

# THE BASIC NEWS

Volume 1 Number 1

November, 2009

## A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hello All!

I am extremely pleased and very happy to reintroduce all of you to our newsletter, which we hope to publish on a quarterly basis, thanks to the help of volunteers and staff who has taken on this project. The Board of Directors and I are very pleased with the forward movement of BASIC and the many positive accomplishments that have been made in the past few years. BASIC will continue to provide vital services in this community.

It is our intention to publish this newsletter now as an email, and we will begin to collect the email addresses of anyone interested in knowing about what is happening with BASIC. We want this to be informative, helpful and supportive. So if anyone has anything that they would like to share with the rest of the BASIC family, they can send information to [basicin6@comcast.net](mailto:basicin6@comcast.net) and we will do our best to include it in the next issue.

I hope that this newsletter is helpful to all of you.

Sincerely,  
Valerie Mincey, M.S.W.  
Executive Director

## WELCOME ABOARD !!!!



Pictured above; Tanya Escalera, Kyle Sullivan, Cynthia Albert, Irene Henderson; in front; Dee Williams.

The Department of Client Services has new faces. BASIC is pleased to have Mrs. Cynthia Albert as the Director of Client Services overseeing all aspect of Ryan White Part B, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA), AIDS Insurance Continuation Program (AICP) and Project AIDS Care (PAC). These programs benefit individuals living with HIV/AIDS in Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson and Washington counties.

BASIC has new case managers. Tanya Escalera, Kyle Sullivan, Dee Williams and Irene Henderson.

Dee Williams also becomes our first Spanish speaking case manager.

## **BASIC NWFL IS HAVING AN IMPORTANT BIRTHDAY!!!**

On December 1, 2009, BASIC NWFL will celebrate its twentieth anniversary of being a community agency whose mission is to aid, assist and comfort those living with HIV/AIDS, and to provide awareness, education and prevention services to those at risk of contracting HIV. BASIC began with a small group of community volunteers who saw a need for an agency whose mission was to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Bay and surrounding counties. From that small group BASIC was incorporated on December 1, World AIDS Day, 1989, and has grown from an all volunteer organization to an agency employing over 20 persons, and bringing approximately \$1.5 million in grants into the community to serve the care and treatment needs of its clients and to assist those who are at high risk of becoming infected with HIV. From humble beginnings, BASIC has become a good and respected community partner. This has been accomplished through the help and assistance of our federal and state government funders, and our national and local nonprofit funders, whose support is essential to the operation of BASIC. The BASIC family is thankful to a generous community for its support during these past twenty years, and its assistance in allowing us to fulfill the mission of BASIC. For those living with HIV/AIDS, medical and support services, pharmaceuticals, case management, and assistance with housing, transportation, and so many other services make the difference between living healthy and with dignity, and being sick, lonely and forgotten. BASIC intends to mark its twentieth anniversary on World AIDS Day,

2009, with several activities culminating with the annual candlelight vigil.

In preparation for this anniversary, BASIC is in the process of renovating the interior and exterior of its operations center on Magnolia Avenue to make the center more inviting to its clients as well as to the many other persons who seek HIV counseling and testing or information on HIV, and to the many persons who are actively involved in the agency's prevention programs. As always, BASIC is looking for volunteers to help with this renovation project, and the other events associated with the twentieth anniversary, as well as supplies to complete the project. It's going to be big. Activities will include a group singing Seasons of Love from the musical rent. All former Basic board members and former employees will be invited. A pancake breakfast for clients is being considered as well as speaking at schools and clubs. There will also be a reception. And in the area of wishful thinking we're inviting Governor Crist and President Obama. We can dream. Anyone who wishes to be a part of this project can contact BASIC at 850-785-1088 Ext 117. Stay tuned to the agency website and to future announcements of upcoming and related activities.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

BASIC would like to thank some of our faithful and diligent volunteers.

