

RISE ABOVE

SERVING THE **WHOLE PERSON**

Photo: Stephen Steen

- April 1-2** AIDS Watch
- April 10** National Youth HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- April 17** World Hemophilia Day
- April 18** National Transgender HIV Testing Day
- April 19** WNCAP Offices Closed
- April 25** Dining Out For Life
- May 6** National Nurses Day
- May 12** Mothers Day
- May 17** International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia & Biphobia
- May 18** HIV Vaccine Awareness Day
- May 18, May 25, June 1** AIDS Quilt Panel Creation Workshops
- May 19** National Asian & Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- May 24-27** WNCAP Offices Closed
- June 5** HIV Long-Term Survivor Day
- June 21** Dance Party - Asheville Celebrates 50 Years of Pride
- June 23-30** AIDS Memorial Quilt Exhibit at Asheville Masonic Temple
- June 28** 50th Anniversary of Stonewall Riots

RISE ABOVE WORD SEARCH

AIDSWATCH	RESTAURANT	ART	MEDICAID
DISCLOSED	VOLUNTEER	ADVOCACY	YOUTH
DINING OUT	GIVING BACK	JONES STREET	HEMOPHILIA
AMBASSADOR	CREATIVE	DISCLOSE	STONEWALL

U E B C F O Y S E N Q X Q N X Q Y H L Z M S X Y U
 J B L U E J R E E E L W F S I I Y D H F V O Z N E
 P Q C H N J D N U T L N D T R S D I E Y E G J N P
 G O M T B S S O V C S C S U T I G Q M B C P A Z Q
 Z G L U P Z T J M U F N T O S P U Q O C Z V T I N
 Z Q X O H O R H S F R Q N C J C H J P P A I G L I
 I S C Y J R E N O Y L E L L Q A S K H U I F G C E
 C L M T O O E V K T W O S D K F T F I E M R T H L
 R K X M H D T P H A S I L T B C F Z L I R Z P S T
 E C P B B A O T L E V X Q Z A Z A H I D D E K N M
 A T Q A Y S Y L D B S I D T N U H B A T J S Q U R
 T Y C I N S A P P X E V O W H W R T R A N O C V E
 I A M P W A F U M H C T A W S D I A A X J L S S Z
 V J E H E B I X Q G F I V V L I I B N U I C M X T
 E P C P E M I W Q I D I I K E Q X P R T A S T W B
 S I I X N A M E D I C A I D S M Z E C E W I X F A
 E H T Q Z F D Z W Y P B O F D I N I N G T D I M M
 V O C N L S Y F I Z Q H N Y C A C O V D A Z O R D
 G E N D G D F Y L G I V I N G N P Q W H N G J H P
 R N R E E T N U L O V K Y J H O S T M U O H N Q U

ASK MISS WINNIE...

Dear Miss Winnie:

I recently tested positive for HIV and am at a loss at how to deal with the stigma of it all. What do I say to my family, friends, landlord and coworkers? I am afraid they will not want anything to do with me anymore, and that I might get fired and/or thrown out of my apartment. What should I do?

- Stigmatized in Sylva

Dear Stigmatized:

Were you planning to take out a full page ad in the local paper announcing your recent diagnosis? While living with HIV is nothing to be ashamed about, Miss Winnie doesn't think that that would be such a great idea. Let's face it: some people can be just down-right ignorant (there, I said it), and unfortunately, you might still have to interact with them on a daily basis. Your doctor needs to know your status so that you can get proper treatment, but other than that, your business is your own. Take it slow....your case worker will refer you to some good support groups that can help you adjust and learn to deal with HIV issues. Close friends and family? Think "CIA or NSA"on a need to know basis and when the time is right and you are comfortable with it all. Employer and landlord? Why bother.....unless you want to risk getting fired or thrown out so you can sue somebody and get lots of money. You do have rights, you know. Let me know if this helps.....and good luck!

Have a question for Miss Winnie?
Email MissWinnie@wncap.org and
put your mind at ease!

