

RISE ABOVE

SERVING THE **WHOLE** PERSON

Photo: Stephen Steen

REMEMBERING MINNIE JONES



Photo: The Urban News

Each February, during **Black History Month**, our country honors the contributions and achievements of African Americans who have dedicated their lives to greatness. In Western North Carolina, thousands have been affected by the life-work of a Social Activist and Community Leader whose vision for justice in America grew from working and marching beside **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Many citizens may not know her name, but if they have ever been in a desperate medical, legal or dental situation in Asheville, **Minnie Jones** has likely touched their lives whether they know it or not. As **The Urban News** stated upon her death, "In Asheville, one name stands out as a model for making history simply by the way she lived her life." That was Minnie Jones.

Jones, who died in February 2015 at age 81, was a native of Spartanburg, SC who came to Asheville after working with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on civil rights issues, first in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965, and later elsewhere across the South.

Upon settling here and seeing local disparities in housing and healthcare, she continued her civil rights work, beginning by volunteering to be the first African American to move into the previously all-white **Pisgah View Apartments** operated by the then-segregated Asheville Housing Authority. ... *continue on next page*

YOUR TEST RESULTS ARE IN!

So... you just found out you're HIV positive? You might be scared or confused – you may even wonder if you're going to die. Thankfully, due to the tireless determination of activists and the steady march of medical science, we know that HIV is not even close to a death sentence. As long as you get connected to medical care, take your medicine as prescribed, and have your blood tested regularly, there is no reason for HIV to dominate your life. But... what exactly do those numbers you patiently waited for all day actually mean?



Photo: The Tribune India

This article is certainly no substitute for a conversation with your doctor or nurse. But as a patient, the most important two numbers you should know are your **viral load** and your **CD4 count**. Viral load is literally **how many copies of the HIV virus** are found in a small amount of your blood. This is the number that you want to **go down** because the higher it is, the greater the chance of having serious health problems.

If your viral load drops below a certain point (anywhere from 20 to 200 copies, depending on the sensitivity of the test) you may become "undetectable." ... *continue on next page*

RISE ABOVE WORD SEARCH

MINNIE JONES	MLK	VIRAL LOAD	RESOLUTION
PISGAH	WNCCHS	IMMUNITY	WILL POWER
SEGREGATION	MEDICINE	UNDETECTABLE	DOFL
HISTORY	TEST	INFECTION	PUDDING

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

ASK MISS WINNIE...

Dear Miss Winnie:
I am in a rut! Another year has come and gone, and I feel so overwhelmed by all the craziness going on in the world that I can't seem to find the energy or motivation to do something....anything....to feel better about myself. What should I do?
 - Hopeless in Hendersonville

Dear Hopeless:
 The world is a mess, but that doesn't mean that you need to be one too! Focus on what you can do for yourself. Take "baby steps": cut back on the stupid smart phone an hour a day....have a daily glass of organic beet juice....volunteer to be an Ambassador for Dining Out For Life this Spring....spend a few hours a week at the library researching local history....read a book or two....walk a dog! Nobody said life was easy: a little effort on your part will go a long way towards some positive change in your life. Miss Winnie's creepy Uncle Joe (or was it Pink Floyd?) once said, "If you don't eat your meat, you can't have any pudding! Go grill yourself a nice juicy burger and see what happens.....and good luck!
 Miss Winnie

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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- Jan 1 New Years Day
- Jan 14-18 & 21-25 Asheville Restaurant Week
- Jan 18-21 WNCAP Offices closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Feb 1-28 Black History Month
- Feb 7 National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- Feb 14 National Condom Day & Valentine's Day
- Feb 18 President's Day
- March 1 Zero Discrimination Day
- March 3 International Sex Workers' Rights Day
- March 10 National Women & Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- March 12 HIV Speaks on Jones Street
- March 16 Asheville Catholic School's Shamrock 5K/10K/Fun Run
- March 17 St. Patrick's Day
- March 19 AZT Introduced (1987)
- March 20 National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- April 1-2 AIDS Watch

"Minnie Jones"... "For me, it all started because of racism and prejudice," Jones said in 2014. "I knew we could not drink water out of the same fountains as white people or eat in the same restaurants and had to ride in the back of the bus. Dr. King was telling us this kind of stuff wasn't right, and that we should have the same rights as everyone else."



From then on, wherever she saw needs in the community she worked tirelessly to fulfill them. She established and led the **Minnie Jones After-School Program**, which touched the lives of countless children over many years; encouraged the development of **Pisgah View Community Garden** to provide fresh, healthy vegetables for residents; and established a health clinic at the complex where most residents, especially the children, had no health insurance or access to medical care other than emergency rooms.

