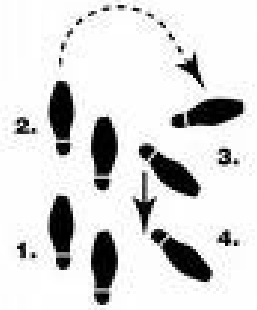




UPDATE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE VERMONT PWA COALITION
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The 2010-2011 “Budget Dance” begins... and has started with big cuts to the HIV/AIDS Budget!!



Here are the dance steps:

1. The VDH submits its budget to the House Appropriations Committee
2. The Committee hears testimony from the VDH and the community
3. The Committee makes its recommendations to the Vermont House
4. The House votes, if approved the bill goes through the same procedure in the Senate.

STEP 1: The VDH submitted its proposed budget on January 22. They proposed cuts in HIV/AIDS funding in the Vermont General Fund of nearly 60%. **YES, 60% CUTS!** The VDH is hopeful that there will be other funding available from AMAP Pharmaceutical Rebates that will make up for some of these cuts, but the availability of these funds cannot be predicted and may well fall far short of meeting the needs of Vermonters living with HIV and at risk of HIV transmission.

These General Funds supplement Ryan White Funds, which are not sufficient by themselves to fund the case management system in Vermont. General Funds are the only funds available for client support—co-pays for medications and doctors’ visits, transportation, mental health services. If the Legislature supports these cuts, and the Rebate funding isn’t there, the State will be abandoning Vermonters with HIV.

STEP 2: It’s time for all of us, members of the HIV/AIDS Community, to get involved and tell the legislature what these cuts will mean to Vermonter living with HIV/AIDS.

Are you thinking...what can I do?
“I’m only one person...they don’t care what I think!”
WRONG!!!!

Your voice is important, and legislators listen to their constituents.
If they don’t hear from you, how will they know what you think??

HIV/AIDS Service Organizations, including the Coalition, are working to avoid these cuts, but we can’t do it alone. Now is the time for the community to step up to the plate and get involved.



**Don’t be a wallflower and
sit on the sidelines!!**
**Turn to page three to see what steps
you can take
to get in the dance...**

SUBJECT: *Help Wanted...No Experience Necessary*

In 1989 a friend with AIDS called me. He lived in Massachusetts and was having problems with services from the Veterans Administration. At the time, V.A. Hospitals were not providing "state of the art" services for vets with AIDS. Many civilian hospitals were in the same boat too, so we can't single out the V.A. clinics and hospitals for being slow to respond to the AIDS pandemic. Denial, stigma, federal budget, dysfunctional bureaucracy, etc, also contributed to the problem.

My friend couldn't get the help he needed and was stuck in the V.A. System. I asked another Massachusetts resident what options there were, and in our talk he suggested Ted Kennedy. I thought about calling his office and procrastinated because I didn't believe "high and mighty" Senators would come to the aid of the little people. Boy, was I wrong! Not only did Kennedy's aide pass along my message, but the big guy himself hand-wrote me a letter expressing his interest in personally seeing that anyone with HIV in the V.A. system would be given the best possible care no matter where they lived. Ted Kennedy was our biggest ally in D.C. He got the Ryan White act passed, and championed our cause in so many ways. When he died, he left a hole in the Senate that can't be ignored.

Last week a special election was held to fill his seat. In Vermont we look with fear at this Massachusetts outcome. We know no one could be as able as Ted, but this is clearly scary. I respect the will of the people of Mass. in their election of Scott Brown, but I am also deeply disappointed at the result, because it affects me a lot. As a person living with AIDS, I can't be comforted about having a Republican and critic of health care reform being capable of blocking ANY reform. And the drama will increase when Mr. Brown holds the corporate vote *and* money from pharmaceutical and insurance interests. Will he be on the side of the little people? I'm afraid not. And I hope I'm wrong. This was an important election with implications nationwide.

While I'm saddened by the loss of Kennedy, I must take action to honor his commitment to all people with HIV, and to be a voice in these times of fiscal uncertainty. If he can't speak for us, at least we need to speak for ourselves. I'm begging everyone with HIV to get involved and take some action. Write letters, call your representatives, join organizations which promote our cause, speak to the uneducated, make waves, ask for donations, VOTE!!!, attend the legislative lobbying effort February 16th at the State House. DO SOMETHING! In other words, don't expect the Junior Senator from Massachusetts to help.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Heins

P.S. 1/25/10, 1:45 pm: I've just learned that the proposed state funding for HIV may be cut in half. This is REALLY BAD NEWS. Huge implications to this. VTPWAC and all other ASOs will be fighting hard to keep what we have. Let your voice be heard too as you WILL be affected by this cut.

"SUBJECT: " is a monthly commentary by Jonathan Heins, the Consumer Advocate for the Coalition.