Questions, Comments, Criticisms?
Contact RISE ABOVE:

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THE AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT IN ASHEVILLE

From **Monday, June 17** through **Saturday, June 22**, WNCAP will be presenting portions of the famous AIDS Memorial Quilt at the **Masonic Temple** in downtown Asheville - 80 Broadway Street, Asheville, NC, 28801. The exhibit will be open from **10am-7pm**, and is free and open to the public. The exhibit coincides with the **50th Anniversary of the Stonewall Riots**, placing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the broader context of the LGBTQ rights movement.

On Monday, June 17, there will be an **Opening Reception** from **6pm-8pm** featuring live music by the **Asheville Gay Men's Chorus**, light refreshments, and a moving Induction Ceremony for newly created Quilt panels. The Opening Reception is free and open to the public.

"It was important to us that HIV/AIDS be a part of the conversation around the 50th Anniversary of Stonewall," said WNCAP Executive Director **Antonio del Toro**. "As we look back over fifty years of LGBTQ activism, we must never ... *continue on next page*"

DINING OUT FOR LIFE WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!

Dining Out For Life is Western North Carolina's biggest day of HIV/AIDS awareness and fundraising. On **Thursday, April 23**, 100 restaurants in Asheville and WNC donated 20% of sales to HIV Prevention & Care in our region. Hundreds of **volunteer Ambassadors** visited restaurants and spoke to diners about the event and invited them to join a raffle for three great prizes.

Although final numbers are still coming in, Dining Out For Life 2019 is on track to exceed the total raised in 2018. That means that **over \$100,000** was raised on a single day to help prevent new cases of HIV and Hepatitis C, to take good care of people in our region living with blood-borne viruses, and to continue our education & advocacy activities.

We are so proud of all of our volunteer Ambassadors who dedicated their time and energy for a great cause. But there are a few Ambassadors who deserve a special mention: **HJ Hayes**, who covered the dinner shift at Buxton Hall Barbecue submitted his promotional materials to his restaurant in a timely fashion ... *continue on next page*



"AIDS Memorial Quilt"... those who passed away from AIDS-related causes. Their activism and sacrifice led us to where we are today."

The AIDS Memorial Quilt began in **June 1987** when a small group of activists gathered in San Francisco to document the lives they feared history would neglect. Their goal was to create a memorial for those who had died of AIDS-related causes, and to thereby help people understand the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS. This meeting of devoted friends and lovers served as the foundation of **The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt**.

In 1987, 1,920 panels were first displayed in the nation's capital during the **National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights**, to highlight the scale of the epidemic. By 2016, the Quilt included more than **49,000 panels** representing over **97,000 people** and it continues to grow. It is a memorial to those lost, a tool for preventing new HIV infections, and the world's largest ongoing community art project.

Over **25 million people** have visited portions of the AIDS Memorial Quilt over the years. The total weight of the Quilt is more than **55 tons**, and the total size is **1,725,000 square feet** - equivalent to 367 NCAA basketball courts. It would take a person **34 days** to view the entire Quilt if they spent only one minute at each panel.

"It was important to us that HIV/AIDS be a part of the conversation around the 50th Anniversary of Stonewall"

*- Antonio del Toro
Executive Director, WNCAP*

The WNCAP Quilt Exhibit includes sixteen **12x12 foot blocks**, each one made up of 6 or more individual panels. Many of the panels memorialize people from the local Western North Carolina area who passed away. Others are more far-flung, such as celebrity panels honoring **Freddy Mercury, Liberace, Arthur Ashe, and Eazy-E**, and two blocks made entirely of international panels. It is a solemn and moving exhibit, but also an inspiring display of the love and activism that was generated by the AIDS epidemic.



