

35 Years

ACRHealth

Opening doors to create healthy communities



*Our Mission is to create healthy communities
by opening doors to services that enhance the
wellbeing of all.*

Dedication

This book is dedicated to ACR Health staff members who passed away 2013-2018.



*Kandise Hayward
2/10/14*

Resilient, strong, and warmhearted to her clients and co-workers



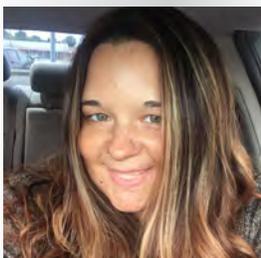
*Dale Woolson
4/1/15*

Made everyone feel loved, accepted, and safe



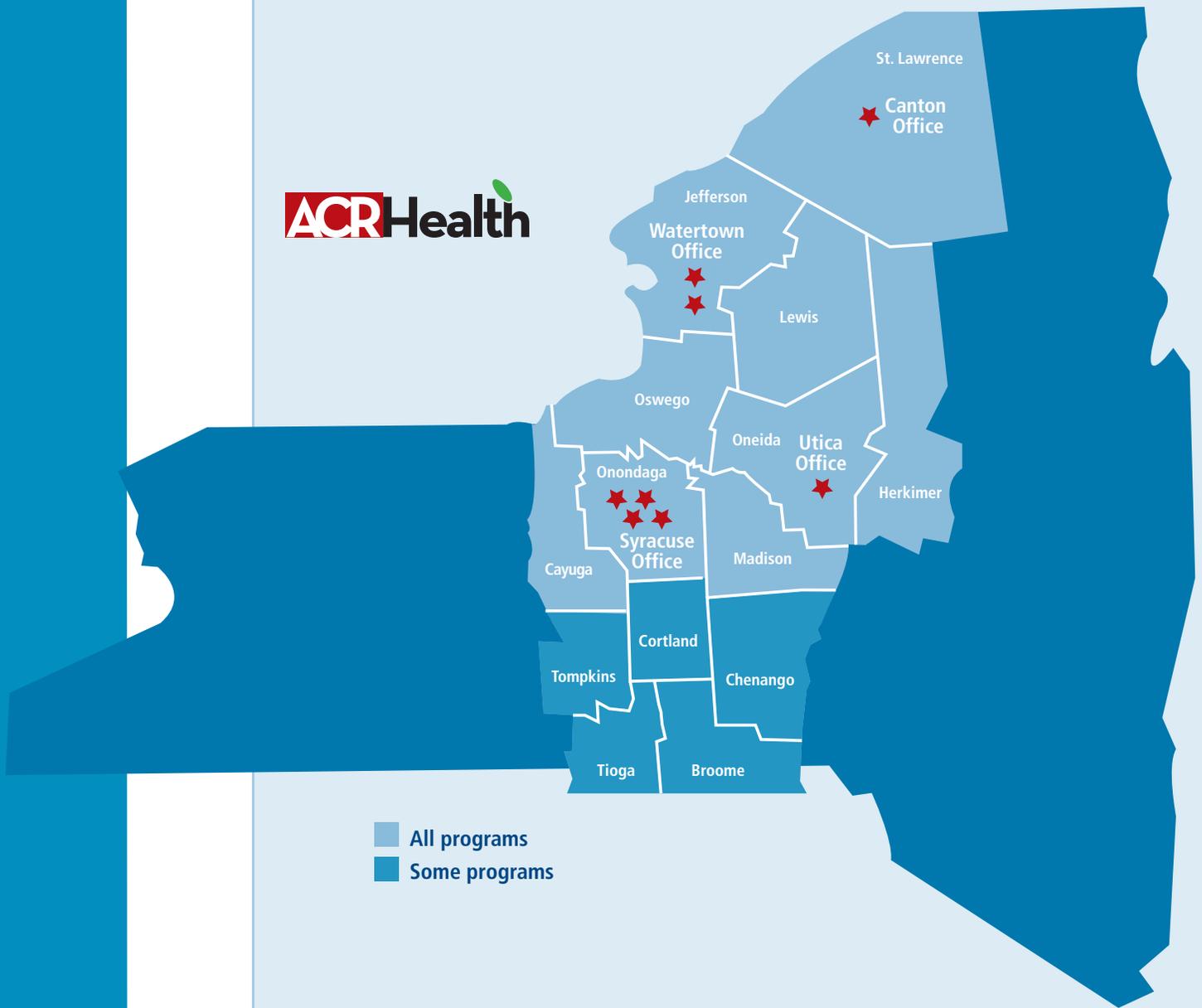
*Kevin Parker
7/15/16*

A caring, smart, and funny young man who worked at helping others



*Dawn Peck
10/24/17*

Put her heart and soul into her work with clients



- All programs
- Some programs

Created in 1983, ACR Health serves the counties of Cayuga, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, and St. Lawrence in New York State.

Our Vision

A community in which every person has the opportunity to achieve optimal health and equality.

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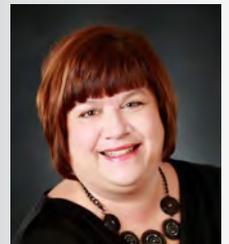
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Message from the Executive Director



Wil Murtaugh
Executive Director

ACR Health's primary focus beginning in 1983 was HIV/AIDS. Now, through the expanded priorities we undertake on behalf of our state and national funders, our focus has spread to our four cornerstone causes: **HIV/AIDS, Addiction, LGBTQ Equality, and Poverty.**

We campaign to keep HIV/AIDS front and center because it is such a killer – of people, of families, of hope. As executive director of ACR Health, I am keenly aware of all the lifesaving and life-affirming work that needs to be done outside the scope of AIDS.

Many conditions cripple the human spirit; some from illness, others from stigma and discrimination. ACR Health, through its groundbreaking work in HIV/AIDS supportive services, is adept at improving, transforming, and empowering lives. ACR Health's vision is a community in which everyone has the opportunity to achieve optimal health and equality. To that end, we work to address:

- **HIV/AIDS:** We are fully invested in New York's campaign to End AIDS by 2020. A high percentage of our clients are virally suppressed; we have increased testing; brought HIV+ individuals into care; and promoted the use of PrEP, a once daily pill that prevents HIV.
- **ADDICTION:** Our Drug User Health services provide comprehensive support for individuals who often feel marginalized by the health care system. We promote welcoming, affirming, and stigma-free syringe exchange and medical services for all individuals who use substances; work that is imperative to decrease overdose deaths, curtail the increase in hepatitis C cases, and avert a new wave of HIV.
- **LGBTQ Equality:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth find safe, supportive, and creative spaces at our Q Centers and regional support groups. The centers offer HIV, STD, and Hepatitis C testing; after school drop-in programs, leadership and advocacy training, and social events: with the goal of transitioning youth to successful adults.
- **POVERTY:** ACR Health cannot erase poverty, but we can and do improve overall quality of life through services like health insurance enrollment, a Drug User Health Hub, and experienced Care Managers who connect individuals and families to services that nurture and protect.

Today, those with HIV/AIDS, people with substance use disorders, LGBTQ individuals, and the poor are marginalized and blocked from a seat at the community table. ACR Health's programs and services help move them away from the margins and into the mainstream.

Many thanks to our staff, supporters, sponsors, volunteers, and friends who, for the past 35 years, have supported our mission: To create healthy communities by opening doors to services that enhance the wellbeing of all. Please join arms with us as we break down barriers and build up the human spirit as we embark on the next 35 years.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wil Murtaugh".

NEW YORK AND HIV/AIDS

On June 5, 1981 a news item from the Centers for Disease Control noted a “mysterious illness” affecting young homosexual men in New York and California.” The “mysterious illness” soon became known as AIDS; claimed 636,000 American lives; and spawned millions of headlines.



In 1983, Governor Mario Cuomo made New York State a national leader in response to the AIDS crisis. He set up 14 regional Community Service Providers (CSPs) to help AIDS patients and families in every county of the state. Since then, New York has provided support services and medication for those with AIDS, and invested heavily in preventing the spread of HIV.



On June 29, 2014, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a three-point plan to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2020 (ETE) and poured tens of millions of dollars into the effort to:

- 1 • Identify persons with HIV who remain undiagnosed
- 2 • Link and retain HIV positive individuals to healthcare
- 3 • Provide access to PrEP, a once daily pill that prevents HIV



ACR Health is one of the original 14 CSPs and, with 35 years of experience under our belts, we are leaders in the fight to bring about the End of AIDS.

By late 2017, there was significant progress to report in New York’s ETE campaign. For the first time in a decade, the number of new HIV infections diagnosed in men who have sex with men (MSM) decreased dramatically in New York State, down 10% in the number of new HIV infections in MSM from 2014 to 2015.

- In 2014, 1,975 men were newly diagnosed with HIV in New York.
- In 2015, the number of HIV cases decreased by 200 to 1,775.

1 • GET TESTED.

Ron Smith, a gay man who lived in a small town in upstate New York, was afraid to be tested for HIV. Though he worked in health care and understood how important it was to know his status, he was never tested for HIV until he got seriously ill. The test confirmed Ron's worst fear. He was positive for HIV and the disease had progressed to AIDS. His mother Denise spent countless hours working to help him regain his ability to walk and to talk. He took his medications as prescribed, but Denise said, "In the end he lost his ability to communicate, but not before he made it clear that he understood he had sacrificed his life out of fear."



Ron Smith died of AIDS related complications. December 5, 2016.

2 • GET TREATED.

Anthony Abbott got tested for HIV regularly. In April 2015, the test came back positive. He was shocked, devastated, and grief-stricken. He was in what he thought was an exclusive relationship with a young man he trusted enough to engage with him in unprotected sex.

"I felt untouchable. I remember thinking that there was nothing left. That I've reached the end of my story."

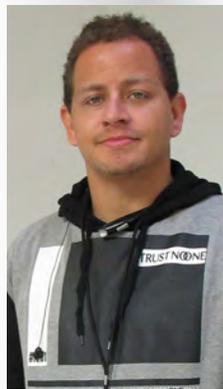
The HIV diagnosis was NOT the end of his story, but it was the beginning of a new chapter. Anthony connected with ACR Health. Began taking his medications consistently and saw his HIV virus become undetectable.

"If there is one thing I have learned through all of this is that it is okay to put yourself first. To be your own best advocate."



An HIV test saved Anthony Abbott's life.

3 • TAKE PREP.



Jason stays HIV free through PrEP.

Jason Mungin started using PrEP, a once daily pill to prevent HIV, after a very close call. He was new to town, lonely, and met a man who was both appealing and interested. Without conversation of any kind – including the important discussion about sexual safety – they had unprotected sex.

Three weeks later Jason learned that the man he had slept with was HIV positive. "The most hurtful thing about it was that he had contracted HIV from a man who did the same thing to him. That is just wrong."

Jason tested negative for HIV and started taking PrEP. He now receives counseling about reducing his health risks, and an HIV test every three months. He knows he dodged a bullet, and plans to stay free of HIV from now on, by taking PrEP every day.

The **Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program** provides a comprehensive system of care that includes primary medical care and essential support services for people living with HIV who are uninsured or underinsured. It also serves as an important source of ongoing access to HIV medication that can enable people living with HIV to live close to average lifespans.

The federal program provides HIV care and treatment services to more than half a million people each year, reaching 52% of all people diagnosed with HIV in the United States. **In ACR Health's nine-county service area, 189 individuals received Ryan White Services in 2017.**

Safe, stable, affordable housing keeps people healthy. The lack of stable housing interrupts an HIV positive person's ability to adhere to complicated medication, nutrition, and treatment regimens. A federal program exclusively for HIV positive individuals, **HOPWA - the Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS Program**, is the only Federal program dedicated to the housing needs of people living with HIV/AIDS. Under the HOPWA Program, HUD awards grants to local communities, States, and nonprofit organizations for projects that benefit low-income persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families. **In ACR Health's nine-county service area, 305 HIV+ individuals received housing assistance through four programs in 2017.**

Housing Program Worth the Wait

For people forced to live along the edges of the economy, ACR Health programs and services are a godsend. Take the case of 55-year-old Leon Caskinett who became permanently disabled when he fell from a third story roof in 2003. His back injury left him unable to work. He now lives in a trailer with his mother who is 83-years-old, disabled from a stroke, and has dementia.