The health clinic grew into **Western North Carolina Community Health Services (WNCCHS)**, a nonprofit she established in April 1992 with **Carlos M. Gomez** and **Dr. Polly Ross**. Originally located in the historic Gudger house at 89 Montford Ave., it opened its first clinic as a Wellness Center for persons with AIDS at Kenilworth Presbyterian Church. The clinic later expanded its services and moved to a location in West Asheville, and then to its current home at 257 Biltmore Ave. In 2010, Buncombe County contracted with WNCCHS to take over the Biltmore Avenue health clinic. The clinic was renamed the **Minnie Jones Health Center**. In 2014, the clinic saw 14,456 patients, including 733 HIV positive patients.

"She was a giant in our community," said **David Gantt**, former chair of the Buncombe County Commission. "She was in the middle of everything that helped the working person. Every time I saw her, she asked me the same question: 'What are you doing for the common person?' That was her guiding star."

"She was a fierce advocate for the underprivileged. She really felt passionately about injustice. It didn't matter who it was," recalled Carlos Gomez, who partnered with Jones and Polly Ross to form the health nonprofit. "When many people were running away from AIDS, she was saying this could happen to anyone. She wasn't about just one cause. She was concerned about justice for all."

For this and for countless forgotten acts of selfless service and kindness to her fellow citizens, we humbly say **thank you** to Minnie Jones. The truth is we wouldn't be as healthy without you.

Special thanks to **The Urban News** and **The Asheville Citizen-Times** for contributing to this story.

Every time I saw her, she asked me the same question: "What are you doing for the common person?"

"Test Results"... **Once you are undetectable, you can no longer transmit HIV sexually.** This relatively recent knowledge is often called "**U=U**" or "**Undetectable Equals Untransmittable**".



The **CD4 count** is a fancy name for your **white blood cells**. If you recall your high school biology, white blood cells help fight off unwanted guests in the body – everything from the common cold to Ebola. So, if you're living with HIV, you want your CD4 count to be **higher** to assure your body can get rid of intruders. A healthy immune system normally has a CD4 count ranging from **500 to 1,600** cells per cubic milliliter of blood (cells/mm3), according to HIV.gov, but again, every body is different and you should talk to your doctor. You want your CD4 count to be like Goldilocks: not too high, not too low, but just right. If the numbers are too high, that could indicate an infection somewhere in the body. Too low a number might mean your medication isn't working properly.

This can all seem very confusing, but trust me – over time it gets easier. **Get connected** to medical care, **take your medication** as prescribed, and **stay informed**, and you will not just be living with HIV – you will be thriving!

STICKING TO NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS

It's that time of year again when many of us start thinking about what we might do differently this year to make our life, and perhaps



the world, a little bit better with a **New Year Resolution**. Living with HIV can bring a unique spin to our resolutions, especially with regard to how they affect our health. Here are some general guidelines and a few ideas for resolutions for the coming year, in no particular order.

Studies show that people who are successful with their New Year's Resolutions:

1) Don't talk about their resolutions - announcing your goals publicly can make you less likely to actually do the hard work to follow through on your intentions and lead to a falsely inflated self-image

2) One Resolution at a time. Willpower is a limited resource so choose carefully and wisely to focus on the one that matters most to your life.

Quit smoking

We've all heard this one before, and it's one of those situations where smokers are likely to argue, "Hey, I've given up everything else, so don't take that away from me!" But seriously, a recent study found that people with HIV who smoke have a higher rate of death and are more likely to die of smoking-related causes than from HIV itself. Moreover, smoking can make it more difficult to fight off serious infections. For help in quitting smoking, go to smokefree.gov.

Reduce or eliminate alcohol/recreational drugs

Alcohol is metabolized (broken down) through the liver, and the liver is used to metabolize many HIV drugs. This added stress can damage the liver and may be especially detrimental in people who are co-infected with Hepatitis C. HIV meds can boost the level of recreational drugs in your system, sometimes in dangerous ways. If you're unable to quit altogether, then use in moderation.

Exercise regularly

Exercise is a great way to help improve health, manage stress and can also boost your self-esteem and a give you a sense of accomplishment. Start slow and build when beginning an exercise program. Any amount of exercise is good, even if you only take a 20-minute walk three days a week. Get Moving!

Actually Make Resolutions

A study conducted in 2002 asked subjects whether they made New Year's resolutions or not. Those who made actual resolutions were far, far more likely to stick to them! Happy New Year!

DINING OUT FOR LIFE 2019 IS THURSDAY, APRIL 25



On Thursday, April 25, over 100 restaurants in WNC will donate 20% of their sales to HIV Prevention & Care. Want to have fun and give back? Become a DOFL Ambassador! Invite your friends to your favorite restaurant for a great cause. Email Chris at wncapvolunteer@wncap.org or call (828) 252-7489.

