

Facing AIDS



Testing
Education
Treatment

Winter 2009

The Newsletter of the AIDS Action Coalition of North Alabama

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World Famous Artist Dan Dunn Brings “Paint Jam” To DWF Dessert Reception

Bridgestreet hosts 2009 Dining With Friends Dessert Reception featuring delicious desserts from its most popular restaurants.

It's almost unbelievable, yet you see it with your own eyes—artwork created by throwing paint around on a canvas while music blares in the background.

It's what Dan Dunn is famous for, and he'll entertain Dining With Friends attendees this year, while creating three original art pieces for live auction.

Dunn's works of art have been featured on The Ellen Show and you can watch him create one of his paintings on YouTube.

If watching Dan Dunn in action isn't enough to entice you to attend the 2009 DWF Dessert Reception and Auction, maybe the chance to try desserts from Bridge Street's restaurants will. This year's event will be held at Bridge Street Town Centre—an outdoor party with all the eclectic art and yummy food that makes Dining With Friends one of the most anticipated events of the year.

Scheduled for Saturday, May 16, 2009, Dining With Friends is the largest fundraiser of the year for the AIDS Action Coalition, and all money raised remains in the community to support the AAC Davis Clinic, and HIV prevention education programs.

This year, attendees will sample desserts from P.F. Changs, Conner's,



Artist Dan Dunn sits in front of two of his most popular paintings.

The Chocolate Crocodile, The Melting Pot and Cantina Laredo. Some of the restaurants will provide signature cocktails through a cash bar, but every attendee can enjoy free champagne, as they bid on fabulous auction and art.

“There are more people every day who depend on the services of the AAC,” said Heather Carlton, DWF chair for 2009. “We need you now more than ever. Our mission doesn't go away because of an economic downturn. In fact, it is elevated.”

“I'm asking you to make a commitment today to host a party, attend the reception, volunteer your time. *I'm asking you to make a difference in someone's life. I promise you, your life will be changed in the process.*”

To get involved, call 256-536-4700, x. 125.



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Nathan Adams
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Message From The Executive Director



I wanted to take a moment to thank all of our supporters who responded so quickly and with such generosity to two of our pregnant moms. Many times we see

women at our clinic who are alone in the world and trying to cope both with a difficult disease and pregnancy.

They often don't have a strong family support system to fall back on, and we become their family.

Many times they are without the basic necessities that you and I take for granted: transportation, food, clothing. Most are without the items that a newborn baby would need.

We have purchased infant car seats, baby beds, blankets, clothing, and formula—all with the help of you—our donors.

We have also helped these mothers furnish apartments with gently used items such as sofas, beds, and tables.

I am proud to say that both moms and their newborn babies are doing well. We coordinated care with their Ob doctors, the hospital and the pharmacy to insure that antiretroviral medications, used to treat AIDS, would be on hand for the babies. This medication is administered to the babies immediately after birth.

Babies are born with their mother's antibodies, and we cannot get an accurate HIV test until after about 18 months. Through those first few months, the baby will receive medication as if he or she is HIV positive as a precaution.

I am proud to say that we have five to 10 women who deliver each year, and we have never had a HIV positive baby. Part of this is due to the fact that we provide a continuum of care, carefully monitoring moms through pregnancy and insuring they are compliant with medications.

We are able to provide this standard of care because of the continued support of our donors and community. Thank you!

Until There's a Cure,
Mary Elizabeth Marr

Advocates For Youth Grant Empowers Teens To Make Healthy Life Choices

Through a grant from Advocates For Youth, the AAC has implemented a program for girls, ages 13-18 involved with Upward Bound.

By partnering with Upward Bound, a community program that works with high school students from low-income families and families where neither parent holds a bachelor's degree, AAC has targeted its message to African American young women who fall into a high risk category for both teen pregnancy and STIs.

Empower U will utilize "Making

Choices" as its foundation for teaching girls about the risks associated with having unprotected sex.

"Making Proud Choices" is a Centers For Disease Control (CDC) effective intervention for teens. We understand that only through open dialogue will teens be less likely to make choices that put them at risk.

To find out more about the AAC's prevention education program or to help support a program, contact 256-536-4700.