"Dining Out For Life"... and won a \$50 Gift Certificate to the Grail **Moviehouse! Tony Beurskens**, the lunch Ambassador at Gan Shan Station, was our top recruiter for additional Ambassador in 2019 and also won a \$50 Gift Card to The Grail.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not mention our **top earning** Ambassadors of 2019. These are the volunteers who raised the most money through individual diner donations at their respective restaurants. Our top earners were **Harvey Jenkins** and **Silvio Moura** at **Posana**, followed closely by **Barbara Bell** and **Lacy Hoyle** at **Avenue M**. **Pam Nellis** and **Carl Romberg** took third place with the donations they garnered at **On the Verandah** in Highlands.

Dining Out For Life is WNCAP's biggest annual fundraiser, but that's not the only reason why it's important. Dining Out For Life is an opportunity for people across the community to speak openly about HIV. That dialogue helps to decrease the deadly stigma that can still surround HIV. We'll raise a glass to that!

LET'S TALK ABOUT "SELF-STIGMA"

BY: JEFFREY LONG, MEMBER OF THE EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS AND HIV/HEP C ACTIVIST.

From www.mentalhealth.org: *"Self stigma is an internalised stigma that eats away at our self esteem and self efficacy. It is like a voice inside our head that tells us that we aren't good enough. Feelings of shame and guilt often come with self stigma, when we are lead to believe that we have broken some unwritten code about what it means to be a full member of society."*



Jeffrey Long (far right) speaks with NC Rep. Susan Fisher at HIV Speaks at Jones Street in March 2019

In the past several years, I've become passionate about advocacy. But in order for me to keep going with my advocacy work, I must practice **self-care**, including staying **adherent** to my medications, maintaining an **undetectable** viral load, and taking care of my **mental health**. And part of practicing good mental health is being aware of the danger of **self-stigma**.

Years ago, I went to the doctor because I couldn't shake a three week cold, and I walked out with a **diagnosis of HIV**. After I learned my test results, I was horrified. I felt unclean. I was shunned by most of my friends, including the majority of my gay friends. Only my late husband and a very special friend stuck with me through thick and thin. They were the first people I told.

Soon after I found out I was living with HIV, I went into an **out of control spiral**. I was using drugs and getting stupid drunk in an effort to make the whole thing go away. My head was spinning with questions: How do I tell my family? What will they think? Should I tell my boss? Will I lose my job? I didn't know what to do. Even though I had two close friends standing right behind me, I was still alone inside my head. **This is self-stigma: feeling all alone.**

Despite my efforts to outrun my virus, it finally caught up with me. I ended up in the hospital with meningitis and **"full blown" AIDS**, which we now refer to as Stage 3 HIV. I had to stay in the hospital for a month and the doctors told me I had two years to live. Now, thirteen years later, I'm living a full and healthy life and my viral load is undetectable. That's the power of taking care of yourself.

[HIV] is not shameful or morally wrong. You did not "bring this on yourself"

I started attending the **HIV Support Group** at WNCAP (this support group still exists - if you're interested, talk to your case manager or email info@wncap.org). I got a case manager, too. I'm really grateful for **WNCAP** because they encouraged me to seek treatment. Now I see a psychiatrist so that I can keep watch over my mental health. Through WNCAP, I've also been able to continue my advocacy work that has become a true passion for me.

Now, let's talk about what you can do to reduce some of that "self-stigma" you may be feeling:

- **Form a community with other people living with HIV. Visit WNCAP's support group or other HIV support groups.**
- **Get involved with helping other people living with HIV. Volunteer for Loving Food Resources (LFR) or your local food bank and/or WNCAP**
- **Get involved with advocacy. Call your state representatives on issues that you care about. There are many ways to get involved**

Just remember that HIV is simply a virus, like the flu or any other medical condition. **It is not shameful or morally wrong.** You did not "bring this on yourself". It was an accident just like any other medical accident. People living with HIV live long, healthy, thriving lives. It is a part of who you are but it does not define you.

Before I close out my piece, I want to leave you with a quote that I heard at the "HIV Speaks On Jones Street" day of advocacy in Raleigh that truly inspired me. It was said by Stephanie Brown, an HIV Advocate from Fayetteville, NC: **"You can't have passion for helping others if you're not passionate about yourself."**

Sgi (Thank You).