Leon Caskinett receives rent subsidy through HOPWA.

On a very limited disability income, Leon has managed to keep his head above water by being a thrifty shopper, especially when it came to food. "You can buy an entire box of individual snack packs with an expired sell-by date for about a dollar. That's what I used to eat."

Because he has HIV, Leon is qualified for housing assistance through HOPWA, but the waitlist for housing assistance is long – about two years. In 2016, Leon finally made it to the top of the list; HOPWA started picking up half of his rent, allowing him to breathe – and to eat – a little better. "The first purchase I made was to eat a salad. They cost a lot and don't fill you up as much, but I really liked them, so that was the first thing I bought, and then a bag of fruit."

Leon now eats healthier food, has extra money for personal care items like deodorant and toilet paper; and has deep appreciation for ACR Health programs that have enhanced his life.

A Good Diet Is Important for People with HIV

Before enrolling in ACR Health's Nutrition Education Program, Donald Tate's favorite food was Hot Pockets and the second favorite was Ramen Noodles. Both items are loaded with salt and Donald had high blood pressure.



Donald Tate ate healthier and lowered his blood pressure.

Through nutrition education, Donald learned how to shop; cook; and read nutrition labels to reduce his salt intake. As he modified his behavior and diet; and he started noticing positive changes. "My blood pressure is down, my digestion is improved and I don't walk around hungry. I feel satisfied," said Tate.

His favorite food now is broccoli, which he likes to eat with white rice, carrots, and baked – not fried – chicken. Donald is committed to optimizing his health because, in addition to HIV, he has dialysis three times each week for kidney function. Any advantage he can find through better nutrition improves his life.

Though he admits to missing the taste of Hot Pockets he doesn't miss the high blood pressure that went along with his old eating habits. "Believe it or not, I sleep better too – no more pounding in my head."

AIDS Drug Assistance Program

The AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) provides free medications for the treatment of HIV/AIDS. The drugs provided through ADAP can help people with HIV/AIDS live longer and treat the symptoms of HIV infection. ADAP eligible individuals may also qualify for ADAP Plus Insurance Continuation Program (APIC) which can pay for commercial health insurance premiums for eligible clients. Policies must be comprehensive and provide full prescription and primary care coverage without annual coverage caps.



Donne Smith and E.J. Hawley qualify for ADAP and APIC insurance

Donne Smith and his husband qualified for ADAP:

"Thanks to ACR Health, my husband and I now have health insurance. My previous employer did not offer insurance and the coverage I bought before coming to ACR Health had expensive monthly premiums and high deductibles. As hourly workers, you can imagine that this was a huge concern for us. Doctor visits and any treatments had to go on a credit card, which I am still trying to pay off. E.J. paid over \$100 a week in premiums at his place of employment. That is a huge cost when you are trying to pay your bills. We are so thankful for the help, guidance, and support from ACR Health."

Clients can apply for ADAP through program enrollers in ACR Health's Insurance Department.



Bishop
"HIV Stops with Me" Advocate

HIV Stops with Me

Bishop was incarcerated in 2017 when he was diagnosed with HIV. He was referred to ACR Health's Criminal Justice Initiative within 90 days of his release so that we could link him to care and services in the outside world.

Bishop was absolutely stunned when he tested positive for HIV. He had been an HIV educator since his youth; he knew about safe sex; his partner of many years had shown him paperwork that his HIV status was negative which, of course, turned out to be a lie.

"It was a wakeup call to me and to my community that HIV can happen to anyone. If you are sexually active, always practice safe sex and get tested often," said Bishop. In his work as an educator, Bishop has met many people with HIV. "Women who were married and faithful who only found out about their husband's secret life after they were diagnosed with HIV." Bishop's bottom line, "only you can prevent HIV."

Now a spokesperson for the AIDS Institute's HIV Stops with Me campaign, Bishop tells HIV positive individuals to get on treatment and stay on it:

- Advances in HIV care have changed everything
- People who were very sick have come back to life
- Medication keeps HIV+ people healthy
- Staying undetectable, there's effectively no risk of infecting our partners

HIV cannot be cured. Though it can now be effectively treated, avoiding HIV is the very best advice Bishop can give.

Ending Hepatitis C in New York

In 2018 Governor Cuomo built off his 2014 commitment to end AIDS as an epidemic in New York State by committing to end the hepatitis C (HCV) epidemic as well.

The HCV elimination effort increases access to medications that can cure hepatitis C and expands programs to connect New Yorkers with prevention, screening, and treatment services. One priority population is those housed in correctional facilities. The prevalence of hepatitis C in the general U.S. population is 1%-2%, the rate in incarcerated populations ranges from 10%-41%.

"Getting people with hepatitis C into medical care as soon as they are released will maximize their health and minimize the spread of HCV," said John Arcaro, ACR Health's Director of Prevention: Community Initiatives.

ACR Health has been awarded annual grants of \$180,000 for four years to link HCV positive individuals to resources and care upon their release from prisons in the Oneida and Watertown hubs.



John Arcaro, Director of Prevention:
Community Initiatives



Transportation

Transportation has been a barrier to quality healthcare for HIV positive consumers since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic.

Federal funding allows ACR Health to help about 150 HIV positive clients in our nine-county service area to access medical and other essential services; to meet with their medical providers - physicians, dentists, mental health, social services, support groups, substance use providers, and other care management appointments.

Marty Spagnola can't drive. He is legally blind and has a prosthetic leg. "STAR Transportation is a life saver for me. Without it I couldn't get to the doctor, pharmacy, or my support groups at ACR Health."

STAR Transportation is a lifeline for Gertrude Frith, who, at age 71, decided to get serious about her health. "Transportation has allowed me to grow up and take responsibility for myself. I have a lot to do: my eyes, my rheumatoid arthritis, my mental health. I have insurance and now I have a way to keep my appointments."



Marty Spagnola



Gertrude Frith

Employment Services

Roger's life changed forever on June 3, 2009, at 2:15 p.m. "My defining moment was the day, hour, and minute that I found out I had HIV."

His reaction to the diagnosis was to become more focused and intent on creating new opportunities. "It made me want to push my limits – to become more than I ever expected I could be." He used ACR Health services; saw his HIV drop to undetectable levels; and got a job as a case manager with clients in six counties.

Roger's next defining moment came on January 31, 2017 when an on-the-job auto accident fractured a vertebra in his neck and caused three herniated disks.

Unable to work, Roger went back to school to turn his associate's degree into a bachelor's. Because of his HIV, Roger was eligible for education assistance from ACR Health's Employment Program which helped with college fees and transportation costs.

ACR Health's Employment Program for HIV+ people ran from October 1, 2013 – September 30, 2018. It is now open to other clients who need employment assistance, regardless of their health status. Services include resume building, job skills education, job retention, mock interviews, and referrals to educational opportunities. During its five years, the employment program assisted 250 individuals.



Roger discusses his options with Alexis Sutton, ACR Health Employment Specialist.

ACR Health offers a full range of testing opportunities through Community Initiatives funded by ten state and local grants. ACR Health conducts tests in neighborhoods, recovery facilities, prisons, and in ACR Health offices.

ACR Health prioritizes for testing individuals at high risk for HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, or hepatitis C. Behaviors like unprotected sex with multiple partners or anonymous sex, and some injecting practices such as re-using equipment or sharing syringes, can result in new cases of HIV, hepatitis C, or sexually transmitted diseases.

Anyone with questions or concerns about their risk of infection should come to ACR Health for an assessment, education, and, if warranted, testing. Tests are free to those who do not have health insurance.

MENS Project uses a comprehensive group of HIV prevention strategies to reach individuals at high risk of becoming infected with HIV. One of these offerings include initiatives targeted to men, and particularly men of color, who are statistically more likely to have HIV.



K. Daniel Reed
Prevention Services
and Testing Supervisor

“Knowing that it is not who you are, but what you do that puts you at risk, ACR Health’s initiatives educate individuals how to modify their behavior to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV,” said Prevention Services and Testing Supervisor, K. Daniel Reed.



Mijah Young



ACR Health's Safety First Team took their HIV prevention message to the people on National HIV Testing Day, June 27, 2018.

Women's HIV Prevention Program serves a minimum of 300 women annually, helping them learn their HIV status, sharing strategies for staying HIV free, linking them to Care Management and other relevant services.

Dawn was briefly homeless and was spiraling out of control when her aunt took her to ACR Health's Women's Support Group, part of the Women's Program. The group is a safe place to go where she can feel comfortable – even while crying, which Dawn says she is doing too much of these days.

“They welcomed me with open arms and did everything possible to make me feel better.”



HIV/AIDS Prevention & Education Program for Young Men

Because of the Q Center's ties with the young LGBTQ population in Central New York, the New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute awarded a \$150,000 grant to reach young gay, bisexual and other MSM ages 13-29, with a focus on youth of color, to combat new HIV and STD infections.



The Young Men's Project provides testing for HIV, Hepatitis C, Syphilis and STDs; evidence-based sexual health education for HIV+ individuals and individuals at risk of HIV infection; support groups; and linkage to prevention services, like PrEP. The program provides services throughout ACR Health's nine county service area.

According to the CDC:

Gay and bisexual men aged 13 to 34 account for two-thirds (64%) of HIV diagnoses among all gay and bisexual men.

The two age groups 13-24 and 25-35 have consistently had the highest rates of HIV infection in communities of color.

In 1998, ACR Health embarked on a mission to further support Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Questioning (LGBTQ) youth. In two decades of steady forward progress we have built a program that has inspired, empowered, uplifted, and encouraged thousands of young people and their families; and sought to enlighten residents of our nine-county service area about cultural competency.



Marissa Rice
Director of Youth Services

There were no government grants or programs for LGBTQ youth and [MARISSA RICE PHOTO] meeting spaces were temporary: usually a church basement or a restaurant's back room. "We wanted youth to have something permanent to depend on," said Marissa Rice, Youth Services Director. "Slowly and steadily we applied for grants, recruited donors, and held fundraisers to establish a network of safe-space LGBTQ youth programs that now feature the **Q Center Central New York, Q Center Mohawk Valley, and two Q Centers in Northern New York.**"

At ACR Health Q Centers, youth are empowered with the skills they need in order to make a change in a world that discriminates against them. "Our ultimate goal is to set youth on the path to independent, successful adulthood," said Rice.

The Q Centers have extensive programming; offer HIV, STD, and Hepatitis C testing; after-school drop in programs; leadership and advocacy training; and special events. Case Management services are available for LGBTQ youth who need assistance with housing, advocacy, medical care, mental health services, and other special needs.



Youth from ACR Health's Q Centers educate Albany lawmakers annually for LGBTQ Equality and Justice.



Q Center youth have participated in the Syracuse Gay Pride Parade since the Q Center opened its doors. Their route extends nearly a mile from the Q Center to the Inner Harbor, and they walk with pride.

Q Center Profiles



Sam Mudge

Sam was assigned female at birth; but with age, realized that he was male. At the Q Center Sam received referrals to affirming medical providers, and help navigating the legal complexities of his transition: changing his name and his gender marker on legal documents. Sam became a volunteer, giving back to the agency that helped him when he was struggling with his own transition. "It was such a relief to be able to come to group and meet other people like me. It helped to know that I wasn't alone."

Mikayla arrived at the Q Center as a freshman who had a lot of questions about her sexuality. She found it impossible to be authentic and feel accepted at her high school. At the Q Center she discovered tolerance, acceptance, and respect; features lacking in her interactions at school. "Bullies are the ones with a problem. I can't change them, but I have learned to ignore them and be confident in who I am."



Mikayla

Courage



Q youth from Northern New York at the New York State Fair in 2017

This iconic photograph of Northern New York Q Center youth with rainbow flags draped over their shoulders was taken as the group prepared to march in the Pride Parade on Pride Day at the 2017 New York State Fair. Youth from all of ACR Health's nine counties participated. The New York State Fair was the first in America to host an official Pride Day to celebrate the LGBTQ community.

"I think that it's essential for LGBTQ youth to participate and experience pride parades and festivals so that they can see and feel this level of support firsthand; that the community is always evolving; and that each one of them have a place in it," said Talia Shenandoah, Care Manager/Educator for the Q Center.