AAC Struggles To Provide Care As HIV Spreads

Donations Directly Impact Care

In December alone, the AAC saw seven newly diagnosed patients. Recent testing events have identified new positives, and 2008 brought 95 new clients to the AAC's door.

HIV continues to be a growing concern in North Alabama communities, yet funding support has not remained steady. In fact, just this month, the state of Alabama slashed 9% from state budgeted funds promised to AAC, leaving the clinic with less financial support than promised in October.

The federal government supports the HIV/AIDS crisis in America through the funding of the Ryan White Care Act. Through this act, the AAC funds most of the Davis Clinic budget. However, when Ryan White funding was first issued, the AAC had 198 clients. **Now, the clinic provides care to 550 without any additional dollars from the federal government and even less from the state.**

"AIDS is an expensive disease to treat," said Mary Elizabeth Marr, AAC executive director. "One person's medication can cost up to \$3,600 for one month. Finding the money to provide quality medical care has become a daily challenge for us."

With the economic crisis, Marr said she expects to see even more cuts at the state level and doesn't feel optimistic about new federal dollars, which leaves the AAC dependent on community and individual donations to sustain it.

Several programs have been implemented this year to provide AAC supporters with avenues to give, while still being mindful of the bleak economic outlook. To find out how you can support the AAC with a monthly gift of just \$10, contact the Development Department at 256-536-4700, x.125 or visit the website at www.aidsactioncoalition.org.

Did You Know? About AIDS in Alabama

The numbers of newly diagnosed HIV cases in Alabama is rising.

In 2008 the AAC treated 541 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Of those, 95 were newly diagnosed. Several of these new cases of HIV were discovered during testing events on local college campuses.

National trends in HIV/AIDS are just as true for the state of Alabama and our local community.

There are 33 individuals who receive care at the AAC Davis Clinic who are between the age 15-33. Our youngest client is 15; our oldest is 68. We are seeing more and more cases of HIV being diagnosed in younger individuals, which only confirms that our teens and young adults are not using protection and are making choices that place them at high risk for contracting a sexually transmitted infection.

Many individuals living with HIV/AIDS have difficulty keeping a job and have no health insurance.

More than half (55%) of our patients at the AAC Davis Clinic have no form of insurance. They are not even eligible for public insurance such as Medicare and Medicaid.

If the AAC Davis Clinic did not exist in the Huntsville community, these patients would seek care at the emergency room, placing the burden of their medical care on the tax payers.

With the help of our medical team, we provide a continuum of care for these patients, and insure that they receive the highest quality of care by physicians and nurses specializing in HIV/AIDS treatment.

If you live in the South, you are more likely to die of HIV complications.

According to the Southern Manifesto, released in 2008, of the 15 states with the highest rates of new HIV diagnosis, 9 are in the South.

Rising numbers of new cases, combined with the challenges of delivering care in rural areas, and the ongoing battle against discrimination that still exists in the South, have placed a burden on southern states who continue to try to provide care.



AAC Celebrates

AAC and its supporters honor and remember the following special individuals and groups who have been touched in some way by this disease:

- Martin Adams
 - Annette Anderson
 - Tom Barnwell
 - Tom Baxter
 - Mary Bragdon
 - Virginia Bragdon
 - Jeff Brewer
 - Rosemary Brubaker
 - Sam Bobo
 - Mark Buchanan
 - David Bul
 - Meg Carstens
 - H. Eric Castro
 - Toby Clark
 - Joseph Clay
 - Marion McIntosh Cort
 - Robby Creekmore
 - Tyler Kevin Drane
 - Tom Fleming
 - Randall Garison
 - Daniel G.
 - John Gray
 - Mitch Gullick
 - Dr. Eugene Hames
 - Michael Hoyny
 - Tony Jordan
 - Larry Knipschild
 - Corinne Cope Kurtz
 - Tom Lydon
 - Mary Elizabeth Marr
 - Jay McIntyre
 - Dennis O'Connor
 - Michael Todd Poe
 - Eddie Reid
 - Steve Ritch
 - Ed and Donna Rush
 - David Rozkuska
 - Mancil Self
 - John Sewell
 - Michael Shipley
 - Richard Klee Smith
 - Jorge Soto
 - Christopher Tucker
 - Paul Trupin
 - David Womack
 - Wayne G. Wood
- Florence Clinic Clients
AAC Volunteers
AAC Staff
All those living with HIV/AIDS

We all have work to do....in this fight against AIDS. Learn more about this disease, its impact on your community, and how you can get involved at www.aidsactioncoalition.org

Luminaries in Big Spring Park Bring To Light A Disease Impacting Huntsville

“We’ve Got Work To Do,” was the phrase heard over and over at this year’s Light of Hope event in Big Spring Park.

