



Alliance for Living, Inc.
Annual Report

July 1, 2009 ~ June 30, 2010

~2010~

**A Year of Historical Congressional
Action that Improves the
Quality of Life for the
Members of Alliance for Living
& the LGBTQ Community**

**National AIDS Strategy
Health Care Reform
Repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell
Medical Discoveries**

Mission Statement

The Alliance for Living is dedicated to improving the quality of life for people affected by HIV and AIDS in New London County. We accomplish our mission by providing comprehensive non-medical support services, education and prevention, and advocacy.



Member Board of Directors (l to r): Dr. Lynda Smith, Bryan Sweet, Treasurer, Meg Polubiatko, Dr. Jorge Funes, Gardner Young, Jr., President, Hector Rivera, V. President, Sandy Brindamour, Exec. Director, Ken Hanson, Don Bowen, Dennis Palmer, Alia Barefoot, Student Representative, Chris Sistrunk, Attorney Beth Hogan, Secretary. Missing from photo: Deb Burnside, Linda Palmieri, Rep. Kevin Ryan, Greg Stott

Towns Served

Bozrah	Norwich
Colchester	Oakdale
East Lyme	Old Lyme
Franklin	Pawcatuck
Gales Ferry	Preston
Griswold	Salem
Groton	Sprague
Jewett City	Stonington
Lebanon	Taftville
Ledyard	Uncasville
Lyme	Voluntown
Montville	Waterford
Mystic	Windham County
New London	Middlesex County
Noank	The Homeless
North Stonington	

Core Programs & Services

Medical Case Management

Behavioral Health Case Management

Support Groups

(Support Group and Creative Expression Art Therapy)

Essentials of Life

(Monthly distribution of food, personal care and household cleaning supplies, weekly and evening meals)

Community Meals

(Families and friends are invited to join members for a themed dinner once a month)

Life Skill Workshops

(Basic Financial Information, Employment Readiness Landlord/Tenant Relationships, Parenting)

Scattered- Site Housing

(42 apartments)

Fitness and Wellness

(Exercise in well-equipped fitness center, complementary therapies, and laundry)

Clothing Closet

(New and gently used clothing and shoes, household items, toys for children, furniture)

Quality of Life Gatherings

(Themed dinners, local outings that included and CT Defenders' games, dance lessons, Member Retreats, the Dinosaur Place and Friday's at Ocean Beach)

Members of Our Community Who Have Passed This Year

*Miriam, Sylvia, Jose, Sandra, Robert, Richard, Doug, Paul, Kathy,
Chris, Francisco, Dean, Benjamin, Michael*

Dear Friends,

A Dedication

This year's Annual Report is dedicated to the men and women who have proudly served our nation. No longer does the government question whether or not they suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; these brave soldiers immediately receive treatment, thus avoiding years of using substances that put them at risk of contracting HIV. And finally, in signing the repeal of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell*, President Obama's statement rang so true for many whom Alliance has had the privilege to serve: "No

longer will our country be denied the service of thousands of patriotic Americans who were forced to leave the military, regardless of their skills, no matter their bravery or their zeal, no matter their years of exemplary performance, because they happen to be gay. No longer will tens of thousands of Americans in uniform be asked to live a lie." Alliance is proud that we have had the opportunity to help many of these men and women work to re-gain the self-efficacy that should never have been taken from them. Connecticut can be proud as well that its Senators and Congressmen supported the repeal of this inequity.



Gardner Young, Jr., President,
Board of Directors &
Sandy Brindamour, Executive Director

A National AIDS Strategy Policy

It is an amazing time to be a part of the HIV/AIDS community. Our country finally has a National AIDS Strategy Policy (NASP) outlining steps and timelines to address every facet of life for individuals with HIV/AIDS and striving for its eradication. In conjunction with the NASP, our nation's new Health Care Plan eliminates disparities in accessing preventative care that is imperative in optimizing positive health outcomes for people living with HIV/AIDS. The NASP and the Health Care Plan are inherently synergistic. They focus on producing housing opportunities for people with disabilities, which includes individuals living with HIV/AIDS as a priority. Also they focus on education and prevention efforts designed to confront and eliminate the stigma and discrimination that continues to be a part of this disease like non-other. And, testing will become a natural part of everyone's annual visit to their primary care physician along with innovative and unorthodox locations for testing sites so individuals don't feel they are on display.

