

MAP PLUS weekend equals success

by Gene Poteat
Special to Q-Notes

"Emotional support plus information equals power." That phrase, offered by Adam Robinson, Director of Education at Metrolina AIDS Project (MAP), provided a theme for PLUS (Positive Living for US), a weekend long seminar sponsored by MAP for persons affected by HIV and AIDS whose purpose was, according to Robinson, "...to inspire and encourage people to take control of their health care." Robinson, in introductory remarks, described the group of approximately 40 in attendance as, "Very different people with one thing in common — we all care about someone with HIV living well."

Held November 11-13 at the Carolinas Medical Center campus of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Hospital Authority's School of Nursing, PLUS provided information on such topics as legal issues, nutrition, treatment options, spirituality, sexuality, stress management and financial planning. "It was a fabulous opportunity to learn more about HIV and get more emotional support," said Barbara Rein, MAP's Executive Director.

MAP assembled a diverse group of area experts for the presentations. Dr. James Horton of Carolinas Medical Center provided a medical overview of HIV from what a retrovirus is to treatment options. "Currently, the fastest increase in the number of reported cases is in women and teens," Horton said, presenting statistics showing AIDS as the number one cause of death for men 25 to 44 years old and the third leading cause of death for women in the same age group. Horton noted, "The South leads the country in new cases among heterosexual, gay and bisexual men and is third among IV drug users."

Dr. Bill Larson, a family physician at the Nalle Clinic, says he has changed the way he looks at HIV. "It used to be that when I told a patient, the reaction was 'I'm dead,' now I look at it like diabetes or another chronic illness." Larson notes, "The incidence of Kaposi's Sarcoma is declining," but adds, "as people are living longer [with HIV], other diseases are becoming more prevalent."

Separate presentations focused on seeking services, financial planning and legal issues. Kim Funderburk, a Case Manager at MAP, offered advice for seeking services in the most effective way. "Be patient. Make sure you know the person to whom you are speaking, ask for time lines and confirm them back," she suggests, adding, "Compile information before you call. Know your rights, know rules of the specific organizations you are calling and know what avenues are available to you." She also recommends keeping detailed records of all contacts. In an effort to be kind to yourself, she says, "Put yourself in a quiet environment and plan around your good and bad times. In general, energy levels drop in the afternoon. Know when to be assertive, not aggressive [and] don't minimize your need."

Frank Lubbers, a financial planner, says,

"If you have insurance policies, the first thing you should do is read them. Look for clauses, limits and look into expanding your coverage." He also suggests to those still employed, "Look into the possibility of converting your insurance coverage from group to individual policies."

Kevin Edwards, MAP Case Manager, took participants through a tour of Medicare and Medicaid services. Regarding old medical bills someone is carrying, he said, "What is

"I have learned to give myself permission to be as silly or as angry as I feel."

still owed can be used toward the Medicaid deductible." Edwards also pointed out that although Medicaid has limits on the assets a recipient may have, "a limited exclusion can be set up for burial expenses." Tim Futtrell, a volunteer helping MAP create a legal clinic, noted the importance of living wills. "People don't realize the importance of a Health Care Power of Attorney," he says, "a designated person can be given a very broad range or a limited power over your health care needs. A Durable Power of Attorney authorizes someone to take care of your monthly bills or other things that you would be doing if you were, say, in the hospital."

Lisa Piazza, also of MAP, emphasized the importance of making provisions for minor children. "It's not talked about in families, assumptions are made about guardianship, but [after a parent's death] children often end up in foster care," she says.

Larry, a long time survivor and member of a "Living with HIV" panel, says, "I have learned to give myself permission to be as silly or as angry as I feel...One of the most important things is to be around supportive people." Nancy McLaughlin, a holistic nurse, noted, "When we find love in a group, we find acceptance and healing."

In an effort to make PLUS a supportive environment, group exercises were conducted and participants were gathered into five groups which met five times over the weekend to process information, express their feelings and give emotional support. For some, these groups were their first opportunity to be with others also affected by HIV.

"I think it is always exciting when we reach people that we may not have reached otherwise," notes Barbara Rein, adding, "My guess is that for some people it was difficult to walk in the door and talk about HIV, but the fact that people stayed the entire weekend speaks well for the event."

In her presentation, "Coping with Emotions," Rein's words were certainly in keeping with the phrase "Emotional support plus information equals power." She admonished each participant to "...give yourself permission to ask for help. It is important to remember that you always have choices."

North Carolina Pride elects board of directors and changes name

Date for Pride '95 set for June 9-11 1995 in Raleigh

RALEIGH—At its November 19 meeting, North Carolina Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgendered Pride, Inc. elected an almost entirely new board of directors and set the organization on a course of increased visibility and inclusiveness.

The new 13-member board, co-chaired by Dan Kirsch, Charlotte community activist, and Janice Vaughn, founder of the Center for Non-white Lesbians in Durham, is the most diverse in N.C. Pride's history, according to Jim Duley, Executive Director.

"Pride made a deliberate attempt to incorporate as many aspects of the community as possible," Duley said. "Not only did we focus on geographic diversity, we paid particular attention to the inclusion of youth, bisexuals and transgendered persons."

The board elected its first bisexual activist, Melinda Brown of the North Carolina Bisexual Network in Carrboro, as Treasurer, and its first transsexual, Shawn Tonnesen of Chapel Hill, as Secretary. In addition, the organization voted to include the words "bisexual" and "transgender" in its official name, on all events, publicity materials and official documents.

Other new board members are: Kathi

Beall, Pastor of St. Jude's MCC in Wilmington; Ed Farthing, President-elect of NC Lesbian and Gay Attorneys, from Hickory; Michael Frye, a librarian from Winston-Salem; Chris Ingle of Haw River, co-chair of the N.C. Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality; Patricia Jones, Disease Intervention Specialist for the NC HIV/STD Control Branch in Charlotte; Sonya Lewis, a pharmacist and founder of the NC Carolina Pride Marching Band, of Durham; Jean Raley, chair of the Youth Leadership Council of Time Out Youth in Charlotte; and Wayne Wilson, AIDS Educator for the NC HIV/STD Control Section in Raleigh.

The board's only returning member is Lucy Harris, former Pride Co-chair and Program Director for the NC Lesbian and Gay Health Project in Durham.

In other business, the new board selected the date for its tenth annual Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgendered Pride March and Celebration, which takes place this year in the Triangle Area. Although it considered a proposal to move the event to the fall, it chose the weekend of June 9-11 1995 for the three-day event. The Radisson Plaza in downtown Raleigh will serve as the host hotel.

316 Rensselaer Ave.
Charlotte, NC



(704) 376-1617

Open 7 Days A Week
4 p.m. - 1 a.m.

Drink Specials Daily

Large Variety of
Sandwiches & Appetizers
Wed - Sun 4 p.m. - 10 p.m.
with Daily Specials

***Coming Soon ...**
Blue Plate Specials

FREE Pool Mon & Tues

4 p.m. - 7 p.m.!

Pool Tournaments

- Thursday - 25.⁰⁰ Bar Tab
- Sunday - 25.⁰⁰ Cash
- No Charge to Enter Or Play
- Must Be a Member

*We Will Be Open Christmas Eve
& Christmas Day*



Happy Holidays
From Our House To Yours
—Management & Staff

Closed Monday, December 19