Tom Garrett

Michael Bamberg

The Keeton House

Michael Tyler



## **GET REAL; BASIC'S NEW PROGRAM FOR MEN.**

On January 1, 2009, BASIC initiated a new program for men at risk of contracting HIV, called GET REAL. This program is funded by the Florida Department of Health for the next three years, and is intended to reach men who have sex with other men and black heterosexual men, provide both individualized risk assessment and support in reducing risk, and group training on consistently and properly implementing safer sex techniques through the VOICES program. Mrs. Pamela Williams is the program coordinator, and Derrick Robinson and Jermaine Daniels are currently the two outreach prevention specialists, who will work directly in the communities of Bay and surrounding counties. GET REAL is intended as a response to the growing number of HIV infections which are occurring among men in our area as well as within the state and the country as a whole. Within the recent past, the Bureau of HIV/AIDS within the State of Florida Department of Health released a report entitled "Out in the OPEN," which details the increase of HIV infections among men who have sex with men in Florida. The report lists several factors which contribute to this increase, including a loss of appreciation for the seriousness of the disease with the advent of antiretroviral drugs which have enabled HIV to become a chronic but manageable disease, the amount of virus already established within the

community, as well as homophobia and the stigma of HIV/AIDS which are persistent attitudes within our communities. The report noted that in Florida at least 1 in 22 men who have sex with men (MSM) are living with HIV/AIDS, though minority populations share a greater burden of the infections. Since the single most important preventive measure is for MSM to know their HIV status, all participants in the GET REAL program are provided with individualized HIV testing and counseling. For additional information on this program, please check BASIC' website at [www.basicwfl.com](http://www.basicwfl.com) or call Mrs. Pamela Williams at 850-785-1088 Ext 118.

## **OUR FIRST ANNUAL REPORT**

BASIC has published its first annual report on agency operations for the year 2008. In addition to providing information on incomes and expenses, the report summarizes key program accomplishments in care and treatment as well as prevention. The complete annual report, as well as other interesting information about BASIC, can be found on line at BASIC's website: [www.basicwfl.com](http://www.basicwfl.com).

## **SUCCESS! SUCCESS! SUCCESS!**

BASIC has been featured in the **Bureau of HIV/AIDS Contract Managers' Quarterly Newsletter** as a best practice for the way in which the agency combines scientifically base interventions into one coherent program. For example, the Get REAL program for men combines the best of the intervention RESPECT with the skills building of VOICES into one intervention targeted at assisting men to know their HIV status, implement a risk reduction step, and

then have that risk reduction reinforced through VOICES.

BASIC's current mentoring program Each One Teach One for children who have an incarcerated parent was featured in **The Signal**, a newsletter for student information, The Florida State University Campus in Panama City. Under this program, a community member volunteers to mentor a child by meeting with him/her for one hour a week for some activity they both can enjoy and find benefit. Mentoring provides role models for children and helps them in what must be an extremely difficult time.

BASIC has recently received notification of a funding award from the Department for Children and Families within the federal Department of Health and Human Services for an additional mentoring program for children who have one or both parents incarcerated. Under this grant, BASIC will partner with Juveniles Understanding Discipline, Order and Service, JUDOS here in Panama City, and Okaloosa AIDS Services, Information and Support, OASIS in Ft. Walton Beach. This mentoring program is somewhat different than the previous program since BASIC is the lead agency and has responsibility for ensuring that many more children are provided with a mentor who meets with them on a weekly basis. This program called Every Child: One Promise represents a new direction in service to the community for BASIC, but does not diminish its commitment to serving persons with HIV/AIDS or those at risk of contracting HIV or any other Sexually Transmissible Infection, STI.

BASIC has had several successful fund raising events in the past months: a Yard sale in September, a pancake breakfast at Appleby's on 23<sup>rd</sup> street and the Beach ball at Pineapple Willey's on the Beach. Thanks to everyone who helped with these events or supported them.

The minimal landscaping in the front of our building on Magnolia has recently undergone some improvement thanks to the generosity of the Home Depot and Lowes, as well as one of our clients and some workers from Keeton House. Again, thank you for your efforts on behalf of the BASIC community. A welcoming and professional looking building is important to the clients, to anyone who comes for services or visits, and to the community in which we reside.

The Prevention Department at BASIC had a very successful HIV Testing event in Conjunction with National HIV Testing and Awareness Day. In addition to testing in Bay County, BASIC co hosted an event with the Jackson County Health Department, which included refreshment for participants. The Bay County Health Department was also a partner, conducting a successful testing event at the Panama City mall.

