task Force meets the second Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. Meetings are held at the LAAN office, 913 W. Holmes Rd., Ste. 115, Lansing. The Task Force will begin planning for local observances of the Fifteenth Annual Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS to be held during the week of March 7 – 13, 2004.

### LAAN Canister Collection Locations

*LAAN receives cash donations through its Canister Collection Program. Look for our canisters near the cash registers at these supporting businesses:*

Beggar's Banquet

Fashion Bug

International Bread Co.

Mackerel Sky

Triple Goddess Bookstore

Wazoo Records

### HIV/AIDS UPDATE

According to the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), there are an estimated 15,500 people living with HIV/AIDS in the state of Michigan, of which 10,749 cases were reported as of January 1, 2002. It also estimates that nearly 825 new cases occur annually. They report that the number of HIV related deaths declined significantly in 1996 and 1997, but decreased very little from 1998-2000. They indicate the prevalence of HIV disease is increasing because new cases continue to be diagnosed and infected persons are living longer. There are more people living with HIV/AIDS today than ever before in the history of the pandemic. The hardest hit area in Michigan is in Region 1, which includes the counties of Detroit, Wayne, Macomb, Oakland, St Clair and Monroe. MDCH reports there are 10,630 people living with HIV/AIDS in this region of the state.

In Region 4, the Lansing Area AIDS Network (LAAN) serves residents who live in Ingham, Clinton, Gratiot, Montcalm and Isabella Counties. MDCH estimates that in Region 4 there are 520 people living with HIV/AIDS, of which 344 were reported as of January 1, 2002. Incidence of HIV (the number of new infections) is level at around 20 new cases in the year 2000. The prevalence rate of HIV disease in Region 4 has also increased, concurrent with statewide statistics. MDCH reports that HIV disease is distributed disproportionately in Michigan. Region 4 has fewer cases when compared with the general population that lives there. The greatest percent of cases in Region 4 was recorded in Ingham County, where 87% of the cases in the region were reported.

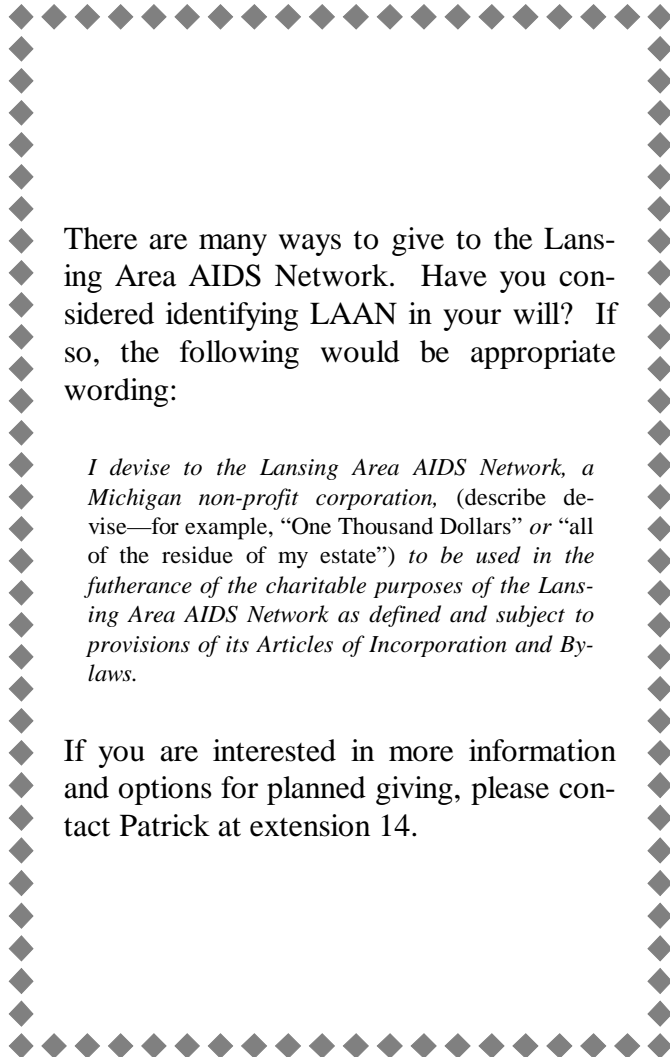
In the United States the number of new infections remains at about 40,000 persons each year, while the number of deaths have declined to about 15,600 in 2001. Nationally, through December 2001, there have been 807,075 cases of AIDS reported; of these, 462,653 (57%) have died. Approximately 850,000 persons in the United States are believed infected with HIV. Michigan ranks 17<sup>th</sup> in total number of cases and 29<sup>th</sup> by cumulative rate per 100,000 in the population.