The NASP highlights what Alliance for Living and its sister organizations throughout Connecticut have been advocating for since the onset of HIV in the 1980's, when over 130,000 cases per year were being diagnosed: Increase in prevention efforts, routine testing, increase in condom use, the use of harm reduction versus punitive policies, expansion of support services such as housing, employment, insurance and wrap around healthcare, expansion of services to at-risk populations that are linguistically and culturally appropriate. There isn't a single component of the President's NASP that Alliance does not provide itself or collaborates with other agencies throughout New London County to ensure its members receive.

Prevention & Education

Prevention, education and outreach are primary goals of Alliance and are achieved through its Positively Speaking Program, which partners an Alliance AIDS Certified Educator with an Alliance Member who is part of its Speakers' Bureau. As you will read later in the Annual Report, Positively Speaking promotes prevention of STD's and the elimination of discrimination through presentations to students, teachers, civic and faith-based organizations and agencies that serve the at-risk population. It was chosen to participate in an educational video produced by the JSI Research & Training Institute in Boston, MA., funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Four of Alliance's members who participate in Positively Speaking deserve accolades as they were courageous enough to share their experiences in this video to help educators understand the importance of compassion, education and support to the well being and longevity of a person who has just received the news that they are HIV positive.

Outreach

Alliance's Outreach Program is dedicated to bringing individuals who are infected, but afraid of disclosing their status, into the healthcare system. Alliance has a staff member who has regular office hours at agencies that serve our community's at-risk population. This now includes weekly visits to New London High School and Senior Centers. Why? Because our teens represent 29%, and individuals over 50 represent 15% of newly diagnosed cases of HIV. As HIV/AIDS is the third and fourth highest cause of death in

African-American women and Latinas, respectively, it is clear that Alliance, with its increasing numbers of heterosexual minority women it serves, 43% versus 34% statewide, must focus its attention on this highly at-risk group of individuals. Sensitivity to African-American and Latino cultures are an imperative part of Alliance's strategy to eliminate the fears that keep women of color from getting tested, protecting themselves, and bringing them into care if tested positive. Alliance remains committed to its Outreach Program because the longer an individual does not receive care, the likelihood of living longer and stronger is diminished considerably. That message must be made clear through an awareness campaign that is currently in development at Alliance.

Growth of HIV/AIDS in Southeastern CT

These discoveries are particularly important now, when Alliance has seen growth in those it serves. In 2000, Alliance had 213 members under its care. As of June 30, 2010, Alliance had 281, 55% of southeastern CT's infected residents. The complacency that surrounds HIV/AIDS is misplaced. Yes, medications are helping people live longer; however, there is an obvious increase in the number of members Alliance is serving today, among teens and young adults, and among minorities and people over 50. Without doubt, HIV/AIDS is once again growing. Alliance's budget was \$814,000 in 2000; today, it is \$1,345,546. In 2000 the Department of Public Health supported nearly 50% of this funding; today, DPH is providing 29%. The remainder comes from our neighbors, local foundations, the generosity of those who give through the United Way, a very active Board of Directors and Development Committee and the Department of Social Services/HUD in support of Alliance's Scattered Site Housing Program.

The Importance of Southeastern CT's Legislators

As Alliance closed its year, it received devastating news that funds it had received through the Department of Social Services since 1991 for eleven apartments to support some of Alliance's most physically compromised members had not been renewed. It had been given to AIDS Service Organizations in Hartford and New Haven. We were in shock. Had it not been for the tenacity of Congressman Joe Courtney, State Senator Andrea Stillman and Representatives Betsy Ritter, Kevin Ryan and the Democratic Legislative Delegation representing Southeastern CT a long hard campaign to reverse DSS's decision would never have begun. With our seasoned politicians and the United Way of Southeastern CT who assisted Alliance in developing an on-line petition that over 500 of our neighbors signed, and editorials by the Community Foundation of Eastern CT and The Day, this travesty would have gone uncorrected. Because of our community's support and HUD's nearly 20 years of accolades for Alliance's management of this HUD housing program, DSS re-instated six of the eleven subsidies.