Artist Amy E. Bartell created an original piece of art based on the State Fair photograph, which became the cover of ACR Health's 2017 calendar.



2017 Calendar

The legend "Courage" – is painted across the sky. Courage is an appropriate word to describe ACR Health and the youth we serve at the Q Center. Courage is something this agency has always had in abundance.



What Do You Bring to the Table?

The Q Center’s monthly Sit Down Dinner Initiative provides a family experience for youth who may not otherwise have one. Youth, volunteers, and guest chefs to come together to share the preparing, the cooking and of course, the enjoying of a meal...together! “Guest Chefs” volunteer to come with the fixings for dinner, from salad to dessert, teaching youth some of their favorite recipes. If the youth don’t want to cook, there is always something to do from setting the table, coming up with a creative centerpiece, collecting cell phones (no phones at the table!) and everyone cleans up!

Dinner takes place during a support group where everyone shares their highs, lows, hopes, and dreams and like any other dinner table, you never know where the conversation will end up. “The rule is everyone helps, everyone shares and most importantly everyone matters,” said Q Center Supervisor, Tyler Gilyard.

Food brings people together and at the end of the meal, everyone gets to know someone a little bit better. “It was great to meet everyone there. We were so happy to be a part of the group for the night, we hope to come back soon,” said chefs Ira and Jeanne Klein, who came and shared a traditional Italian meal...and yes, there was enough sauce left for another meal the next day!



Ira and Jeanne Klein made their special pasta sauce.

Getting Homeless Youth Off the Streets

One of the chronic conditions many young LGBTQ individuals face is homelessness. Only about seven percent of the youth population identifies as LGBTQ, but they account for 40 percent of all youth homelessness.

In 2016, ACR Health received funding from HUD for our Rapid Re-Housing program for LGBTQ youth aged 18-24. The program provides rental subsidies, security deposits, emergency financial assistance, moving assistance and supportive case management. The Housing Case Manager helps youth identify housing based on their unique needs, preferences, and financial resources; deal with issues that may inhibit access to housing; and negotiate manageable lease agreements with landlords. Youth have access to Independent Living Skills workshops focused on budgeting, employment, education, nutrition, landlord relations and healthcare.

Those assisted through the Rapid Re-Housing program, like Demirous, receive up to 24 months of assistance. The apartments are not furnished; but through the support of the United Way the program provides youth with necessities like mattresses and pots and pans. Demirous is grateful for the roof – and he’s working diligently on the rest.

Most of the people we serve live in poverty. Demirous was 23 years old and homeless; with no job and no hope. “I had no place to turn, and then you helped me get a place of my own.” Like other clients, Demirous was capable of becoming self-sufficient, given a helping hand.

PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH IDENTIFYING AS LGBTQ



IN GENERAL POPULATION



IN HOMELESS POPULATION



Demirous, no longer homeless

Agencies Partner to Create Shelter for LGBTQ Youth



April 25, 2018, Syracuse - Wil Murtaugh, ACR Health Executive Director and Dan Sieburg, Rescue Mission Chief Executive Officer announce a partnership to establish a homeless shelter for LGBTQ youth.

Under a 2018 agreement, ACR Health and the Rescue Mission Alliance intend to establish an emergency 10-bed shelter for runaway and homeless lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth ages 12-17 in Syracuse and Onondaga County.

Area facilities capable of housing youth are frequently near or at capacity. The Rescue Mission is forced to turn youth away from its emergency shelter in Syracuse, which only serves adults 18 and older. ACR Health's Rapid Re-Housing program can only serve 18-24 year olds.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter, which will open when we meet our \$500,000 fundraising goal, will allow the Rescue Mission and ACR Health to bring what they each do best to the project. The Rescue Mission has extensive experience establishing and operating emergency shelters and permanent residences. ACR Health has a proven record of providing counseling and programming to youth, specifically LGBTQ youth.

The challenges these youth face are tremendous. They attempt suicide at a high rate; they report being sexually assaulted on the streets and inside shelters; and they are homeless in many cases because their families reject or abuse them. The new shelter will provide indispensable comfort and care to homeless youth.



ACR Health has a proven record of providing counseling and programming to youth, specifically LGBTQ youth.



November 11, 2015, Syracuse ~ ACR Health shared evidence-based strategies for providing quality healthcare to transgender individuals.

Transgender Healthcare in Transition

Transgender individuals are widely recognized as a group that faces substantial barriers to accessing quality health care. From instances of humiliation to outright denials to provide care, many providers and institutions have made it challenging for transgender individuals to obtain equal, consistent, and high-quality health care. As a result, transgender consumers and patients are marginalized rather than prioritized.

ACR Health, in its role as community educator on transgender issues, presented a first of its kind conference for medical professionals in Syracuse. Designed for medical and mental health providers, the conference explored the experiences of transgender patients and provided evidence-based strategies for improving health outcomes.

Q Center staff provided a session on LGBTQ Cultural Competency, including terminology, sub-populations of the trans community, and best-practices for creating a safe and affirming experience for transgender patients. Medical and mental health providers specializing in the care and treatment of transgender individuals shared how they implement best-practices in their offices. Transgender individuals shared their experiences and provided guidance about improving doctor/patient communication.

Providers left with the knowledge and resources to implement policies and practices to improve the experiences of transgender patients.

Creating Safer Schools for Transgender Students

The Q Center sponsored workshops for Central New York, North Country, and Mohawk Valley educators and service providers on the topic of: Creating Supportive Schools for Transgender Students: A Review of Best Practices.

These workshops were ACR Health's effort to close the often harmful gap in knowledge and understanding surrounding how to support and communicate successfully with transgender students. The best way to be an ally is to understand that each student is an individual and an expert on their own lives. Advice to educators: listen and take your cues from them.



Q Center and school teams invest in themselves by participating in fundraising events throughout ACR Health's nine-county service area.

Mother of Trans Youth Helps Families through Transition

Karen Fuller first came to the Q Center looking for resources to help her family through her child's transition. Over the years she has become one of the most valuable resources the Q Center has for families with transgender children.



Karen Fuller
Family Peer Advocate

Fuller, the Q Center's Family Peer Advocate, is the only Credentialed Family Peer Advocate in New York State certified to work with families of transgender youth.

"Every family with a transgender child has a different story. As a Family Peer Advocate, I meet them where they are at and I share what I have learned through my own experience and my training to help them," said Karen.

Q Center support groups are there for the whole family, with TransYouth, Trans-Parent, and TransSiblings groups meeting regularly in Syracuse, Utica and Watertown.

Comprehensive Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program

Teen pregnancy rates in Onondaga County are some of the highest in Upstate New York. ACR Health's Pregnancy Prevention Program is a comprehensive pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease (STD) prevention program targeting youth between the ages of 11-21 in Onondaga County, including LGBTQ youth. Most sexual health programs center around male-female relationships, but we know that LGBTQ youth are just as susceptible to HIV, STDs and unplanned pregnancy as any other sexually active young person. ACR Health understands that regardless of how someone identifies, factual and evidence-based education is imperative.

The Comprehensive Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program provides evidence-based sexual health education for teens, parent/caregiver education, and accurate information about local family planning and sexual and reproductive health care services available to young people. ACR Health will receive an estimated \$2.8 million over five years from the NYS Department of Health, Adolescent Health Unit, to implement this programming.

"The Syracuse City School District is fortunate to be partnering with ACR Health to bring this program to our students who may have an increased risk of having an unintended pregnancy," said Jaime Alicea, Superintendent of Syracuse Schools. "ACR Health has a long track record of providing comprehensive and appropriate sexual health education in our community and we are confident this program will improve students overall health, well-being and development."



Jaime Alicea, Syracuse School
District Superintendent

The \$500 Eddie "Future Greatness" award supports and promotes higher education. This award is dedicated to helping youth with the desire and ambition to succeed. It is available to all LGBTQ youth and their allies, 16-26, who are registered in an accredited post-secondary institution.

Eddie's Future Greatness Fund was established by community members Laura Serway, Cindy Seymour and Paul Mahalick; in memory of Eddie Kirsteins who passed away in January 2012 at the age of 31.

In its first six years, the Eddie Fund distributed:

- \$13,000 in awards
- 26 students receiving award
- 5 students have finished degrees
- \$5,250 awarded in Extra Eddies



Eddie Kirsteins



Emily Dibble

Of note, Emily Dibble won the Eddie Fund three times and was awarded extra money for maintaining her GPA.

"I'm so grateful to be receiving the Eddie Future Greatness Award. This award helps support me in focusing on my studies in biopsychology, cognition, and neuroscience and art & design.

"About myself? I like bright colors, human sexuality, snow, and making art. I'm passionate about ending sexual violence and working against oppression. I'll use the money to help fund my study abroad, required for my degree, in Ireland this summer (2014) at the Burren College of Art in a month long program focused on landscape and shadows.

"Receiving this award means a lot to me - it's very inspiring to know that my future, as a writer and as a queer youth, matters so much that people think it's worth investing in. The money I receive will play a hefty role in relieving the stress that comes with being a college student who has bills to pay. I cannot say thank you enough to everyone who played a role in my receiving this award! But thank you. Really."



Katherine Boone

Katherine Boone was one of the recipients of the Q Center's Eddie "Future Greatness" award. She made headlines on a much broader scale in the summer of 2015 when the story of her transition to female was featured in the New York Times.

"I am transgender, and while I have faced many hardships and struggles I have come to understand that throughout my journey I have been very fortunate to receive generous amounts of support and acceptance.

"Originally, I wished to stay 'stealth.' I just wanted to be myself without anyone knowing I was transgender. However, I saw many hardships that other transgender people faced regularly and found them disturbing and moving.

"I realized I needed to make more of my fortunate circumstances, and 'pay it forward.' I realized I had to put myself out there so the world could see another example of what it is to be transgender and to advocate for others like me. In doing so I have made great strides towards comfort within myself."

Q Center Milestones throughout nine-county service area

- 1998** • ACR Health welcomed the Lesbian and Gay Youth Alliance Support Group
- 2001** • Three-year grant from the United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica launched the Utica LGBTQ Youth Safety Project
- 2004** • In CNY, Transgender Support Group started meeting separately from lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth
- 2005** • In CNY, ACR Health rented stand-alone space to open the Q Center
• In Utica, first LGBTQ Youth Pride Prom was held
- 2006** • United Way CNY funded the Q Center director
- 2007** • David Bohnett Foundation installed CyberCenter at the Q Center
- 2008** • United Way CNY granted three years of funding to the Q Center
- 2010** • \$300,000 federal earmark acquired to expand youth programs
- 2011** • Allyn Foundation gave challenge grant for Q Center Development Associate
- 2013** • 5-year state grant for LGBT Case Management and Cultural Competency workshops
• First Eddie Fund education award granted
- 2015** • Q Center Mohawk Valley has a dedicated space at ACR Health offices at 287 Genesee Street Utica
• Q Center groups established in Jefferson and Lewis Counties.
- 2016** • HUD funded Housing grant for homeless LGBT youth 18-24
• North Country added TransYouth and TransParent groups
- 2018** • ACR Health and Syracuse Rescue Mission collaborate to establish shelter for homeless LGBT youth
• Q Support Groups established in Auburn
• Q Center CNY updated flooring and furniture for support group and therapy rooms
• Q Center CNY relocates to 835 Hiawatha Boulevard West

ADDICTION

ACR Health has dealt with stigma since we opened our doors 35 years ago to serve people with AIDS; individuals who were rejected by their families and shunned by society. Having been born out of the AIDS epidemic, we readily recognize the substantial Discrimination all substance users face.

Stigma around substance use has a terrible impact on human dignity and creates barriers to testing, care, support, and treatment services. To be truly effective in our work we must address the long-standing problem of stigma.

Our work against stigma is three fold. We can work to **prevent** it, our clients can work to **overcome** it, but only you can **stop** it.