Worldwide, an estimated 5.0 million new infections and 3.1 million AIDS deaths occurred during 2002, bringing the worldwide total persons infected with HIV to 42 million. There have been a cumulative total of 28 million deaths since the beginning of the pandemic. About three-quarters of new cases and deaths were in Sub-Sahara Africa, where transmission is predominately heterosexual.

**STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION**  
*World AIDS Day Observed  
 Locally and Globally*

On December 1, Lansing, Michigan and the world paused to observe World AIDS Day. This special one-day observance was held to remind our community and the world that the AIDS Pandemic is not over. Its purpose was to give the world a closer look at where we stand globally and locally in the fight against AIDS. Because of the magnitude of the pandemic, the US has declared HIV/AIDS a national security threat. As of 2002, it is estimated that 40 million men, women and children worldwide are living with HIV/AIDS. In the US, 900,000 people are now living with HIV/AIDS, with 40,000 new infections each year.

Over three-dozen people gathered at the Hannah Community Center in East Lansing, on December 1, to hear community leaders and HIV/AIDS activists speak out about AIDS related Stigma and Discrimination. The special ceremony included a display of 24 panels of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt and educational placards that were created to help educate the community about the impact that HIV and AIDS has had locally and globally. In addition to the reading of proclamations and personal accounts of living with HIV/AIDS, a Silent March was held to dramatize the impact that stigma plays in keeping people effectively silent about their disease. Special World AIDS Day programs were also held at the MSU Student Union Building, the Kresge Art Museum and the Lansing City Council Meeting.



There are many ways to give to the Lansing Area AIDS Network. Have you considered identifying LAAN in your will? If so, the following would be appropriate wording:

*I devise to the Lansing Area AIDS Network, a Michigan non-profit corporation, (describe devise—for example, “One Thousand Dollars” or “all of the residue of my estate”) to be used in the furtherance of the charitable purposes of the Lansing Area AIDS Network as defined and subject to provisions of its Articles of Incorporation and By-laws.*

If you are interested in more information and options for planned giving, please contact Patrick at extension 14.

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~ Clif Nelson ~  
 LAAN Web Master

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## Resources

### Local

#### **AIDS Education & Training Center**

(517)355-9324

Provides education on special mental health care needs of persons living with HIV disease.

#### **Gateway Community Services**

(517)351-4000

Provides HIV counseling & testing and education for adolescents.

#### **Ingham County Health Department Adult Health Clinic**

(517)887-4424 (517)887-4302

Provides HIV counseling & testing and other STD testing services.

#### **The Listening Ear**

(517)337-1717

24 hour crisis center.

#### **Olin Health Center**

(517)353-0718

Provides HIV counseling & testing and educational presentations to the MSU community.

#### **Planned Parenthood of Mid-Michigan**

(517)351-0550

Provides confidential, reproductive health care services to women and men, including pap smears, STD screening, and HIV counseling & testing.

### State & National

#### **Michigan AIDS Hotline**

(800)872-AIDS (800)872-2437

#### **AIDS Clinical Trial Information Service**

(800)TRIALS-A (800)874-2572

#### **AIDS Information in Spanish**

(800)344-SIDA (800)344-7432

#### **CDC National AIDS Clearinghouse**

(800)458-5231



Lansing Area AIDS Network

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