We welcome your reactions to Jonathan's comments. Please mail, fax, or email us your thoughts for future issues!

Here's what you can do to join the "Budget" Dance:

1. Contact your representatives at the State House

Contact these members of the House Committees on Appropriations and Human Services and voice your opinion:

Martha Heath, Chair of Appropriations
mpheath@aol.com 893-1291

Mark Larson, Vice Chair of Appropriations
mlarson@leg.state.vt.us 453-5517

Kathy Keenan, member of Appropriations
kkeen@leg.state.vt.us 524-5013

Ann Pugh, Chair of Human Services
apugh@leg.state.vt.us 863-6705

Michael Fisher, Vice Chair of Human Services
mfisher@leg.state.vt.us 453-5517

Contact your own representative. Not sure who they are? Go to <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/legdir/findmember4.cfm> to find all their contact information

What should you tell them?

Talk about your own experiences, and how important HIV services are in your life. Tell them how a 60% cut will affect your life. Tell them that the AMAP Pharmaceutical Rebates are not predictable and may not replace the funds that have been cut.

The important thing is to contact them and let them know what you think!!



2. Attend the HIV/AIDS Awareness Day at the State House

Tuesday, February 16



Join your Vermont AIDS Service Organizations at 9 a.m. for a morning of meet and greet at the Card Room (just before the bridge to the Cafeteria).

We'll be introduced in the House of Representatives, talk with Representatives and Senators, pin red ribbons on people who want to show their support for people living with HIV/AIDS, and meet with the Governor.

Numbers count!!!!

We want to have as many people as possible there this year to talk about the proposed budget cuts.

So, mark your calendars and plan on being in Montpelier on Tuesday, February 16

Contact your AIDS Service Organization or the Coalition for more information.

AT THE DRAG BALL OF GOOD & EVIL

Winter is a Drag Ball 2010

Saturday, February 13th
Higher Ground,
S. Burlington
Doors open at 7,
show starts at 8
Tickets \$20 in advance,
\$25 at door

In the Ballroom, **Heloise & the Savoir** **Faire**

"Heloise has "Cyndi Lauper's tone,
Debbie Harry's range, and many
cheesy come-ons—what's not to
love?" ...Marie Claire
Check out their website:
www.heloisemusic.com

In the Showcase Lounge,
The House of LeMay
will open with the annual Drag Ball
Cabaret accompanied by the Decoys
and Craig Hillard. Live
performances and DJs along with
the popular Diva Lounge will fill out
the night.

Hosted by the
House of LeMay
from Beaver Pond, VT
www.houseoflemay.com

Need tickets for the Drag Ball?
Contact Higher Ground:
888-512-SHOW or online:
higherground.frontgatetickets.com

**The Drag Ball is always sold
out, so don't be disappointed.**
Get your tickets early!!

Haiti

here's how you can help:

In the wake of Haiti's devastating earthquake, Housing Works announced today that it will collaborate with PHAP+, a Haitian coalition of PWA-led organizations, to provide desperately needed medical services and supplies to Haitians living with HIV/AIDS.

Housing Works President and CEO Charles King urged people to contribute cash donations to Housing Works' efforts in the region through www.housingworks.org.

"If we have learned anything from past disasters, including Hurricane Katrina right here in the U.S., marginalized communities, especially poor people with AIDS, end up being further marginalized by relief efforts that don't take them into account. Housing Works has committed its relief efforts to giving PWA-led organizations life-saving materials and supplies that they can distribute to the people they serve," King said.

PHAP+ is establishing a safe refuge for Haitians living with HIV/AIDS in St.-Marc, a city north of Port-au-Prince and outside of the earthquake zone. The refuge will include a staging area for processing donated supplies and providing medical treatment, as well as a tent city for displaced people. On Friday January 15, King and Dr. Vaty Poitevien, the Haitian medical director of one of Housing Works' clinics, will travel to St.-Marc to deliver the first shipment of thousands of dollars worth of HIV medications and other urgently needed medicines and supplies, such as tents, first aid kits and blankets.

Haiti has the worst HIV/AIDS rate in the Western hemisphere; some two percent of Haitians are living with HIV/AIDS.

ABOUT HOUSING WORKS

Housing Works is the nation's largest community-based AIDS organization and the nation's largest minority-controlled AIDS organization. Since 1990, Housing Works has provided a comprehensive array of lifesaving services, such as housing, medical and dental care, meals, case management, counseling and job training, to more than 20,000 homeless or low-income New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS.

The best way to support the relief effort and HIV/AIDS agencies in Haiti is through financial donations to organizations such as:

Clinton Bush Haiti Fund
American Red Cross
UNICEF
Partners in Health
Doctors Without Borders
Housing Works.



The Vermont People with AIDS Coalition

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