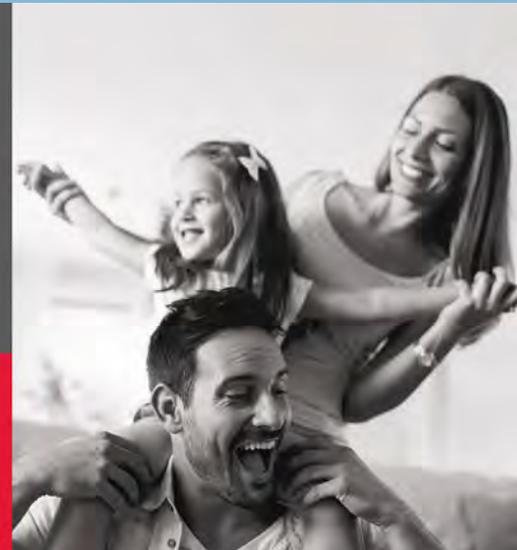
Those with substance use disorder are stigmatized and subjected to bigotry, intolerance, or injustice because of this disease. Addiction is one of our four fundraising causes because the need is immense.

some who have overcome IT refer to it as A chronic brain disease. Others, like Amy, simply call addiction The Devil.



Addiction is closer than you think.

End the Stigma.



Accidental Descent into Drug Abuse

Amy's Story

Before a significant back injury, Amy was a highly motivated hospital manager who owned a small business on the side. One morning when she tried to get out of bed, she could not move.

"I woke up paralyzed. I couldn't even walk. I had emergency back surgery, and that is when it all started."



Amy's back surgery led to years of opioid dependence.

Amy received a Percocet prescription that eased her pain enough to allow her to work. When the Percocets were no longer effective, her doctor increased the strength and number prescribed, until she received 360 maximum strength Percocets a month. This continued for eight years, until her doctor abruptly dropped her.

Separated from her lifeline, Amy turned to the streets to buy pills. She went through all of her savings, took on new debt in order to satisfy her cravings. "Then one day someone said, 'Wow, you're spending all that money. Why? For ten dollars you can get heroin that does the same thing.' And there came that devil."

Amy's journey wound its way to ACR Health, and Syringe Exchange Coordinator Belinda Felder. Amy came because a man in her treatment program told her that nobody at ACR Health would judge her.

"For me, as a harm reductionist, it's not what you do, but how you do it. If you are shooting heroin, make sure you use a clean needle every time. Until Amy can find herself in a good place, I need to keep her healthy."

"Your place is wonderful," Amy said. "If I didn't have support from Belinda and your agency, I would have been in the grave."

Many with substance use disorders start like Amy, with an injury and a legitimate prescription for a pain reliever.

The New York State Legislature's 2012 attempt to curb over-prescription of pain medications cut off the endless supply, but had the unintended consequence of creating thousands of victims like Amy.



Belinda Felder, Syringe Exchange Coordinator, helped Amy get "to a better place."

Drug User Health Hub



Nurse Practitioner Lorraine Padden reviews test results at ACR Health's Drug User Health Hub.

All services offered through the Drug User Health Hub are based on the principles of Harm Reduction, which apply strategies from safer use, to managed use, to abstinence in order to meet drug users "where they're at."

Many clients have young children and fear they will be taken away. If clients want to get into treatment, ACR Health will help them. If they want to keep using drugs we show them how to reduce their harm. Our goal is to stabilize their lives.

ACR Health's Drug User Health Hub, established in July 2017, is one of 11 Health Hubs statewide set up by the AIDS Institute to enhance Harm Reduction and Syringe Exchange Programs with an array of services determined by the needs of the participants who are served by ACR Health.

Drug User Health Hub services:

- Acute medical care
- Medication Assisted Treatment
- Overdose prevention, aftercare, and safety planning
- Connection to substance use treatment
- Testing and treatment for Hepatitis C
- On-site mental health counseling
- Training for providers to ensure availability of medical services, mental health, and substance use services



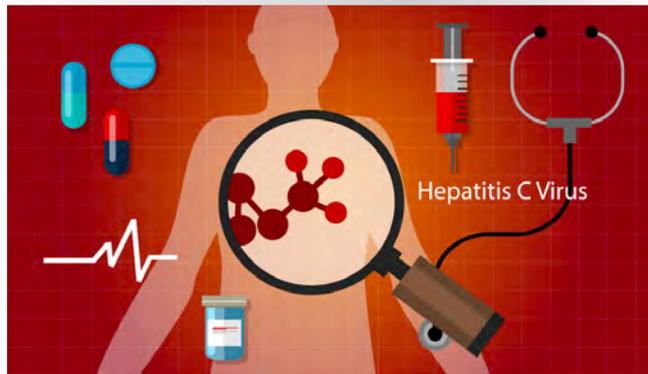
Alexandra Punch
Director of Drug User Health

Many clients come for a bridge Suboxone prescription as they wait to enter treatment. Most are with ACR Health's bridge program for no more than three months. We also provide Suboxone maintenance for clients who are not engaged in or seeking treatment, but want to stop injecting opioids.

"If you spent a day in our Hub, you would understand how brave these individuals are. They have hit rock bottom and admitted defeat. They are willing to start that long climb back despite the odds, despite the stigma they face," said Director of Drug User Health, Alexandra Punch. "I think they are courageous."

Service Expansion at Health Hub

ACR Health's Drug User Health Hub expanded its practice to treat individuals with hepatitis C in mid-2018. Among the first hepatitis C patients were two young men who were in recovery after years of heroin use. The two are from different states and were unknown to each other before meeting at a Syracuse halfway house; but they share similar stories, similar struggles, and admit they have only their impulsivity to blame for getting hepatitis C. We have changed their names in order to share their story.



**From 2004-2014,
Hepatitis C increased
400%
among people aged 18-29**

Both 26-year-old *Franklin* and 27-year-old *Kurt* know exactly when they exposed themselves to hepatitis C. Each knowingly shared injection equipment with a person who had been diagnosed with hepatitis C. They just didn't care at the time. The possibility of hepatitis was a remote risk they were willing to take at the time they were so focused on getting heroin into their systems.

Today, they are each at the point in their recovery where they want to be healthy and are prepared to tackle the residual problem of hepatitis C. The two were familiar with ACR Health through its Syringe Exchange Program and wanted to come to the Drug User Health Hub because at ACR Health they have been treated fairly and nonjudgmentally.

Hepatitis C is a liver infection caused by the **Hepatitis C** virus (HCV). Hepatitis C is a blood-borne virus.

Today, most people become infected with the **Hepatitis C** virus by sharing needles or other equipment to inject drugs.

Effective medication is available to treat **Hepatitis C**. Treatments have a 95% cure rate.



Rhiannon

Rhiannon was thirteen years old when she used heroin for the first time, and it was her mother who injected the heroin into her vein. Now, at 32, an older and wiser Rhiannon said, "Mom was sick in the mind. She thought she was helping me, but gave me heroin instead of the help I needed."

Rhiannon never finished high school; overdosed more than once; failed in repeated attempts at recovery; got her GED; attended college; stole a car; served two years in prison; and eventually ended up with a potentially fatal blood and bone infection which led, strangely, to two pieces of very good fortune.

Central New York hospitals have seen a 600 percent increase in endocarditis and blood infections among people who inject heroin and other opioid drugs. These patients often need six weeks of intravenous antibiotic treatment or heart valve replacement surgery to recover at an average national cost of \$120,000. In all, Rhiannon needed ten weeks of intravenous antibiotics to recover.



Rhiannon before treatment

To help contain costs, the state awarded a \$2.3 million grant to the Centers at St. Camillus to develop a nursing home program to care for some of these patients. ACR Health subcontracted with St. Camillus to work with qualified patients. The first piece of good fortune came when Rhiannon became ACR Health's first client to enroll in the St. Camillus program. When we first met her she had to use a walker to stay upright. She was frail, exhausted, and had lost all of her teeth.

Rhiannon has recovered her strength and received the medical, dental, and mental health care she needed; a very good example of how lives can be turned around with the right kind of support.

The second piece of good luck came to Rhiannon by way of being selected for the Road2RecoveryCNY program established by a Central New York couple whose son beat his opioid addiction by attending long term treatment. News of this placement has transformed Rhiannon. "This is unforgettable for me. St. Camillus, ACR Health, and Road2RecoveryCNY has completely changed my life and offered me a new beginning," said Rhiannon.

Rhiannon's "road to recovery" is being funded by Darlene and Tim Endy. "The turning point for our son was the one year stay at BRC Recovery in Austin, Texas. We want to bring that kind of hope and healing to Central New York," said Darlene Endy. The cost for Rhiannon's treatment is about \$50,000.

*"It's okay to change –
to be somebody better"*
Rhiannon

The Endy's have established a fund to raise money to help people with substance use disorder who don't have enough money or insurance coverage get the kind of long term treatment their son received. The nonprofit Central New York Community Foundation is administering the new fund, Road2RecoveryCNY.

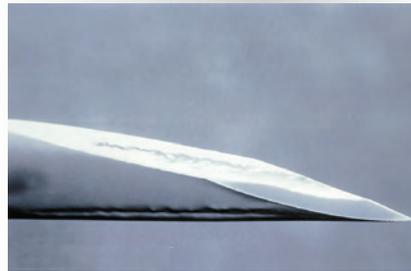
Syringe Exchanges



**SYRINGE
EXCHANGE
PROGRAM**

Every week, 25-30 new people walk through the doors of ACR Health Syringe Exchange Program (SEP) offices and enroll to receive clean, sterile syringes free of charge. SEP has expanded to locations in three cities: Syracuse, Utica, and Watertown. Other communities in our nine-county service area are either served by our “backpack peers” or make special arrangements to receive clean syringes.

ACR Health provides syringes for every use, including medical conditions like diabetes, but most syringes go to people who inject substances like hormones, steroids, cocaine, or heroin. They are the population we need to reach: people who won't get their syringes from a pharmacy because of the stigma surrounding their drug use, but cannot live their lives without needles, so they share instead – and share potentially dangerous diseases in the process.



New Needle

In addition to preventing the spread of infectious diseases, using a clean syringe every time you inject can help prevent damage to veins, prevent formation of abscesses, and blood clots. Used needles are blunt and can damage skin and veins at the injection site.

Syringe Exchange Programs offer a non-judgmental space for individuals to feel safe in discussing, not only their need for syringes, but also any other concerns they may have in their lives. Syringe Exchange Programs do so much more than just offer syringes; they offer hope in a time when many feel hopeless and judged because of their drug use.



Needle used 6x

Because of syringe exchange programs across the state, New York has seen a dramatic decrease in the spread of HIV among injection drug users.

- In 1990, 54% of injection drug users were infected with HIV.
- In 2016, the prevalence rate for HIV in the same group was less than 2%.

Syringe Exchange Programs do so much more than just offer syringes; they offer hope in a time when many feel hopeless and judged because of their drug use.

High Cost of Accidental Overdose

ADDICTION



Kevin Parker

24-year-old Kevin Parker, our co-worker at ACR Health, died of a drug overdose on July 15, 2016. He left behind a two-year-old son and a mother, Donna, who wrote from her heart when she penned her son's obituary.

"Kevin was a caring, smart, and funny young man who worked at helping others and was destined for greatness. Sadly, he suffered from an addiction, a disease which took his life. The disease knows no social boundaries, economic status, or prejudice. The demons he battled within himself proved to be greater than he."



Kevin and his mother Donna

Donna made substance use disorder a focal point of Kevin's obituary because she wanted to take a public stand about drug addiction. "Heroin will grab you and you will be addicted the first time you use it. They say the high is like no other. If you use it once and you are able to walk away, you think you can do it again. And the next time perhaps you are dead within 15 minutes."

The most important message to those who use injection drugs is DO NOT USE ALONE. There is no one to call 911 and get help.

Narcan Reverses Opioid Overdoses



Since 2014, ACR Health has trained thousands of emergency personnel and individuals how to administer Narcan (naloxone), the opioid overdose rescue drug. The life-saving drug is widely available at pharmacies statewide, with most health insurance plans covering the cost.

Narcan kits are provided free of charge to individuals who are themselves at risk for overdose or their family members or friends who receive training through ACR Health. Those individuals may also acquire Narcan in pharmacies through the N-CAP program without bringing in a prescription.

Naloxone (generic Narcan) Co-payment Assistance Program (N-CAP)

- Co-payments for naloxone in an amount up to \$40 for each prescription dispensed will be billed to N-CAP, not to the individual getting naloxone.
- No individual enrollment is necessary.
- Your primary health care coverage may limit the monthly amount of naloxone that will be covered.