The Year Ahead

It is with confidence that we enter 2011. Like all of New London County's non-profits, Alliance knows the challenges ahead are great; but knowing we have the support of the community we serve encourages all of us at Alliance to continue to make progress. Your advocacy to eliminate discrimination and stigma, as well as the disparity in education, housing and healthcare, is imperative in stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS. The Board of Directors, Development Committee, dedicated Volunteers and Staff recognizes Alliance cannot accomplish its mission without you. As we have done every year, we ask that you advocate for prevention and testing. Your voice will save lives.

With gratitude,

A. Gardner Young, Jr.
President, Board of Directors

Sandra L. Brindamour
Executive Director

Medical Breakthroughs

Although, Alliance for Living is currently serving 281 individuals infected with HIV/AIDS, there are approximately an additional 25% of southeastern CT's residents who are infected and unaware of their status. The Center for Disease Control states that nationwide approximately 25% of the 1.1 million people infected are unaware of their status, thus based on the demographics it serves and the ever increasing number of individuals who are currently seeking our services, Alliance is fairly confident its client base will grow.

However there is tremendous hope on the horizon that the elimination through a vaccine or preventative measures is within reach. Until then, there have been remarkable strides made to mitigate the spread. Women may soon have a microbicide that prevents them from being infected. Microbicides are currently used in some third world countries, but has yet to be approved by the FDA for usage in the United States. As the use of male and female condoms is not accepted in some cultures, women will be able to protect themselves for the first time with a vaginal cream. The National Institute of Health (NIH) studies have shown that nearly 45% of women who used the microbicides did not become infected.

For men who have sex with men, a private/public partnership between the NIH and The Gates Foundation recently released a study that verifies that nearly 73% did not become infected when they adhered to a strict anti-retroviral medication regimen and condom use.

With this hope comes the reminder that loving safely is still the only way to ensure you remain free of all sexually transmitted diseases.

The Blessing of Friendship and a Supportive Community

By: Annie Stockton, Sr. Medical Case Manager

Throughout the year Alliance for Living organizes activities and events for members and their families that align with our mission: to improve the quality of life for people effected and affected by HIV/AIDS in New London County. The Staff and Board of Directors work diligently to create an atmosphere in the building of safety, comfort and fun for members so the Living Center is a place where they feel welcome and feel like it is their home. With limited funding in this economy and busy schedules, creativity is needed to make our events possible. Community support is vital to making our events successful. Alliance is fortunate to have great volunteers and a supportive community. Two projects that were largely supported by our community this year were **Positively Glamorous**, Alliance's first member organized fashion show and our annual **Gifts for Children** project to children whose parents are members of Alliance for Living. Both events were very successful due to the dedicated staff at Alliance and the overwhelming support from community members.

Positively Glamorous, was a red carpet event not to be missed. The room was filled with positive energy, lively music and good friends and family. Over 70 people gathered at the Living Center for the event. The mayor of New London, Rob Pero, came by to wish the models well. Friends, families, people from the community and the Board and Staff all participated in the event. Sixteen models walked down our red carpet wearing amazing outfits donated by Talbots and the community. The red carpets were donated by Kalamian's and Abbey Carpet. Prior to the event, e-mails and letters were sent and phone calls were made to the community for assistance. The donations came pouring in faster than we could go through them. Dave Pasqua, Housing Coordinator, from SMHA, Catherine Foley, Executive Director of The Covenant Shelter and Maggie Marley, Community Investment Manager at United Way volunteered their time to be our honored judges and had a fabulous time. One of our members who is a multi-talented artist, designed jewelry specifically for each woman's outfit. We also had a volunteer make-up artist and hairdresser. All of our models left with new outfits, new jewelry, awards and smiles on their faces.