Originally scheduled for December 1st—World AIDS Day—the luminary lighting was moved to December 13th when a winter storm system brought cold air and snow flurries into Huntsville.

The crowd that gathered in Big Spring Park two weeks after World AIDS Day was not discouraged by any means. In fact, just the opposite.

They were challenged by people who are living with HIV everyday **to do more** to help fight this disease, **to do more** to educate others about how to prevent its spread and **to do more** to eradicate stereotypes that still exist surrounding HIV/AIDS.

“We all recognize that more needs to be done, especially in the area of prevention education and testing,” said Mary Elizabeth Marr, AAC executive director. “How else are we going to stop a disease that has no cure, yet continues to kill people



Thank you to our LOH Committee: Giselle Bodin, chair; Jerry Robinson, Jeremy Pope, Lindsay Lester, and Scott Faulkner.

everyday?”

More than 2,500 luminaries were placed throughout the park by a team of volunteers earlier in the day. Many were purchased by friends and family to honor or remember those who have been or continue to be impacted by HIV/AIDS.

Over \$13,000 was raised through the luminaries to support the Davis Clinic and other many programs of the AAC. Thank You!

Pennies Add Up To Dollars For AAC

This year in conjunction with World AIDS Day, the AAC encouraged its community to donate its pennies and loose change to fight AIDS.

Several area businesses and schools participated, raising more than \$600. Thanks to WHNT Channel 19, Partners Bar, Renaissance Salon, Terrame Salon and Spa, Randolph High School, Huntsville Center For Technology and

McDonnell Elementary School for collecting pennies in support of AAC.

AAC challenges all its supporters: Save your loose change this year and be ready for the “Make Your Pennies Count” campaign in December 2009!

You may be surprised how much you can give by saving your pennies.

To pick up a penny container for your home or business, call the AAC at 256-536-4700.



Be A Smart Donor: How To Grow Your Donation Without Hurting Your Wallet

Would you like to help your favorite charity, without writing a bigger check?

Sound impossible? Well, it's not. In fact, all it takes is the proper form from the human resources department at your company and a few minutes of your time.

Many companies offer Employee Matching Gift Programs that allow an individual to make a cash donation to the charity of their choice, and the company will match that donation dollar-for-dollar.

Recently, the AAC received a \$500 donation from an individual, who then submitted a form to his company for A matching gift. Within four weeks,



the AAC had another \$500 check.

Employee Matching Gift Programs are easy solutions

to helping raise more money to support HIV/AIDS care in your community! Don't doubt that every dollar counts. And small donations add up to make huge contributions in the fight to stop the spread of this disease.

So, if you support Dining With Friends every year, think about maximizing your donation with a matching gift from your company.

Creative Giving

The following is a list of companies who have a matching gift program.

- Abbott Laboratories
- ADP
- Aetna
- Alabama Power
- AllState
- American Eagle Outfitters
- American Express
- Amoco
- AT&T
- Bellsouth
- BlueCross BlueShield
- Boeing
- BP
- Chevron Texaco
- Delta Airlines
- Energen
- ExxonMobil
- Ford Motor Company
- Georgia Pacific
- General Motors
- General Electric
- Grainger
- Guidant Corporation
- IBM
- JC Penney
- Johnson Controls
- K-Mart
- Merck
- Merrill Lynch
- Monsanto Chemical Co.
- Norfolk Southern
- Norsdon
- Northrop Grumman
- Parker Hannifin Corporation
- Pepsi Cola
- Pfizer
- Philip Morris
- Proctor & Gamble
- Prudential
- State Farm
- Teledyne Technologies
- TimeWarner
- Unilever
- United Parcel Service
- Wal Mart
- Winn Dixie
- Xerox

Friends Who Care Campaign Continues

Since launching our Friends Who Care Campaign in September 2008, the AAC has raised \$15,000 of its \$35,000 goal.