Saving Lives



Kevin Donovan
Overdose Prevention Coordinator

Kevin Donovan's firsthand account of lifesaving power of Narcan.

The last time I injected heroin was July 23, 2013. In the last five years, I've lost 6 friends to opioid overdoses.

My job, providing the community with Narcan and training people how to use it, became my immediate passion. Each person I train is an opportunity to save someone else from experiencing the grief of losing a friend, or brother, or sister, or father, or mother, or son, or daughter. In my short time here at ACR Health we've trained roughly 1,500 people; 236 of them reported that they used a Narcan kit to save a life.

There was a mother who saved her 21-year-old son who had a 2-year-old son of his own. There was the 27-year-old former high school athlete, whose fight with substance use disorder left him homeless, who reported saving at least three people with Narcan. There were spouses, friends, and children who saved their loved ones lives. There were staff at area shelters and drug treatment facilities who saved their clients; and there were ordinary citizens, good Samaritans, who saved strangers in public places.

Narcan is an extremely effective emergency response medicine that will temporarily reverse any opioid overdose if given in time. It saves lives, and with life, there's hope. It gives the rescued the opportunity to live to fight another day and a chance at recovery. And, it saves people from the grief of losing loved ones.

International Overdose Awareness Day

The opioid epidemic has become a global, national, and local crisis. In 2017, more Americans died from a drug overdose (72,000) than were killed in the entire Vietnam War. This epidemic kills more people annually than gun homicides and car accidents combined, and more than the AIDS epidemic did at its peak.



August 31, 2018, Syracuse ~
Family members who have lost loved ones to
opioid overdose, mark International Overdose
Awareness Day.

- In Onondaga County in 2017, 91 people died from opioid related overdoses.
- That represents a 36% decrease from the year before when 142 people died.
- In 1999, the number of people who died from opioids in Onondaga County was zero.
- In one year, ACR Health trained 2,002 individuals how to use Narcan, the opioid overdose rescue drug.
- 255 individuals have voluntarily reported reversals with the kits we provided.
- Currently, there are 21 million Americans who have a substance use disorder, more than the annual number of cases of cancer in the U.S.

International Overdose Awareness Day is a global event to raise awareness that death from drug overdose is preventable. In the U.S. it is promoted by the Centers for Disease Control.

ACR Health offers as many as 40 programs that solve specific problems for our clients. These traditional programs definitely make life better for the people we serve, but they offer very little flexibility. Often the programs stop just short of true success for clients. That's when our donors make their impact felt.

Due to your generosity through the years, we have helped hundreds of people get on a better footing. We have, for example, bought steel-toed work boots for a man with a new job; purchased a mattress so a two-year-old no longer had to sleep on the floor; bought a sofa for a homeless youth who got housing but had no place to sleep or sit; and paid the fees and lodging for a group of young transgender individuals to attend a national conference. Grant money doesn't cover specialized needs. You, our faithful donors, met these goals.

Recently (October 2018) ACR Health secured one million dollars in grants that will bridge the gap left between what traditional programs can offer and the level of assistance people actually need to emerge from poverty. These grants help only narrowly defined populations, but are a step forward

ACR Health cannot erase poverty, but we can and do improve overall quality of life by connecting qualified individuals to existing programs and applying donors' gifts where a positive impact can be made.

We serve poor people. Opportunities to help in meaningful ways come our way quite often. What follows are a few stories of those rescued by the safety net ACR Health has woven to protect people under our care.

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.”

- Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa

“It is hard to argue that housing is not a fundamental human need. Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart.”

Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, 2016

ACR Health is very effective in placing individuals into treatment programs, but the Substance grant provides no funding to place them in decent housing after they are released from a halfway house. In the following case, we found a way to work around the barriers.



Don Adair

Don's Story

When Don's wife died his life fell apart. He fell into addiction and in quick order lost his job and his home. A good friend, afraid that Don would die, brought him to ACR Health.

“I had struggled trying to get into recovery on my own. No one had room for me. I really didn't know what to do next, but I knew I couldn't go on like I was. It wasn't bringing my wife back.”

ACR Health's Peter Emery found a treatment facility for Don. He followed the rules, stuck to the program, and moved in with a relative's family when he was released. He was on the road to recovery, but certainly not home free. He needed a place of his own. The stress of his “shared” living space put his recovery at risk.

Here's the paradox: Don had a small monthly income that would cover rent, but he didn't have the \$500 upfront deposits to get into housing. The Holiday Angel Fund came through with the one-time money for Don and he remains independently housed and successful in recovery.

“Lack of money is like stepping on you when you are trying to get up. ACR Health has been wonderful helping me get past the hurdles I'm trying to jump over and I am so grateful they helped me with this.”

Qualified individuals who have multiple chronic health conditions can now receive help from ACR Health's Care Management team to coordinate all primary, acute, behavioral health, and long-term services and other supports to treat the whole person.

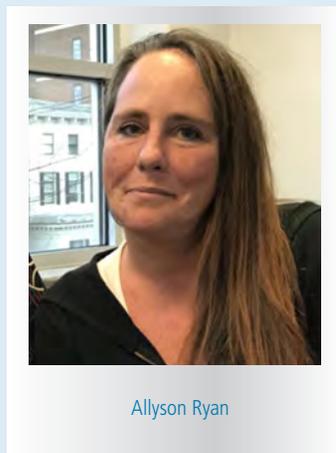
ACR Health's Expanded Care Management opportunities are part of New York's Health Home program which aims to provide access to services to help bring down healthcare costs statewide. When people don't have a primary care physician services, they go to emergency departments for their care, which is expensive and lacks follow-up.

ACR Health Care Managers work one-to-one to identify needs and link qualified individuals with services. Care Management Services include: comprehensive care management; care coordination; health promotion; comprehensive transitional care and follow-up; patient and family support, and referral to community and social support services.

Eligibility Requirements

You may be eligible if you have:

- Medicaid, Medicaid/Medicare, Uninsured, Self-Pay, or Private Insurance
- Have one single qualifying condition; HIV/AIDS or Serious Mental Illness; or
- Have two or more chronic health conditions: chronic conditions include, but are not limited to, mental illness, substance abuse, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, a BMI over 25.



Allyson Ryan

Allyson Ryan of Utica was given a new lease on life when ACR Health Care Managers linked her to primary care and other needed services. She was hooked on substances since age 14 when her mother made whiskey sours and left them in the blender for her children to drink. Allyson and her brother drank the whiskey sours and also got "an old guy in the neighborhood" to buy them beer or peppermint schnapps. "We were drinking to get drunk, whenever the opportunity arose," said Allyson, who is in recovery from opioid and alcohol abuse.

Allyson volunteers with ACR Health as a Peer. She engages with people who face similar struggles.

"I have peace of mind now. ACR Health has been a breath of fresh air."

New Ways to Help More People

New York's efforts to reduce Medicaid costs statewide have brought two blockbuster programs to ACR Health and created new opportunities for some of the most vulnerable people in our community: the homeless and those with mental health concerns. Both grants seek to lower the cost of health care.

Grant #1: a five year, \$500,000 per year grant, beginning October 1, will allow ACR Health to provide housing for up to 65 homeless individuals per year. The housing program is funded through New York State Department of Health's Medicaid Re-Design "Health Homes" program, and is designed to lower overall Medicaid costs.



Jennifer Cook
Director of Support Services

"This opens up opportunities for us to serve people we've never before been able to help," said Jen Cook, Director of Support Services. "Housing is a key factor in improving overall health care while lowering costs."

Homeless individuals often consume significant health services through frequent trips to hospital emergency departments (ED), at many times the cost of an office visit. Homeless individuals can go to EDs as many as 100 times a year seeking warmth in the winter or basic medical services they could receive from a primary care physician at a fraction of the cost.

According to the National Health Care for Homeless Council: 'When people have stable housing, they no longer need to prioritize finding a place to sleep each night and can spend more time managing their health, making time for doctors' appointments, and adhering to medical advice and directions. In many ways, housing itself can be considered a form of health care because it prevents new conditions from developing and existing conditions from worsening.'

Grant #2: provides \$500,000 funding for 18 months to provide comprehensive assistance for Medicaid eligible individuals who rely heavily on ED services. ACR Health Care Manager Supervisor Linda Munson, a representative from Crouse, and a mental health counselor work one-on-one with patients to address their healthcare needs overall; within 48 hours of discharge the patient receives a home visit.

ACR Health has been working with Crouse Hospital to increase such patients' access to care and decrease hospital utilization. Through this collaboration, we have found that those who over-utilize the ED have complex needs, very often unmet mental health needs. To that end, ACR Health has connected with Psychological Health Care to provide counseling for our clients. We have found tremendous success in being able to quickly connect clients to counseling, and are now applying this strategy to those we encounter who over use ED services.

This 18-month program is funded by Central New York Care Collaborative Innovation Fund whose main purpose is to reduce avoidable hospital use by 25% over five years.



Linda Munson
Care Manager Supervisor

ACR Health's much acclaimed annual Holiday Angel program collects gifts and monetary donations during November and December every year for the benefit of our clients. The community response is so generous as to allow us to accumulate a nest-egg for use year-round. A monetary donation to the Holiday Angel Fund is a gift you can make that keeps on giving.

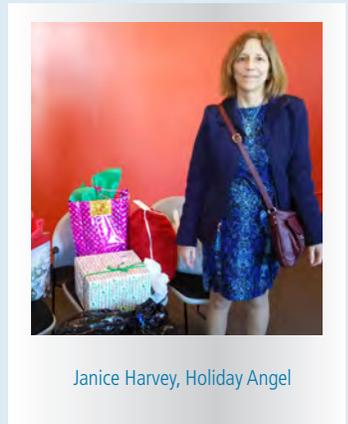


One of the most generous annual Holiday Angel gifts is from Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS of New York City. Their mission to "mitigate the suffering of individuals affected by HIV/AIDS and to support organizations across the country which provide treatment or services for people specifically affected by HIV/AIDS and their families" dovetails perfectly with what ACR Health accomplishes through Holiday Angels.

The traditional Holiday Angel program pairs volunteer community members – Angels - with a qualified ACR Health client and their family. Angels like Janice Harvey are given a list of "needs" compiled by the client and their Care Manager, and then makes holiday purchases based on the list.

The lists contain requests for basic items like clothing, bathroom towels, kitchen supplies, or personal items like shoes or a coat.

Participating Angels can buy as many or as few of the items on the list as they wish. Many community groups, churches, or extended families pool their resources every year to sponsor an ACR Health client and members of their family. Several hundred people rely on Holiday Angels for whatever holiday gifts come their way.



Janice Harvey, Holiday Angel

This Mohawk Valley family was especially grateful for the gifts from their Holiday Angel, telling their care manager that they had nothing to share until Wendy arrived on their doorstep with presents.



Richard Walker, left, Care Manager Wendy Grullon, center, and Rosalie Davis, right, wanted their Holiday Angel to know how much they appreciate the presents.

ACR Health's Director of Major Gifts, Frances Hradil said, "We are always impressed by the stunning generosity of our Holiday Angels. Poverty is a constant companion for many of our clients and their families. They often have nothing to give their loved ones at holiday time. Thanks to our Angels, they do."



Frances Hradil, Director of Major Gifts

The Living Legacy of Bradley Clifford Caine



Bob and Diane Caine

Bob and Diane Caine of New Hartford established a memorial fund in memory of their oldest child and only son, Bradley Clifford Caine, after he died of AIDS in 1987 at age 31.

In high school, Bradley had been a star athlete; and played the lead role in every production of New Hartford High School in his four years there. He graduated magna cum laude with a degree in political economics, and moved to Los Angeles.

Bradley called home in May of 1987; told his parents he had pneumonia, the kind that meant he had AIDS. His mother took a leave of absence from her teaching job and never left his side. He died four months later.

During Brad's illness, numerous critical needs became evident, needs that were expensive and beyond the reach of many AIDS clients. In recognition of those needs, Brad's parents and sisters established the Bradley Clifford Caine Memorial Fund for AIDS. That fund continues to provide relief for qualifying ACR Health clients whose needs are not covered by existing grants.