One of Alliance's annual projects that we receive tremendous support for is our **Gifts for Children** project. Entirely through community donations, Alliance is



able to provide toys and gifts to all children whose parents are members of Alliance; one of the many ways we support affected individuals. This year we distributed a garbage-size bag full of gifts. St. Patrick Church in Mystic was instrumental in the project by donating 70 gifts. Other organizations generously donated gifts for 50 of our children. Mystic Aquarium, L&M Hospital's Infectious Disease Service, Waterford Country School, Brio Academy and community members. Also, Frank's Place displayed a tree with names for patrons to take and purchase gifts. Save the Kids was a new donor and they came through in a huge way. This organization of working colleagues at Dominion decided years ago to collect recyclables and use the proceeds to better the lives of needy children in our community. Through the advocacy of John and Barbara Johannemann and Fred Altvater, Treasurer of Save the Kids, they provided winter coats for our kids age 1 to 17. This wonderful group of like minded Dominion workers didn't stop there. When they heard that Alliance was in need of toys for our little ones and gift cards for our older kids, who are frequently forgotten, they just asked how many and when did we want them delivered. One of our student volunteers from Connecticut College, Lucy Wallace, saw the work we were doing and organized a toy drive at Connecticut College. She was able to get 60 gifts donated; some little stuffed animals and mittens, others as fancy as iPods. The response from the community was overwhelming. As we were closing our doors to celebrate our holidays with our families, gifts kept pouring in. Because we had already given our members their children's gifts, we donated these gifts to Centro de la Comunidad to use for their Three Kings Celebration. The community was so generous to us; it was nice to be able to forward that generosity on to the needy children served by another agency.

Throughout the year, Alliance solicits support from the community. These are two specific projects that we organized over the past year, but the generosity of the community has not been limited to these two occasions, especially at Thanksgiving time. We are bursting at the seams with turkeys and all of the fixings that are donated by Stop & Shop and many of the same organizations that support our **Gifts for Children** project. Not one of our families goes without the blessing of a Thanksgiving Dinner with their loved ones.



Evelyn lit up the room as she made her way down the red carpet in her stunning black and white ensemble!

The Year in Housing

By Jodie Craig, Housing Coordinator

The last 12 months have proved to be difficult ones in Alliance for Living's Scattered Site Housing Programs. In June 2010, we were notified by DSS that for the first time in 19 years, AFL would not be receiving HOPWA (Housing Opportunities for People Living with AIDS) funds for our housing program, potentially putting 11 individuals and families out on the street. Furthermore, the loss of funding would be instantaneous, giving less than 30 days notice that these 11 clients would no longer have a rental subsidy paid for by the State of Connecticut. Though devastated by the news, our Executive Director, Sandy Brindamour, immediately began a campaign to restore funding and keep AFL's most vulnerable members in their apartments and off the streets.

Through the tireless efforts of Sandy, the Continuum of Care for New London County, Congressman Joe Courtney and the Legislative Delegation from Eastern CT, we were able to avoid such a devastating outcome.

Through attrition, we were first able to slide four of our members into other AFL housing slots that had been vacated over the previous months. Second, Dave Pascua, Housing Coordinator for Southeastern Mental Health Authority and Lisa Tepper-Bates, Executive Director of Mystic Area Shelter & Hospitality offered temporary rental assistance to five of our remaining members. Lastly, Sandy was able to secure other funding that would keep everyone in their apartments for a few months while AFL appealed the decision. Sandy also went to our local legislators asking for their assistance in reversing the DSS decision. While DSS admitted that their grant process was flawed, ultimately they stood firm on their decision to pull HOPWA funding from AFL. However, as a direct result of the political pressure from our legislators, DSS agreed to provide five temporary subsidies for AFL's most vulnerable clients over a nine month period giving both AFL and our client's the time necessary to find other safe, affordable housing.

By September 2010, the dust had settled and our clients, AFL staff, and the community breathed a sigh of relief as each of the 11 HOPWA members had other subsidies in place and not a single person would be forced onto the streets or into area shelters. However, through this process, it became apparent that AFL would need to find a different approach when providing Supportive Housing to our 31 remaining members. As Housing Coordinator, I began working with clients to identify ways to increase monthly income (which is difficult as most are disabled and receiving SSI income of \$674.00 per month) and find permanent housing through the local Housing Authorities, Section 8 Certificates, and other alternative living situations. With funding always in question, each member of our housing programs has been made aware that their subsidy is *not* considered permanent, and will be provided only as long as AFL is receiving the funding from the State of Connecticut. Each member now has a "back up plan" if funding is lost suddenly, which includes moving in with friends and family, finding a roommate, or covering their full rental amount on their own while alternative living arrangements are sought. Additionally, each member has a long term plan which includes being on the waiting list for the life-time federal subsidy through the Section 8 programs and local Housing Authorities. In fact, four of our clients have been notified that they will soon be receiving this federal subsidy after being on the Section 8 waiting list for more than ten years.