**The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the United States Is REAL—Get the Facts!**



Before we can stop any epidemic, we first have to recognize the magnitude of the disease. HIV is still a threat across the United States. And even though there are treatments to help people with HIV live longer than ever before, AIDS is still a significant health issue. Surprised? Get the facts:

- Every 9½ minutes (on average), someone in the United States is infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.
- In 2006, an estimated 56,300 people became infected with HIV.

- More than 1 million people in the United States are living with HIV.
- Of those 1 million people living with HIV, 1 out of 5 do not know they are infected. (People who have HIV but don't know it can unknowingly pass the virus to their partners.)
- Despite new therapies, people with HIV still develop AIDS.
- Over 1 million people in the United States have been diagnosed with AIDS.
- More than 14,000 people with AIDS still die each year in the United States.

**The HIV/AIDS epidemic isn't just happening in faraway places. Every 9½ minutes someone in the United States gets infected with HIV.**

### **What about Florida?**

- ✓ HIV/AIDS continues to be a major health challenge in Florida with approximately 7,498 Floridians becoming infected in 2008;
- ✓ Approximately 95,000 Floridians are alive and living with HIV; with 498 in our area alone;
- ✓ In Florida 32.4 of every 100,000 Floridians is infected with HIV. This rate is more than 65% higher than the national rate of 11.4%;

### **HIV and AIDS: We Are All Part of the Solution**

We can all be leaders. We can take more responsibility to do more as individuals, as communities, and as a nation to fight HIV and AIDS.

As individuals:

- We should know whether or not we are infected with HIV;
- If we are infected, we should seek medical care and protect others from becoming infected;
- We should protect ourselves and others from HIV;
- We should educate ourselves and others about HIV.

As communities:

- We should mobilize to overcome the challenges and barriers to HIV prevention;
- We should fight ignorance and complacency related to HIV;
- We should increase the awareness about the severity of epidemic and the continued impact that HIV is having on our communities;
- We should make sure that HIV prevention services, HIV testing, medical care and treatment are available to all who need them;
- We should work to prevent stigma and discrimination—and to increase support for people living with HIV.

As a nation:

- We must recognize the epidemic here, in this country, for the crisis that it still is;
- We must implement the programs that scientific evidence tells us are most effective;
- We must ensure that those who need effective prevention interventions have access to them;
- We must come together to intensify efforts and to stop this epidemic.

Together, we have the power to change the course of the HIV epidemic in the United States and in our area.

WORLD AIDS DAY



Started on 1st December 1988, World AIDS Day is about increasing awareness, fighting prejudice and improving education. The World AIDS Day theme for 2009 is 'Universal Access and Human Rights'. World AIDS Day is important in reminding people that HIV has not gone away, and that there are many things still to be done. Please join us at the open house and the candlelight vigil on Tuesday December 1, 2010, and in remembering all we have lost to HIV/AIDS by wearing something red on that day. For additional information, call 785-1088 Ext 117 or 116.

### LOOKING FOR A WAY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

BASIC is looking for a volunteer who would be interested in coordinating other volunteers at BASIC. This position would be helpful for anyone wishing to not only volunteer their time in a beneficial way to the community, but also to gain hands-on experience within a nonprofit organization. The service would be a wonderful addition for a person to add to their resume, as well as a great opportunity for gaining experience that so many employers are looking for. If interested, please call Ron at 785-1088 Ext 117.

Check out the current issue of **Panama City Living** for an article on BASIC's twenty years of service to the community.

Also check out our new and improved website at [www.basicnwfl.com](http://www.basicnwfl.com)

# BASIC's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## World AIDS Day



**A Day of Service to Area 2A HIV+**

**Clients** on Saturday, November 28, with a fellowship Holiday Luncheon and Food Distribution;



**A Day of Healing Divisions Caused**

**by HIV/AIDS** on Sunday, November 29, in local participating churches during Sunday Services;



**A Day of Awareness** on Monday,

November 30, including displays and HIV testing at various educational sites and the Glenwood Community Center; appearances on local media talk shows; public service announcements;



**World AIDS Day and BASIC's 20<sup>th</sup>**

**Anniversary**, December 1, to include news articles, an Open House at BASIC 432 Magnolia Avenue from 3 till 5:30 p.m., and the Annual Candlelight Vigil and signing of the World AIDS Day Proclamation in McKenzie Park at 6 p.m.