

New ideas, bright vision meet at 'Intersections'

Agency's main focus will be to raise HIV/AIDS awareness

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

The Triad has a new nonprofit focused on educating the masses about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

Intersections of the Triad also provides facilitated support services those living with HIV/AIDS, as well as for those who facing other perils such as the homeless and ex-offenders, explained Dr. Victor Seltzer, Intersections' president.

"When I started thinking about (moving to) North Carolina, I started researching sort of the unmet needs here," said Seltzer - a seasoned nonprofit coordinator. "I wanted to be involved in helping other nonprofits address these issues."

To that end, Intersections will work in conjunction with existing agencies to promote HIV awareness and encourage testing; and to create a drop-in center, where homeless men and women can use computers and speak with case managers.

Seltzer also wants to form alliances with other agencies to create what calls a "safe place," where members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community can gather freely and comfortably.

A Bronx, N.Y. native, Seltzer says issues like HIV/AIDS are more difficult to address in the South because they are often connected to the often taboo topic of homosexuality. Intersections of the Triad plans to meet clients where they are. Seltzer says there is a large group of men who have sex with other men but do not consider themselves homosexual. The agency wants to reach these men to encourage them to get tested and practice safer sex.

"A lot of folks around here don't talk about (homosexuality)," Switzer remarked. "It's kind of swept under the carpet, but we need to deal with things for what they are."

Intersections, which was incorporated in the spring, had its official unveiling last Thursday evening during a reception in the swanky Traders Row loft of Gordon Duggins and Armando Dunn. The couple was pleased that the event drew such a wide cross-section of area residents.

"People in Winston-Salem like to do things for people, but we're still not certain how to do things with each other - this community is polarized," said Duggins, who operates an emergency homeless shelter in NYC and has worked with Seltzer in the past. "I really like seeing black people working with white people, working with Latinos."



Intersections President
Dr. Victor Seltzer

For the reception, the walls of the loft were lined with the work of noted South African photographer Michael Myersfeld. The 19 portraits, showcased for the first time in the United States, were a sampling from Myersfeld's photography book "Gaze," which provides a stunning visual commentary on the lives of South Africans of virtually every sexual minority.

"It was the perfect match with Victor's organization... because Michael's wife is one of the country's leading HIV/AIDS activists," said Peggy O'Donnell of the consultancy firm - Morgan and Masterson - that brought the exhibition to the reception.

Roger Hayes, pastor of Winston-Salem-based Church of the Holy Spirit Fellowship, said he sees Intersections as "a new insurgence" in the ongoing fight against HIV/AIDS. While Hayes acknowledged that there are already several agencies in the area that are working to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS, he believes Intersections will bring a fresh perspective.

"It's not doing away with the old," Hayes stated. "When you look at the number of syphilis and HIV cases that have been reported this year in Forsyth County, that lets us know that there is room for more."

For more information about Intersections, contact Seltzer, at 336-782-4556 or via email: VictorSeltzer@gmail.com.

Adams

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years-plus to be on the safe side," he said with a smile.

Adams didn't fill out an application or go through an extensive interview process to land the job. The Y found him, but it was all by chance. It was the 1970s, when the Y was located on Patterson Ave. Adams - then a talented track star at Winston-Salem State University - was there training, as he often did to keep his championship-winning form. His familiarity with exercise and workout equipment came in handy on this particular day.

"The director asked me if I would show one of the members how to use the treadmill," Adams recalled. "And that's pretty much how I got hired."

Adams has always had a full-plate, so his job at the Y has always been part-time. In the beginning, he balanced the job with classes and track meets; when he graduated from WSSU in 1975 - with a degree in health and physical education - he spent his days teaching school and his evenings at the Y, a tradition that continued when Adams joined the school system's transportation department.

Adams is now a transportation supervisor, responsible for seeing that hundreds of kids get to and from schools safely. That job is more than enough to keep him busy, but Adams said he has never given much thought to leaving the Y - a place that he says is like a second home and its members are like his family.

"I like it here. I like the people. I like making a positive impact on people," he said.

Y member Jim Conrad has felt Adams' impact in years since he and his wife, Cotton, became loyal Winston Lake Y members.

"When I met Al, I felt like I'd known him all my life," said Conrad. "He is a true people person."

To do what Adams does at the Y - loving people is just one of the traits one must possess. Patience and caring are two others, and a good sense of humor doesn't hurt



Adams helps member Patricia Dosier with the Y's popular FitLinx exercise program.

either. The Wellness Center is where members stretch, lift weights, walk on treadmills, glide on ellipticals and peddle on stationary bikes. Adams still instructs members in the proper use of the various equipment. He is also a social worker of sorts - always there with an open ear and a kind word.

"Sometimes people just want someone to listen to them, and I am a good listener," he said.

Shawan Gabriel, the executive director of the Winston Lake Y, says Adams is tailor-made for the family-like environment that Winston Lake is known for.

"Al is a great asset to our branch," Gabriel said. "He has a great passion for helping others and it shows in his work."

Adams is also one of the branch's biggest cheerleaders. When he tells folks about all of the advantages they would reap if they simply come to the Y to work out, Adams is speaking from personal experience. The former All-American hurdler and Winston-Salem State, Atkins High and Winston-Salem Sportsmen halls of fame inductee will soon turn 60, but he stills makes exercise a

part of his weekly schedule. "It contributes to your life in so many good ways," he said. "I tell people that there is something in this Y that everyone can do."

Mo Lucas, who with more than half a century of service at the branch is the indisputable patriarch of the Y, has known Adams since Adams' first day of work at the old Patterson site. Lucas said he is proud of the man that he has seen Adams become.

"He is one of those people that you can truly call a gentleman," said Lucas. "I really can't find a fault with him."

With two jobs for the past three decades, Adams says it often took creativity to make time for his wife of 36 years, Lectrice, and the couple's now adult children - Shannal, Al Jr., Tivana and Rashad.

Adams, a member of Union Baptist Church, is using that same creativity these days to make sure his four grandkids get the quality time they deserve.

When asked if it is possible that he could break Lucas' longevity record at the Y, Adams thought for a second and then chuckled.

"I am just gonna take it day-by-day," he said.

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