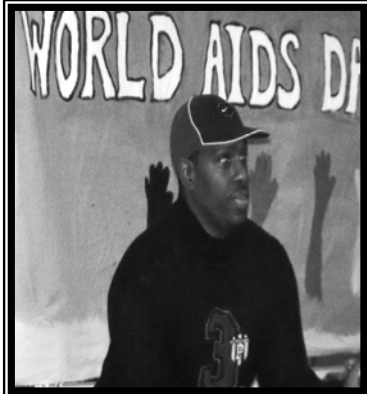
While our approach may be a little different, the AFL staff remains steadfast in our mission of improving the quality of life for those suffering from HIV/AIDS in our region. We have streamlined services and offered wrap-around services to any client in need. As a direct result, we have seen no evictions this last year and few terminations from our housing program as we have helped all of our members remain stable in dignified apartments throughout New London County: acknowledged by the Center for Disease Control as a primary factor in stabilizing the health of a person infected by HIV/AIDS.



Because of confidentiality, Alliance can't share with you a picture of one of our member's homes. But know that each member lives in a safe, affordable and dignified home.

Saving Lives through Education

By: Carol Jones, Dir. Medical Case Management



Not only is Chris a member of the Speakers' Bureau, but he is a leader in our community serving on the Board of Directors.

The Alliance for Living's ***Positively Speaking*** program is a unique interactive presentation that can be tailored to any audience.

Schools, colleges, business and faith communities, youth/young adult groups, area agencies, substance abuse treatment facilities, community mental health agencies and public service departments are some of the current users of this program.

This program pairs a certified HIV/AIDS educator who will discuss the facts about HIV with a person living with HIV who will share what it is like to live with HIV. The process of combining both an HIV/AIDS educator with a person living with this disease provides a very moving and deeply connecting emotional, learning experience for everyone involved. Participants find themselves connecting in a personal way with the speaker's life story.

As facilitator of this program I have watched both the speakers and the audience exhibit great courage, break down barriers of stigma and help to support one another in experiencing the knowledge that this disease is a virus that can happen to ANYONE and that with education we can hopefully put an end to transmission of this disease. As part of the program we ask students to write letters to our speakers that are HIV positive and share what the experience taught them. I am sharing a letter with you now from an East Lyme High School student so that you can see first hand the impact this program leaves on individuals.

Dear Chris,

I think your story really opened a lot of people's eyes to the reality and dangers of STDs— I know it did for me. For one, it made me realize that risky behaviors result in dangerous consequences. There was a point in my life this year that I started to go out more and try different things. I had one friend that I would always hang out with during the weekends and school breaks, and we started going to parties and drinking. After hearing your story, I realized that by putting myself in these unsafe environments, I had a much greater chance of doing things that I wouldn't do if I were sober or somewhere else. I also recognized that when I was doing these types of things, I was presenting myself as a promiscuous type of person, and that I attracted guys who were looking for casual hook-ups or one night stands, and that was not the attention I wanted.

In addition to realizing my own risky behavior, listening to your experiences encouraged me to reach out to one of my friends who has been making some poor decisions lately. I care about her a lot, and by getting help now, I think she can save herself from hurting herself, or even worse, contracting an STD. Lastly, I just want to say thank you for coming in and talking with our health class. Your own life experiences have really reached out and affected my own outlook on life.

(As you can see, this young person chose not to sign her letter to protect her identity so she could openly share with Chris the impact his presentation immediately had on her. That is our goal through Positively Speaking.)

Volunteers in 2010

By: Cheryl Sharp-D'Esopo, Dir. Member Services & Advancement

Paul Revere made his living as a silversmith. But he's remembered for what he did as a volunteer. Alliance for Living is fortunate to have a growing pool of memorable volunteers who donate their time and expertise. Our volunteers augment our human resources allowing Alliance staff more time to concentrate on improving programs and services for our members. They work in concert with a small, core group of dedicated staff to enhance the services we provide.