Bradley Clifford Caine
December 13, 1955-September 21, 1987

August 25, 2017

An HIV positive client in crisis reached out for assistance after he had exhausted all other options following a fire at his apartment. He was not allowed to move back into his apartment for three weeks. After Red Cross had paid to their limit, the Bradley Caine fund assisted the client in paying for a five days in a hotel after which he was able to move back into his apartment. The client has been grateful ever since and says he would always remember the assistance the Caine Family was able to give him.

June 25, 2018

This HIV positive individual moved from a different city to the area with nothing of his own. After weeks in a shelter, we assisted him in getting into an apartment, but he had nowhere to rest his head. The Bradley Caine fund was used to request a bed for the client as he was not financially stable and could not afford this for himself. He was very grateful to have somewhere to rest his head as he had been sleeping on the floor.

Being in the business of “creating healthy communities by opening doors to services that enhance the wellbeing of all,” as ACR Health’s mission statement declares, it has been painful to watch Congress and the President dismember parts of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

“This truly exceptional law that provided a pathway for more than two million New Yorkers to obtain health insurance has been weakened in some states,” said Director of Insurance Programs Steve Wood. “It remains strong in New York, and we are very definitely still in the business of keeping people fully insured.”

ACR Health’s 15 Navigators who have served 50,000 people since 2012. We continue to offer a full roster of health insurance services to provide coverage for individuals, families, and businesses.



Steve Wood
Director of Insurance Programs



ACR Health Navigators are available to help individuals and families select a health plan, including Qualified Health Plans, the Essential Plan, Medicaid, and Child Health plus through the NY State of Health Official Health Plan Marketplace. This service is free, local, and confidential.

Health Insurance Advocates

Whether they were trying to find affordable health insurance, needed help appealing a denied claim, battling red tape to get better nursing home care for a loved one, or just seeking a better price on medications, 50,000 New Yorkers trusted ACR Health Navigators to help them maneuver through the health care maze. Here are some of their stories:

Health Insurance a Life Changer



Jude Swift got health insurance two months before a significant diagnosis.

Navigator client, Jude Swift always worked at jobs that offered employer-sponsored insurance. When she lost her job her insurance ran out too. "I floated along hoping nothing bad would happen, and then it did." She had several chronic conditions, but could no longer afford to see a doctor. Jude reached out to ACR Health and was soon enrolled into a health plan she could afford. And just in time! Two months later she was diagnosed with Rheumatoid Arthritis. Without health insurance, Jude would never have been able to afford medication, with the price tag of \$2,000 per month.

"I am so grateful; I had no idea where to turn. ACR Health Navigators gave me my life back!"

The Essential Plan



Teresa and Melvin Willems

Teresa and Melvin Willems paid a lot of money for the health insurance offered by her employer. Every four months, like clockwork, the cost went up. They couldn't afford to go without insurance, not with two young children, so they reached out to ACR Health and were enrolled in the Essential Plan - a low cost/no cost health insurance plan with low co-pays that covers ten categories of "Essential Health Benefits."

Designed to help working people with incomes under \$23,540, the Essential Plan costs \$20 per person per month; for Teresa and her husband \$40 per month.

"Signing up for the Essential Plan took a lot of pressure off me. My ACR Health navigator helped me understand all the language and options," said Teresa, "and this insurance is something we can afford."

The Essential Plan is free for people making less than \$17,655. It was designed specifically for lower-wage earners.

In 2014, John and Becca Downey's children were covered through Child Health Plus insurance. The policy was in good standing.

However, when 11-year-old Emily had to go to the hospital emergency department in Ogdensburg they were told that Emily's insurance had been cancelled. Becca went ahead with the visit because she knew that they had valid insurance. After all, she was the one who paid the bills.



John and Becca Downey with daughters Emily, left, and Ava.



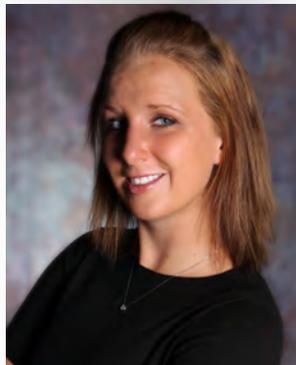
Sheryl Evans

For the next two years, the hospital repeatedly billed for the emergency visit; Becca repeatedly filed the claim with insurance; and ultimately the hospital submitted the bogus bill to a collection agency for non-payment. "This had a huge effect on my family's credit and caused immense emotional and financial stress for us," said Becca.

She turned to ACR Health Navigator Sheryl Evans who worked doggedly for months to straighten out years of tangled red tape. "Becca was a meticulous record keeper, making note of calls, letters, names, and progress," said Sheryl. "She made a hard job easier."

The back medical bill has eventually removed from collections; taken off the Downey's credit report and paid; like it was supposed to have been in 2014. "If it wasn't for all of Sheryl's experience as a Navigator/Consumer Health Advocate and her hard work, I fear this never would have been fixed."

Business Owner Saved a Bundle



Allison Zales

One of the best decisions I have made as a business owner was asking an ACR Health Navigator to help me with insurance. Our appointment was scheduled promptly and the entire process took less than an hour. I walked out of ACR Health with the SAME health insurance company that I had previously selected a year ago, but effective January 1, I would notice a \$100 decrease in my monthly premium and a \$5,500 reduction in my yearly deductible! As a business owner with a ton of responsibilities to juggle, I am thankful for people like my ACR Health Navigator who step in where I'm less experienced! There are few things that are more critical to my life than my personal health and my business bottom line and ACR Health positively impacted BOTH!

Navigators Work Until the Job Is Done



Tammy's insurance needs kept changing

Tammy's husband was diagnosed with cancer and admitted to the hospital within a month of getting health insurance. The hospital balked, but the ACR Health Navigator managed to get his coverage back dated, so his hospital care was covered. First problem solved.

Tammy's husband's convalescence dragged on, and months later he was still unable to return to work. Again, Tammy called, upset because they could no longer afford their insurance. Her husband obviously needed to keep health insurance. Her navigator re-ran the health insurance application with updated financial information and Tammy and her husband had become eligible for Medicaid.

Circumstances change. It is important to remember that ACR Health can help you find the most affordable coverage, and work with multiple organizations to assure you that you are receiving the best healthcare possible.

Directory of Insurance Programs

- **Health Insurance Navigators** enroll individuals into Qualified Health Plans (individual pay plans), Medicaid, Child Health Plus, and the Essential Plan
- **Facilitated Enrollment for Aged, Blind and Disabled**
Enroll individuals with Medicare into Medicaid
- **ICAN Managed Long-Term Care Ombudsman**
Assist individuals with Medicaid Managed Long Term Care or HARP to enroll into a plan and solve problems with the insurer (denials, access to services, etc.)
- **Minority Outreach, Education and Enrollment Program (HIV+ Specific Program)**
Assists HIV+ individuals with insurance enrollment, ADAP enrollment as well as other issues related to their insurance. Will also do general education and advocacy for HIV+ individuals around insurance issues throughout 14 counties: Onondaga, Cayuga, Madison, Herkimer, Oneida, Jefferson, Oswego, Lewis, Cortland, Tioga, Tompkins, Chenango, Broome, St. Lawrence
- **Community Health Advocates**
Help anyone in the community solve problems with health insurance including; old hospital bills, prescription costs, explanation of benefits, denials of service, enrollment into Medicare and associated programs, find a Doctor, Dentist, or specialist, help finding affordable dental and vision. Advocates can work in any county in New York State.

VOLUNTEER

ACR Health has more than 700 volunteers over the course of a typical year; people who collectively donate thousands of hours helping to serve meals, raise money, answer phones, move furniture, sweep floors, stage events, and send out our bi-monthly newsletter (among many other tasks).

This agency started 35 years ago at the height of the AIDS crisis and, in the beginning, was run exclusively by volunteers whose only goal was to care for their loved ones, friends, family members, or strangers who had HIV/AIDS. Their energy, determination, and passion laid the foundation for ACR Health's many programs and services offered today.



Arc of Onondaga staff and crew in the process of assembling the September 2018 issue of the ACR Health newsletter

Arc of Onondaga reliably sends a working group to help assemble the ACR Health newsletter. It's a big job and we couldn't do it without their help.

Cristina De Moya has been volunteering "randomly" at ACR Health since she was 10 years old. She started soon after her uncle Gustavo was diagnosed with with HIV; he later died of an AIDS related illness.

"ACR Health wants the same things I want, equality and an AIDS free world," said Cristina. "I know many people with HIV and AIDS, and I know many people who are part of the LGBTQA+ community, and knowing that ACR Health has helped MANY of them with no questions asked, just shows how AMAZING the entire staff is."



Cristina De Moya is on the ACR Health Events Committee



April 20, 2016 Mike Kyle-Ducharme accepting the award from Dave Wall of the United Way board of directors

ACR Health volunteer Mike Kyle-Ducharme, the reliable master strategist of AIDS Walk/Runs since they started in 1993, was named Exceptional Volunteer of the Year by United Way of Central New York.

Since 2008, ACR Health has hosted two to four interns from the Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, annually. Students spent their one-week internships learning about what we do and sharing their knowledge with our staff. Matt Crough wrote an article for our website and newsletter explaining how PrEP – pre-exposure prophylaxis - blocks the spread of HIV.



Matt Crough, Pharmacist in training

Volunteering a Family Affair

Dawn Haskins and Family have invested 23 years of consistent volunteer support to the AIDS Walk/Run Hospitality Tent.

Dawn started volunteering in 1994 in ACR Health's Syracuse office spending her time with us while she waited to get into nursing school. The program wanted individuals to volunteer while they waited. Dawn chose AIDS Community Resources now ACR Health, specifically because no one else would. Other nursing students were afraid of AIDS and not willing to be near persons that were infected. She thought if everyone acted this way then she should show her children how to be different from others and to care for all people equally.

Dawn had worked at Syracuse Developmental Center when her son was young so he was familiar with people and children with disabilities. Dawn saw volunteering with her children as an integral part of their education.

Dawn was a person who cheerfully accepted assignments and attacked them with enthusiasm. Due to her volunteer time in our office, Dawn immediately got involved with the AIDS Walk/Run and other after hours' events with her children in tow. Devon, the youngest was 4 years old. There was always a volunteer task that could be done even at 4. As a single mom, she incorporated a work ethic, generosity, and community in all of her children by her example. Dawn was typically coming to the AIDS Walk/Run after finishing the overnight shift.

As for why they come back each year, in Dawn's words "That part is easy. The people are the best, be they staff, volunteer, runners, or just there to cheer on others. We have made many friends and look forward to this event every year. Not all of the family makes it each year because life happens but each child of mine that can make it does and we always have the best time. It's been a Family Affair."

Dawn definitely accomplished her objective of teaching her children to care for everyone equally and to not be afraid. Jeremy, Danielle, and Devon follow their Mom's lead of always being personable, friendly, outgoing, and hardworking. They made friends with people living with HIV/AIDS, and volunteer in memory of friends that have passed away.



The Haskins Family volunteers
Danielle Haskins Hierholzer, Dawn (Mom), Jeremy, and
Devon Haskins Neal



Mary Doody
Director of Volunteer Services

Mary Doody
Director of Volunteer Services

"The Haskin Family and other volunteers who have shared their passion and commitment to the work of ACR Health are heroes in our eyes. Dedicated volunteers are integral to the continued success of ACR Health and filling in the gaps in our funding."



Paige Williams-White

ACR Health has been blessed with the presence of Jesuit Volunteers since 2014. They inspire us greatly.

Our first-ever Jesuit Volunteer, **Paige Williams-White**, fit seamlessly into the fabric of ACR's countless activities and programs. Paige was in high demand; she was fantastic with Q Center youth; reliable in coordinating activities like newsletter mailings; and tireless in assisting the Development Department with events like the AIDS Walk/Run and the Sled for RED. Her exposure to health issues at ACR Health lead Paige to a career in nursing.



Ian Rogers

Ian Rogers was energetic, engaged, and willing to try his hand at anything – including cooking for the No-Hitch Luncheon and taking on the additional task of recruiting a volunteer replacement for the departing head chef. Ian had a familial spirit and an indefinable quality that made him an instant friend to the people he met. He too, left his mark on ACR Health by starting a writing group at the Q Center. He is a teacher in Brooklyn.