We want to thank everyone who has joined us as a **Friend**, and we encourage those of you who have not pledged your support to call us today!

For just a \$10 monthly contribution on your credit card, you can be part of the AAC friends network. Over a year that \$10 a month will purchase medications for a patient living with AIDS; it will pay for prevention education materials; or it will pay for someone to receive an HIV test.

AAC would like to thank the individuals listed below for their contribution of \$100 or more to the Individual Giving Program:

Patron:

Steven Marz

Benefactor:

Stephen Blevins
Heather & Don Carlton
Michael Shipley & Tom Lydon
Sherri Shipman

Supporter:

Gregg & Trisha Bragg
Karen Hill
Maggie & Buddy Little
James & Sandra Loew
Mary Elizabeth Marr
Magali Rivera

Friend:

Walter Baker
Giselle Bodin
Hannah Brake
Stanley Brockway
Roseann Burlew
Wanda Campbell
Clinton & Edna Clay
Karen Corps
Robert Coulter
Teresa Crop

Friend:

Pam Delozier
David Dennis
Eye Center Surgeons & Associates, LLC
Parker Griffith
Sheryl Guffin
Nancy Holzwanger
Francis Huffman
Ka Terra Salon
Mattress King
Evelyn Kurtz & Yolanda Curiel
Kelly Labiche
James & Judy Link
Susan Morley
Keith & Kate Pimmel
Mark & Amy Pope
Jeremy Pope
Andree Reeves
Anne Robinson
Edwin & Donna Rush
Eleanor Schweinsberg
Timothy Tolar



HIV Youth Summit Brings 400 Teens Together To Talk About Tough Issues

In October the AAC hosted its annual HIV Youth Summit. More than 400 students from 12 high schools attended the day-long event, where they attended topic-specific breakout sessions led by their peers, and heard from one young woman who contracted HIV from her boyfriend.

Many of our teens have no knowledge of how HIV can be passed from one person to another, and are continuing to engage in sexual activity that places them at a high risk for contracting an STD or HIV. Statistics from the Centers For Disease Control show one in two sexually active youth will contract an STD by age 25, which places them at a higher risk of contracting HIV.

These same young people are the future leaders of our community. They will graduate high school and pursue careers in medicine, politics, education, and other areas that will shape our community. We want to reduce these statistics, and empower our young people to make healthy decisions; to become advocates for a cure.

The HIV Youth Summit has the power to change attitudes and behaviors in our young people, but also in adults. It can open the door to more funding for HIV education in our high schools and change the way our entire community addresses HIV/AIDS.

Following last year's summit, the AAC decided to form a teen advisory council/board that will help plan HIV awareness activities in high schools in North Alabama.

This year, Randolph High School will lead the way with its event "BATLE AIDS" on April 3rd. This event, scheduled to be held at the Lumberyard and open to all high school youth in the Huntsville/Madison County area, will give teens a chance to highlight their talents on stage, learn the facts about HIV, raise money for treatment and testing and get tested themselves. It will be the first event to be organized and led by youth in our community.

Thanks to the Employees Community Fund at Boeing for supporting our youth with a grant to fund the HIV Youth Summit last fall. And, thanks to the students at Randolph High School for leading the way for more teens to get involved in HIV awareness activities.



We can no longer ignore the impact AIDS is having on women in America. AIDS is the leading cause of death for black women ages 25-34.

Women: Get The Facts

AAC Highlights HIV/AIDS Impact On Women As Part of National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

On March 10th women all across the U.S. will join together in an attempt to bring awareness to the impact HIV/AIDS is having in their lives.

Early in the epidemic, women were almost overlooked as a demographic at risk for contracting HIV/AIDS. Now, it is the leading cause of death for black women ages 25-34. America can no longer hide from the facts: one in four girls will contract a sexually transmitted disease in their lifetime, and this includes HIV.

Many women have no idea that they are at risk for contracting HIV/AIDS. And even more women have never had an HIV test.