In 2010, volunteers contributed 2,281 hours at the Living Center. Volunteers also tended our perennial garden, cooked 156 meals, and distributed thousands of pounds of food to members through our Essentials for Life Food Bank. Volunteers are working to update our website, helping develop a donor newsletter, and organizing "FRIENDS of Alliance". Volunteers have repaired our roof and water damaged office walls. Volunteers have prepared food for major fundraising events, decorated our building inside and out for the holidays, carried turkeys and pies to cars, and opened their homes and businesses for fundraising events.

Just as Paul Revere is remembered for his volunteerism, I remember volunteers for their service to the members of Alliance for Living. One such volunteer is Mike Begun. Mike has been the volunteer Chef for our Essentials for Life Meal Program for nearly a year. Each Wednesday, Mike prepares a lunch and dinner, and on Thursday, he prepares a dinner. The menu varies with the selection of meat and fresh vegetables available each week from the Gemma Moran United Way Food Bank. Mike's creativity with the sometimes limited selection of ingredients is legendary. He has done wonders with cases of eggs by the dozen, apples, lettuce, tomatoes, and potatoes. Soup is his specialty. It's made from scratch. Each week, Mike donates 12 or more hours of his time to prepare food at Alliance. He's always here on time with a smile and lots of laughter.

Often volunteers seem to fall from the sky with the right skill at the right time. Mary Susan Flynn is such a volunteer. She came for an interview in September, one week before Celebration. Mary Susan has over 10 years of experience in publication layout and design. With less than a week to complete the Celebration program, she took the lead in getting the project jump started, designed, laid out, and completed in time for the show. Mary Susan is truly an "angel" sent from above.

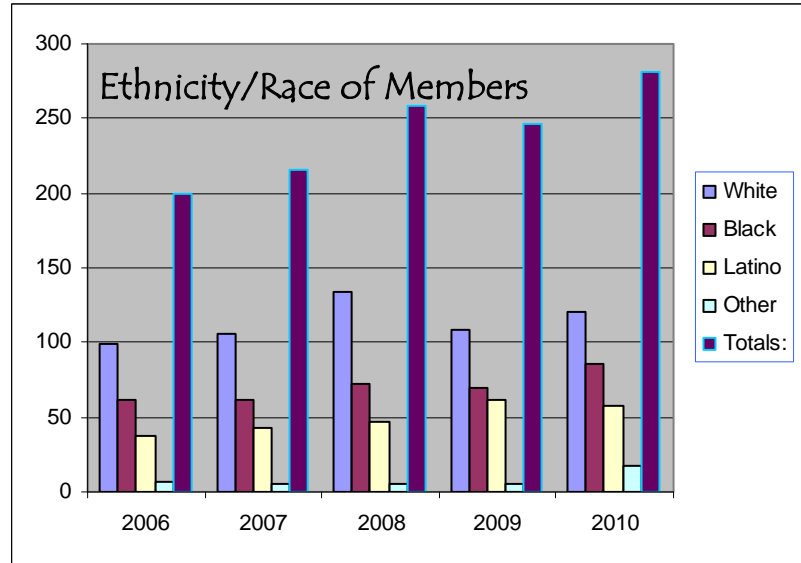
Volunteers also serve in leadership roles on the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, Development Committee, Special Events Committees, and advocates for HIV/AIDS. All of the people we call volunteer have common attributes: a passion for helping others; an understanding of the complex issues facing people with HIV/AIDS; a commitment to the mission of Alliance for Living: to enhance the quality of life for our members and their families.

What is a volunteer? Anyone who without compensation performs a task on behalf of an organization or cause. Paul Revere got on his horse and raised the call to muster a volunteer army to fight the British. In a sense, each person who performs a task on behalf of Alliance for Living is raising the call to improve the quality of life for all people affected by HIV/AIDS. We honor and sincerely thank them for their ongoing commitment.

Alliance for Living Members Demographics

Gender

	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Male	160	156	146	134	130
Female	120	107	103	83	92
Trans	1	1	1	0	0
Totals	281	264	250	217	222



Disparities in New London County's Minority Population versus State of Connecticut

	Norwich	New London	ST of CT
Black	6.8	18.6	10.3
Latino	6.1	19.7	12.0

Level of Poverty (by percentage)

	Alliance	New London County	Norwich	ST of CT
Black	33	15.8	8.6	7.9
Latino	24	11.5	6.7	7.9

