

Under Kooyman, MAP Flourishes

By **MARK DRUM**
Associate Editor

The Metrolina AIDS Project is unlike any other Charlotte organization gay or nongay.

This independent, non-profit health organization currently funded by private donations and benefits held at bars in the gay community has only two purposes: to provide direct support services for persons with AIDS (PWAs) and to help educate the Charlotte area about AIDS.

A 20-member board of directors consists primarily of health care professionals and is operated by a six-member executive committee made up of the founders. Les Kooyman, one of the founders, currently

works 20 hours per week as a paid director in addition to his volunteer work on behalf of MAP. All other workers are volunteers.

Q-Notes recently interviewed Kooyman in the MAP offices:

Q-NOTES: Lets start at the beginning. What motivated you to take on a project of such magnitude?

Kooyman: I was introduced to (a man diagnosed as having AIDS). We had dinner one night and realized we had the same goal — a local support group to help persons with AIDS. We decided to see what kind of interest there was in Charlotte for forming such a group. We had eight people for the first meeting. Of those, six are still actively involved.

Q-NOTES: What were your own reasons for becoming involved with this work?

Kooyman: Having lived in northern California, I watched friends react to all of this back in 1980 to 1982. Someone would be sick, but we didn't understand what was really going on. We didn't know anything about AIDS. My own doctor got sick and started to lose a lot of weight, and the next year I went back to visit and he had died. I was living in Charlotte by this time. I wondered if the same thing was going on in Charlotte. I thought, if I were to get sick too, what would be available for me? I knew of agencies in larger cities such as San Francisco or New York. There was nothing here.

Q-NOTES: What were your first steps?

Kooyman: We started by speaking to medical personnel to see what was happening to AIDS patients. Then, these same people started calling on us and asked



Kooyman

SAFE-SEX GUIDELINES

SAFE

Massage, Hugging
Mutual Masturbation
Social (Dry) Kissing
Body-to-Body Rubbing (Frottage)
Voyeurism, Exhibitionism, Fantasy

POSSIBLY SAFE

French (Wet) Kissing
Anal Intercourse With Condom
Vaginal Intercourse With Condom
Sucking (Stop Before Orgasm)
Cunnilingus
External Watersports
Risk Increases With Multiple Partners

UNSAFE

Rimming, Fisting
Blood Contact
Sharing Sex Toys Or Needles
Semen Or Urine In Mouth
Anal Intercourse (No Condom)
Vaginal Intercourse (No Condom)

MAP EDUCATION PROJECTS

Program	Target Audience	Purpose
Safe Sex Campaign	Gay Men	AIDS prevention: educate gay men about how to protect themselves from receiving or transmitting the AIDS virus. Format: safe-sex party concept.
AIDS In The Workplace	Corporate Managers	AIDS education: inform, prepare and assist corporations in dealing with AIDS in relation to the workplace.
Information Hotline 333-AIDS 6-9 p.m. Mon-Fri	General Population	Information and referral: answer general questions about AIDS; referrals to doctors, therapists; peer counseling.
AIDS In A Community Of Faith	General Population And Churches, Charlotte Area	AIDS education: discussion and education with members of various churches in the Charlotte area about AIDS and related issues.
Gay Health Workshop	Gay Men	Health education: instruct gay men about health issues related to AIDS — nutrition, stress management, exercise, etc. Format: eight-week series one night per week.
General AIDS Presentations	General Population And Gay Community	AIDS education: inform persons about the nature of AIDS and related issues. Format: Forums, lectures and discussion groups.

MAP SUPPORT SERVICES

Program	Clients Served	Purpose
Buddy System (Caregivers, Errands)	Persons With AIDS (PWAs)	Provide care for primary needs and companionship. Liaison to MAP.
PWA Support Group	PWAs, Their Families, Their Friends	Provide emotional support in a positive group environment.
HTLV-III Test Positive Support Group	Persons Testing Positive To HTLV-III Virus	Provide emotional support and information in a positive group environment.
Social Services Advocacy	PWAs	Provide advocacy and liaison to social services agencies in Mecklenburg County.

what to do because they were starting to deal with more AIDS patients. It was hard, though, because we had no volunteers trained at that time. So the six of us were trying to get the organization going and at the same time trying to take care of PWAs.

We finally started training volunteers in February of '86. We finished our second training session in July. We now have about 30 active volunteers trained.

Q-NOTES: Not everyone who may want to can deal with such a sensitive and emotionally demanding type of work. How do you screen volunteers?

Kooyman: Now we have a pre-training interview, then the actual training itself and finally a follow-up interview. We try to make sure that volunteers are sensitive to the issues and are really prepared to deal with the reality of the situation. Not everyone can do that.

Q-NOTES: Where do you find persons who need help?

Kooyman: Usually they call us. A sister, a lover or mother calls. That's the point where we step in. We talk to the AIDS patient and let him know we are coming out to visit.

Q-NOTES: You have come a long way since the six of you started the project. At what level are you now?

Kooyman: A few months ago I was hired as a part-time director because the demand for service had grown so much. Our workers are gay and nongay; many are helping professionals such as doctors, social workers and therapists. There is a great diversity among members of the board, with a wealth of knowledge and expertise. We moved into our offices a few months ago and have a fairly comprehensive set of programs. Around January, we were incorporated. Our executive committee meets regularly for the day-to-day work. The board meets every other month to tackle larger issues and long range planning.

Q-NOTES: How are you funded? How do you support the hot-line, offices and salaries?

Kooyman: Our funding has been,

up until now, through private donations from the gay community. Around March or April of this year, we had grown too much to operate out of the back of my house. We wanted to stand as an independent agency because we are not just dealing with the gay community. It was a risk, we realized, to move into offices. But we had to. In addition to private donations, we have had very successful bar benefits. We want to start a major donor campaign and are looking to writing some grants.

Q-NOTES: This type of work must be very demanding. What keeps you motivated?

Kooyman: Sometimes you really question what you are doing. But then you get that call from a married man or someone still in the closet, or a gay man who thinks he has symptoms and you say to yourself, "Yes, it is all worth it . . . to be there for that call." You can turn that fear around for them. It may be the first time they have ever talked to someone about AIDS. Or they may have had a doctor who diagnosed them as having AIDS when in fact they did not have it.

Q-NOTES: Then is there a lot of bad information in the gay community as well as the straight community?

Kooyman: Yes! One of the biggest myths is that if you test positive (to the HTLV-III antibody test) that you will get AIDS. That's simply not the case. Eighty percent of those who test positive do not show symptoms.

Q-NOTES: Do you find resistance to safe sex practices?

Kooyman: Some people don't want to know about safe sex practices. They have the attitude that if they don't know about safe sex, then they don't have to practice it. Others think that only people with AIDS can pass it to someone else. But right now, safe sex is the only real preventative measure we have. Additionally, people are just afraid of feeling awkward. That's one of the things we address in our safe sex parties. We want people to learn to relax and enjoy themselves . . . and even learn to laugh about using a

SEE KOOYMAN, NEXT PAGE

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