The United States will celebrate National Women And Girls HIV Awareness Day on March 10, 2009—encouraging communities, governments, and physicians to take the initiative in educating women about practicing safe sex and the importance of getting tested.

In North Alabama the AAC will provide Ob/Gyn clinics with fact sheets on HIV/AIDS and women as well as handouts promoting rapid HIV testing to be given to patients during the month of March.

"We know that prevention is the key," said Mary Rozier-Hachen, AAC nurse manager. "Women have to recognize the risk and take the initiative to get tested."



AAC Receives National AIDS Fund Grant

**Empowering Schools
With Tools; Teaching
Teens To Advocate;
Building Community
Awareness**



Through a grant from the National AIDS Fund, the AAC will tackle HIV prevention education this year in several different, but innovative ways.

First, we are introducing a pilot program at Johnson High School called “Making Proud Choices.” This prevention education program is an effective intervention approved by the Centers For Disease Control. In eight sessions, students will learn how to make positive choices that protect them from pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV.

If successful, AAC staff will train teachers at all Huntsville City High Schools, so that all schools can implement the program next school year.

“With a small staff, it would be impossible for us to reach all schools,” said Mary Elizabeth Marr, AAC executive director. “Through this grant, we will have the opportunity to train teachers to teach this model of prevention education, and everyone will benefit.”

AAC staff has seen the power that

youth have when their voices are united. Through the National AIDS Fund grant, AAC will provide a day long training to a group of young adults and teens—empowering them with the knowledge they need to become advocates for policy change.

“After they have had the training, we want to engage these young people in advocacy efforts both on the state and national level, as well as support them in planning outreach and testing events on their school campuses,” Marr said. “HIV/AIDS is impacting our youth. We want to give them the chance to speak out about what they want to see in regards to prevention education.”

In addition to these two programs, AAC plans to implement HIV and testing campaigns through the help of local media outlets.

“We have to quit pretending that AIDS isn’t deadly. This disease is striking quickly and quietly. We can no longer afford to not talk about it,” Marr said.

Ways You Can Help

This spring AAC along with other AIDS Medical Clinics and AIDS Service Organizations across Alabama will spend time in Montgomery advocating for funding support.

For the medical clinics who receive Ryan White federal grant dollars, a percentage of “matched funding” is required by the state to secure the federal funding.

With so many budget cuts, directors of ASOs across Alabama are worried about receiving this matched funding.

The AAC wants to invite you to write a letter to your state legislator to help with this effort.

State Legislators tell us that if they receive even five letters on a given subject they take notice.

Think what a difference we can make in Montgomery!

We have statistics and sample letters available for anyone interested.

Our letter campaign will kick on the first week of March.

Check the AAC web site for sample letters and instructions. If you write a letter, be sure to email us and let us know.

For more information about this letter writing campaign, contact the AAC at 256-536-4700, x. 125 or email

knorton@aidsactioncoalition.org

Food Boxes Delivered In Time For Holiday

This year AAC distributed 120 food boxes to clients and their families during December. The food boxes contained enough nonperishable items to last for several weeks.

Each year, this is a large endeavor that the AAC social work staff plans and provides for our clients.

This year we were able to use an empty office suite in our building to store, fill and manage the food box distribution. Thank you to Birdie Brown and St. Clair Development for donating the use of the suite during the holidays.

To find out how you can help with projects like this, contact AAC.



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Non-Profit
Organization
PAID
Huntsville, AL
Permit #305

Working to end the suffering
of those living with HIV/AIDS
in our community through
education, prevention, and
direct services.



AAC Upcoming Events

Nat. Women & Girls HIV Awareness Day: March 10th

Find out more at www.aidsactioncoalition.org

B.A.T.L.E. AIDS: April 3rd

Huntsville/Madison County teens invited to join AAC and Randolph High School at the Lumberyard for an evening of music, poetry, drama and info on HIV prevention. For more info, call 256-536-4700.



Dining With Friends 2009: May 16th

To purchase tickets, find out more information about hosting a party or about Dan Dunn and the Dessert Reception, visit www.aidsactioncoalition.org.

Nat. HIV Testing Day: June 27th

Watch for more information about testing events in the North Alabama community!