Andrew Lynch

After finishing graduate school for biomedical engineering, **Andrew Lynch** joined the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, swayed by its four values: community, simple living, spirituality, and social justice. After a year with ACR Health, Andrew declared that ACR Health was the full package. "We open the office every day ready to heal what wounds we can and fight to bring people in from the margins. What a privilege this year has been!" Andrew is currently in medical school.



Brooke Hendricks

After finishing a year with ACR Health, **Brooke Hendricks** is studying medicine. "I've learned this year that addiction and chronic illnesses like HIV do not discriminate against age, race, or socioeconomic status. I will not judge a patient's actions or make assumptions; I will not underestimate a patient's ability to overcome obstacles, health-related or otherwise, because the clients and volunteers that I've met this year have amazed me time and again with their perseverance, motivation, and positivity in the face of adversity."



Bebhinn Gilbert

Bebhinn Gilbert: "I've dreamt of being a JV since I was 15 but what helped me confirm my choice and turn in my application happened on November 8, 2016. At the risk of sounding too political, I was completely devastated but I didn't want to wallow in that pessimism, I wanted to make connection and build relationship with people. The JV mission says it beautifully, we're aspiring to create a more just and hopeful world. So much can be done when people build community, celebrate diversity, and work together. Bebhinn is currently in graduate school studying Urban Planning.

Thank You for Making It Personal

DEVELOPMENT

Starting with our first AIDS Walk/Run in 1993 to our most recent, and 65th, event, we are dedicated to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic while also expanding our fight to combat addiction, poverty, and to stand up for LGBTQ equality. ACR Health continues to raise awareness and support for important issues that our community struggles with every day.

You made it personal, we're committed to taking action and making a difference in what matters to you and our community.



26 AIDS Walk/Runs!



20 Hikes for Life!



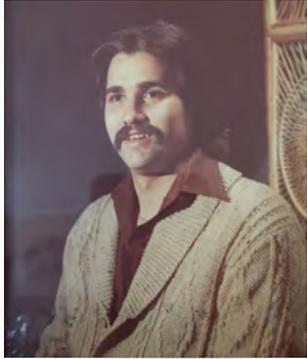
19 First Frost Walks!



Empower Federal Credit Union has invested \$174,097.50 in sponsorship over the last 18 years. Their commitment has helped raise almost 4 million dollars to open doors for our community.

Thank you for 35 years of kindness, dedication, and support.

Sister Left Behind



Alfie Avallone

Wherever Tamara Charette goes in life, she carries the memory of her kind hearted and gentle brother, Alfie. "He loved cooking and he loved traveling. He worked in California as a chef on a movie site, worked at a Greek restaurant, and later in New York City." His dream of being the best chef in the world ended more than 30 years ago, when Alfie Avallone returned to the North Country gravely ill from AIDS.

"Our parents got a call from one of his friends to tell them that Alfie was in the hospital," said Tamara. "The friend said he was being treated poorly because he had AIDS, so the next day, my parents made a bed for him in the back of their van, drove six hours to the city, signed him out of the hospital, and brought him home."

Alfie's mother, a nurse, cared for him at home during his last days. "After his passing, my mother had a hard time finding an undertaker to take his body, but she found one in the town where my brother had been born, and the funeral home treated him with respect and dignity."

Tamara has made it her mission ever since to convert the pain and heartbreaking emotions about her brother's death from AIDS into good works. She enlists her friends to join her in activities, the more enjoyable the better, to raise money for ACR Health in Alfie's name. She gives to ACR Health because, at times of crisis like the AIDS epidemic that claimed her brother's life and the heroin epidemic of today, she knows ACR Health treats people with respect and dignity.



Tammy (in sunglasses) and her friends from the Church Choir: back row Maureen, Rita, Tammy, and Becky, front row Nikki and Heidi; on an outing to raise money for ACR Health.

Supporting Addiction Services

HIV/AIDS seemed unstoppable a generation ago when John Leech participated in the very first Hike for Life stepped off at Hamilton College. He raised **\$3,275** and was the top individual fundraiser by a landslide.

Today John's fight is against the staggering toll the Opioid Epidemic has taken on him personally, and on the Mohawk Valley. "The key is awareness and people not being afraid to speak out," said John. "I am so thankful that ACR Health has stepped up and has made its presence known in the community to address this situation by having a Syringe Exchange Program as well as Case Management for those dealing with Addiction."



John Leech

Strategic Support

For monthly donor Alejandro Amezcua, and many others, LGBTQ Equality is a fundamental right they want to secure and protect.



Alejandro Amezcua, directs his donations to LGBTQ Equality

“I support the Q Center because queer youth are among the most vulnerable members of our communities. They face daunting challenges educationally, economically, and socially. Anything that can be done to support their healthy growth into successful members of our society is worthy and the Q Center exists to do that.”

“As a young person, I had the privilege of knowing teachers and coaches who were gay or lesbian, who at many times talked to me about coming out. They always reassured me that it would be okay when I was ready. Had I not known them, I may have lived in fear of coming out for many years.”



Episcopal Priest, the Rev'd Georgina Hegney supports ACR Health's Q Centers

The Rev'd Georgina Hegney, an Episcopal Priest inspires her community as she embraces the Q Center Mohawk Valley with open arms.

“When people find themselves pushed to the margins, I am more than willing to meet them there on the margins; to broaden my embrace to include them inside our circle, so they are no longer on the margins.”

Rev'd Hegney gives – spiritually and financially – where she sees a need. “Some people are hurt, neglected, and lost.” She calls it her “baptismal covenant” to respect the dignity of every human being.”



Jeff Kalpak
Q Center supporter from New York City

Jeff Kalpak supports ACR Health by opening doors to downstate resources for the Q Center.

“Even when you are loved by your parents, you go through a gut-wrenching stage of uncertainty. I had a loving family but not everyone has the opportunity for love. The Q Center does the work of angels.”



Dr. Frank Smith

Every year like clockwork, Dr. Frank Smith is approached by a friend and asked to donate to ACR Health. Every year, because he cares very much about the health of his community, he writes a check.

Dr. Smith wants to see a cure for AIDS in his lifetime. In the meantime, he wants to see ACR Health succeed in its task to take care of people with HIV/AIDS and educate vigorously to stop its spread.

“It’s not only vitally important for me to support research to cure HIV/AIDS, we must also uphold the communities and agencies like ACR Health that provide services, encouragement, education, and comfort to those with HIV.”



Team Stumblers with Captain Chuck Simpson, second from left in back row.

That friend who asks Dr. Smith to donate, is Chuck Simpson, the captain of Team Stumblers of the AIDS Walk/Run. Dr. Smith said he is “fortified in my giving to ACR Health by the generosity of champion fundraiser Chuck Simpson, Director of Campus Activities of SUNY Upstate Medical University, and his powerhouse fundraising team Stumblers.”

As a Pediatric Cardiologist, Frank Smith knows how fragile life can be. He knows also that banding together with other like-minded and caring people magnifies the power of his gift to ACR Health.

A Company of Donors

BNY Mellon has generously supported ACR Health for more than a decade. Cody Gilkeson, local chair of BNY Mellon’s LGBTQ advocacy group PRISM, “grabbed his proverbial soapbox” to tell his colleagues why ACR Health and the Q Center mean so much to him.



“I grew up in a household that didn’t accept me for who I am, and I faced homelessness when I rejected the idea of conversion therapy. It’s only through a network of supportive parents of friends that I wasn’t on the street. My husband’s three younger siblings were similarly kicked out by their family, and we took them in and raised them as our own. I share that story with BNY Mellon and ask them to think about the kids who don’t have the support system that I had, or that I provided – what about the kids that have nobody? THAT’S why we give.”



Cody Gilkeson, center, with friends and co-workers after winning the Q Center Pink Sneaker Award for outstanding commitment to Equality and Inclusion.

CORPORATE SPONSOR • Dr. Cathy Berry



Dr. Cathy Berry, Corporate Donor

“God gives to us and we should give back, to be part of the community,” is how Dr. Cathy Berry answers the question of why she gives to ACR Health.

“You and I both work with at-risk populations. You provide a safe place for LGBTQ youth – that is so wonderful, so necessary. Some of them are homeless and you help them. All of them need information about their bodies and their sexual feelings. ACR Health is very often the difference between a kid who will make it and a kid who will not. How could I not give to you?”

Dr. Berry tries to be “there” for people. Fifteen years ago, her sister called to report that her boyfriend had died of “weird pneumonia,” the disease that often claimed the lives of people with AIDS. Dr. Berry urged her sister to be tested for HIV, but her sister, in deep denial, did not get tested. She refused contact with her family and within a few years, her sister died of AIDS. That set Dr. Berry on a mission.

“Before you have sex – ask about their health status. This is the real world. Condoms are incredibly important. I want people to live the life they dreamed of and not face the untold problems that can come when people don’t protect themselves. We keep condoms in our bathrooms here at the office and when the basket is empty, we fill it back up.

“Parents should treat their children the way ACR Health and I do: start early, tell the truth, and create an environment where people feel safe sharing their secrets.”

Young women come to Dr. Berry because of her compassion and her common sense. She tells them to look out for each other at all costs. It’s best to avoid alcohol and other substances that cloud judgement. But most of all, “take care of each other. Don’t put yourself in a vulnerable position and don’t ever leave a friend behind at a frat party or a bar. “We are all here to help each other.”



Dr. Cathy Berry, second from left, and her staff donate annually to ACR Health. We are Women, Taking Care of Women

Dr. Berry gives to ACR Health in order that her message is amplified community-wide.

**It’s still personal.
Continue to stand with us until it’s over.**

1981



- AIDS: 422 cases in U.S.**
- June 5: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports on a mysterious illness striking gay men in New York and California, marking the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic
 - The New York Times publishes its first article on AIDS
 - The mystery illness is referred to as GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency)

1982



- Syracuse group headed by Chuck Barry trains in NYC with Gay Men's Health Crisis to plan a Syracuse response to AIDS
- NYS Gay and Lesbian Conference holds a workshop on AIDS at May Memorial Unitarian Church in DeWitt
- CDC calls the illness "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome" – AIDS
- AIDS found in women, children and people with hemophilia

1983



- AIDS Task Force of Central New York (ATFCNY) receives \$38,000 from NYS passed through SUNY Research Foundation
- ATFCNY opens office, sets up telephone hotline, in the Wilson Building in downtown Syracuse
- French scientists discover HIV

1984



- ATFCNY hires Brad Cohen as first Director
- 90 AIDS cases linked to blood transfusions
- AIDS virus is classified as a retrovirus
- San Francisco gay bathhouses are closed

1985



- Studies show HIV is transmitted sexually and can be blocked by condoms
- HIV antibody test is licensed; blood supply screening begins
- Indiana teenager Ryan White, infected by blood transfusions, is prohibited from attending school
- Movie star Rock Hudson announces he has AIDS

1986



- ATFCNY establishes Support Services Department
- Syracusan Ralf Bernecker participates in the first AIDS drug clinical trial
- CDC classifies the AIDS virus as "Human Immunodeficiency Virus" – HIV
- U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop calls for AIDS education for children and widespread use of condoms

1987



- ATFCNY initiates "Buddy Program" linking volunteers one-to-one with HIV+ individuals
- ATFCNY hires Health Educator, launches "safer sex" program
- AIDS Memorial Quilt displayed for the first time in Washington, D.C.
- FDA clears first AIDS drug - AZT

1988



- AIDS: 5 million cases worldwide; 106,994 cases - 62,101 dead in U.S.**
- December 1: Syracuse Mayor Thomas Young proclaims local observance of first-ever global World AIDS Day
 - ATFCNY moves office to 627 West Genesee Street, Syracuse
 - Jan Simpson-Clement hired as Executive Director of ATFCNY
 - Surgeon General Koop mails AIDS information brochure to every U.S. household

1989



- ATFCNY incorporates, separates from SUNY Research Foundation
- Michael Crinnin named Executive Director
- New York State passes an AIDS confidentiality bill
- ATFCNY serving 103 clients

1990



- AIDS: 10 million cases worldwide; 198,466 cases - 121,255 dead in U.S.**
- Ryan White dies; Congress passes Ryan White CARE Act
 - ATFCNY accepted as United Way agency
 - Two panels of the AIDS Quilt displayed in Syracuse
 - FDA approves AZT for pediatric use

1991



- Red Ribbon becomes international symbol of AIDS awareness
- Basketball star "Magic" Johnson announces he has HIV
- ATFCNY establishes offices in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties
- ATFCNY receives the Eleanor Roosevelt Community Service Citation
- Volunteer-driven client "No Hitch" luncheons begin

1992



- ATFCNY initiates Teen AIDS Task Force (TATF) HIV prevention program in regional high schools
- ATFCNY HIV educators begin work in prisons
- CDC expands scope of AIDS definition to include women
- African-American tennis star Arthur Ashe reveals he has AIDS

1993



- Inaugural AIDS Walk/Run raises \$32,000 to support agency services
- AZT is found to prevent mother-to-child transmission of AIDS
- Magic Johnson Foundation and Miller Brewing award TATF \$30,000
- ATFCNY opens office in Mohawk Valley
- ATFCNY volunteers bring 504 AIDS Quilt panels to Syracuse

1994



- April 7: ATFCNY changes its name to AIDS Community Resources (ACR)
- Tom Hanks wins Oscar for his role as a man with AIDS in "Philadelphia"
- Holiday Angel program to support clients at Christmas begins
- TATF has chapters in 37 high schools throughout ACR's nine-county service area

1995



- ACR lobbies for Needle Exchange Program; request denied
- FDA approves HAART (Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy) a "cocktail" of drugs that slows progression of HIV to AIDS
- June 27: National HIV Testing Day designated
- AIDS Quilt panels displayed in Utica

1996



AIDS: 20 million cases worldwide; 622,769 cases, 386,088 dead in U.S.

- HAART therapy shows promise, prompting speculation in Newsweek that the end of AIDS is near
- HIV counseling and testing starts at ACR Syracuse office
- United Way of Greater Utica funds ACR for the first time
- AIDS Community Resources establishes office in Auburn, NY

1997



- Teen AIDS Task Force receives the AIDS Institute's Dr. David E. Rogers HIV Prevention Award
- ACR begins Spanish HIV prevention programs
- ACR's GRADS Project offers support services to MSM
- 5th Annual AIDS Walk/Run raises \$68,000 for youth services and emergency client needs

1998



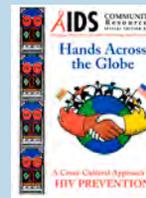
- ACR receives grants to expand GRADS, Transportation, Treatment Adherence and Mental Health services
- ACR assumes sponsorship of the Lesbian and Gay Youth Alliance support groups, Q Center forerunner
- SU researchers provide first detailed look at molecular structure of HIV

1999



- Safety First Outreach initiative to reach injection drug users begins
- Inaugural "AIDS Hike for Life" at Hamilton College in the Mohawk Valley
- "Friends of AIDS Community Resources" hosts "A Time to Remember" event in the Mohawk Valley
- AIDS is the fifth-leading cause of death for persons aged 25-44

2000



- ACR hosts teen Zimbabwean peer educators for Hands Across the Globe, a cross-cultural event on HIV prevention
- Safety First Health Outreach obtains van for HIV counseling and testing
- Inaugural "First Frost AIDS Walk" in Watertown raises \$8,000
- February 7: National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day designated

2001



- ACR begins H.O.P.E Alliance, a prevention project for African American and Latino communities
- Safety First Outreach van obtained for the Mohawk Valley
- United Way of Northern New York funds Teen AIDS Task Force
- United Way of Greater Utica funds project for LGBTQ youth
- ACR implements HOPWA: Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS

2002



AIDS: 30 million cases worldwide; 875,715 cases - 497,724 dead in U.S.

- ACR premier Web site: www.aidscommunity-resources.com
- ACR launches its SISTA peer education program for women of color
- OraQuick Rapid HIV-1 test approved by FDA
- 50% of adults living with HIV/AIDS worldwide are women
- ACR adds Recovery Readiness Counseling Services

2003



- October 1: National Latino AIDS Awareness Day
- ACR produces HIV/STD prevention brochures for Bosnian immigrants in the Mohawk Valley
- AIDS Community Resources celebrates 20th anniversary
- ACR implements a new logo symbolizing life, hope, promise, and an emphasis on living with HIV

2004



- The OraQuick Rapid HIV-1 antibody test is approved by FDA
- 5th Annual First Frost AIDS Walk raises \$17,000 in the North Country
- SISTA program hosts its First Ladies Empowerment Brunch for women of color
- Teen AIDS Task Force acquires first middle school chapter in Moravia

2005



- ACR Spokes bicycling team joins competes in Empire State AIDS Ride
- 13th Annual AIDS Walk/Run at Beaver Lake Nature Center raises \$83,000
- HIV Testing Program at Onondaga Community College is considered for placement at 63 SUNY campuses

2006



- "Hands Up!" mural goes up on the wall of the Q Center
- ACR receives "member item grant" from Joan Christensen, RoAnn Desito and Bill Magnarelli, to connect all 6 offices to one databank
- June 5: ACR commemorates "25 years of AIDS"

2007



- ACR publishes calendar featuring HIV+ individuals
- Q Center officially opens for LGBTQ youth aged 13-22
- March 21: National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

2008



- ACR begins a voucher syringe exchange program
- HOPWA receives 5-year funding guarantee
- ACR begins testing for STDs
- 16th AIDS Walk/Run raises \$201,000
- United Way funds TATF, Q Center, and Safety First Outreach van

2009



- NYS cuts all AIDS programs 10%
- Syringe Exchange Voucher Program with Harvey's Pharmacy extended for 3 years
- TATF coordinators educate Syracuse School District health teachers about HIV

2010



- Feds allow funds for needle exchange programs, lifting a 20-year ban,
- ACR receives \$300,000 federal grant for youth, with aid of U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer
- Criminal Justice Initiative provides HIV prevention services in prisons
- ONCARE and Mental Health grants launch mental health projects for Q youth

2011



- ACR receives approval to operate a Syringe Exchange Program (SEP)
- New winter fundraiser "Sled for RED" raises \$10,014
- New York State legalizes same-sex marriage
- Communities of Color programs MENS Projects and Project HEALTH introduced

2012



- HIV prevention social media campaign "One Decision" developed by ACR Health and AIDS Institute
- Volunteer Marietta Rowe receives United Way's exceptional Community Volunteer Award
- Youth Division gets grants for LGBTQ Youth Suicide Awareness and Mental Health services

2013



- AIDS Community Resources changes name to ACR Health
- Expands support services to include chronic illnesses
- Eddie's Future Greatness Scholarship for Q Center Youth established

2014



- June 29: Governor Andrew Cuomo announces plan to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2020
- Q Center Mohawk Valley opens in Utica
- Youth Services conducts workshops for educators: Creating Supportive Schools for Transgender Students
- ACR Health opens Utica Syringe Exchange Program

2015



- ACR Health receives 5-year grant to engage substance users in services
- Youth Services presents "Transgender Healthcare in Transition" for medical professionals
- ACR Health Care Management caseload reaches 1,381
- Syphilis cases double among young Men who have Sex with Men

2016



- 1,228 individuals trained by ACR to use Narcan, overdose reversal drug
- ACR Health Medical Clinic opens to serve drug users
- Executive Director Michael Crinnin retires; Wil Murtaugh replaces him
- Volunteer Mike Kyle-Ducharme receives United Way Exceptional Volunteer award

2017



- Enrollment reaches 40,000 for Health Insurance Navigators
- ACR Health receives grant to reduce pregnancies in Syracuse Schools
- Drug User Health Hub established at ACR Health, services include Medication Assisted Treatment
- ACR Health expands HIV testing - up 545% since 2012

2018



- ACR Health and Rescue Mission to establish homeless shelter for LGBTQ youth, age 12-17
- Syringe Exchange facility opens in Watertown
- Hepatitis C (HCV) infections have tripled nationwide since 2010; Health Hub cleared to test and treat HCV
- ACR Health celebrates 35 years



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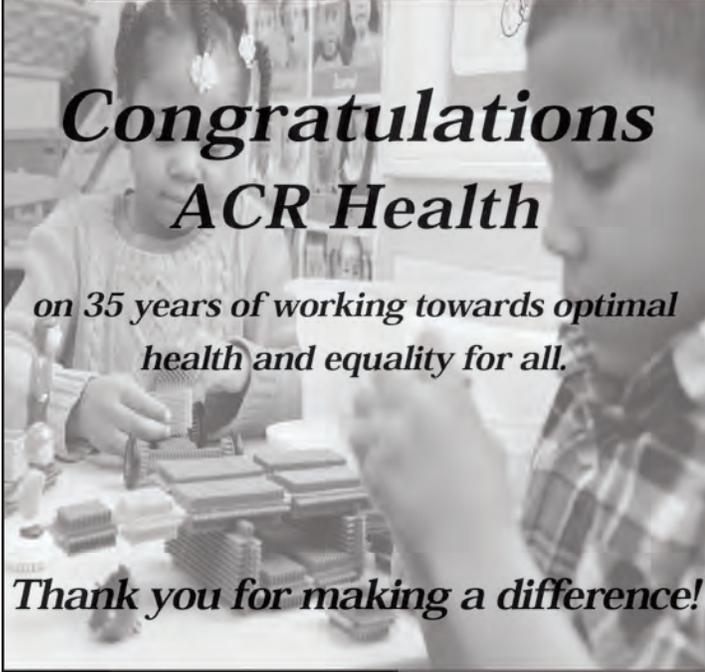
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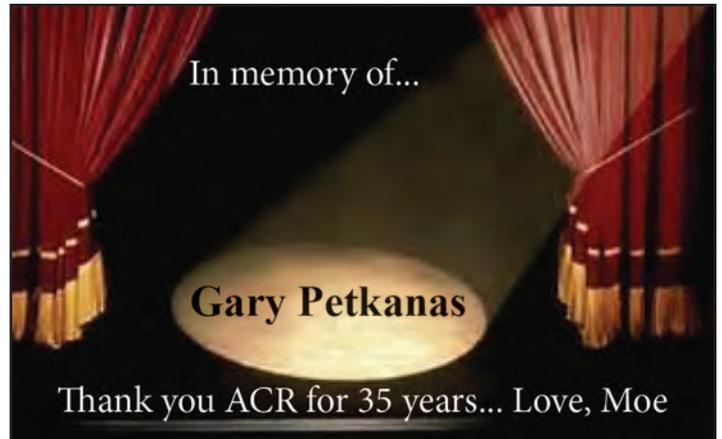
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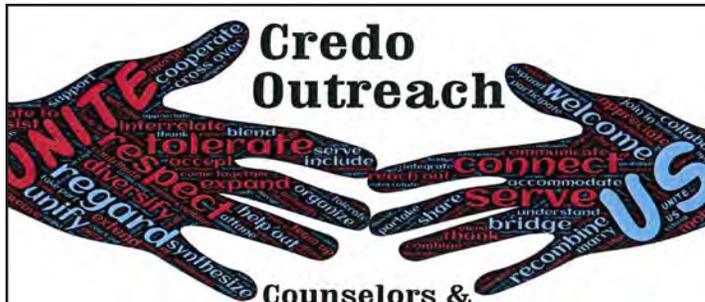
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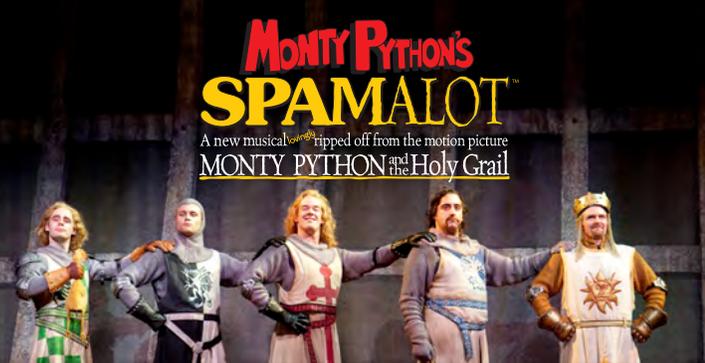
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