

# RISE ABOVE

SERVING THE **WHOLE PERSON**

Photo: Jeffrey Long

**July 3** - WNCAP offices closed for Independence Day

**July 26**- Anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)

**July 28** - World Hepatitis Day

**August 20** - Southern HIV Awareness Day

**Aug 26** - Women's Equality Day

**Aug 27** - National Faith HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

**Aug 31** - WNCAP Virtual Event: International Overdose Awareness Day

**September** - National Recovery Month

**Sep 7** - WNCAP offices closed for Labor Day

**Sep 13** - Grandparents Day

**Sep 15** - Hispanic Heritage Month (through October 15)

**Sep 18** - National HIV and Aging Awareness Day

**Sep 23** - Celebrate Bisexuality Day

**Sep 26**- Blue Ridge Pride Festival is CANCELLED due to COVID-19

**Sep 27**- National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

## RISE ABOVE WORD SEARCH

HUMAN BEING TESTING HEALTHY LOVE	STIGMA INFECTION COVID HARM REDUCTION	NALOXONE WNCAP GARDEN CHEROKEE	CORN BEANS WELLNESS LABOR DAY
----------------------------------	---------------------------------------	--------------------------------	-------------------------------

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

## ASK MISS VIDA...

**Dear Miss Vida:**

*I'm doing everything I can to protect myself from the coronavirus. I barely leave my house and I stay out of the stores except when they're virtually empty. I'm starting to feel lonely and isolated, but I don't want to put myself at risk. What should I do?*

**Lonely in Leicester**

**Dear Lonely:**

We know that social distancing (i.e. not being within 6 feet of another person) is the best way to prevent transmitting the coronavirus. But human connection is critical to mental health, especially for people living with HIV. So, how do we stay connected to one another while staying safe?

Just because we're practicing social distancing doesn't mean we can't stay connected. Miss Vida has been on the phone and texting even more than she usually is. She's also used newer technologies like Zoom, FaceTime, and social media to stay connected to friends and family.

Now, more than ever, it's important to practice love and compassion and think of those less fortunate. You may be young and healthy, but what about your parents, grandparents, or friends who may be older or immunocompromised? Wash your hands; respect their space. Maybe check in on your older neighbor or your friend who is in total self-quarantine. See if they need groceries or simply a friendly FaceTime.

The way that we got through the worst days of the AIDS epidemic was by loving and supporting each other and taking common-sense precautions. We've already been through a pandemic. We'll get through this one just fine, too, as long as we stick together.

Hugs & Kisses,  
Miss Vida Precious Belle



We believe in having fun while saving lives! Our Tiger King "poll" helped increase the number of returned syringes!

## HARM REDUCTION IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

BY: JOSEF GRUBER

The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the need for **harm reduction** services. Since the pandemic began, distribution of materials, including **overdose reversal kits** and **fentanyl testing strips**, has increased exponentially. At least **160** overdose reversals were reported in April, and **185** in May.

Due to the pandemic, WNCAP procedures for harm reduction programs and their teammates have been altered to allow for the safest possible interactions between clients and staff. These procedures have been designed using best practice guidelines from the CDC and NASTAD.

"When receiving services, clients and staff meet in the parking lot instead of the office," said **Harm Reduction Coordinator Thomas Cospito**. "Reducing access to the building is unfortunate but necessary to protect our people. The Harm Reduction team and WNCAP as a whole respect and fully understand the weight of our current living standard. We **socially distance** and **wear our masks** within our office and when meeting our clients so that everyone stays safe."

Thomas explained that the purpose of the WNCAP Harm Reduction has not changed. The program is designed to reduce risk, prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis C, reverse overdoses, and provide safer use education for participants, thereby saving lives. In addition, WNCAP Harm Reduction helps clients who use drugs on their own terms with their plans for safer use and overdose response. WNCAP's Community Navigation team ... **continue on next page**

## HIV MEDICATIONS - WHAT'S NEXT?

HIV medications have improved dramatically over the last few decades. Thirty-five years ago, healthcare providers didn't have encouraging news to offer people who had received an HIV diagnosis. Today, it's a **manageable health condition** due to an extraordinary global effort to develop drugs capable of treating what was once considered untreatable.

In the early days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, drug treatments were **ineffective at best and highly toxic at their worst**, often accompanied by long lists of potentially life-threatening side-effects.

Thankfully, treatments have steadily grown safer and more effective. The main treatment for HIV today is **antiretroviral drugs**. These medications suppress the virus and slow its progression in the body. Although they don't fully eliminate HIV from the body, they can suppress it to **undetectable levels** in most cases.

When the level of HIV virus gets so low that it becomes undetectable, it becomes physically impossible to transmit HIV to another person. This scientific fact is known as **Undetectable Equals Untransmittable**, or "U=U". ... **continue on next page**



HIV is now a manageable medical condition because of major advances in treatments. Today, anti-retroviral drugs can suppress viral loads to undetectable levels.

Have a question for Miss Vida?  
Email [info@wncap.org](mailto:info@wncap.org) and put your mind at ease!

**Questions, Comments, Criticisms?**

Contact RISE ABOVE:

info@wncap.org  
(828) 252.7489  
P.O. Box 2411 · Asheville, NC · 28802



**"Harm Reduction"...** can help clients find medical care, treatment options, and other resources as needed. The **Harm Reduction Community Navigation Team** can provide transportation to ensure people can get the care they request. "We meet people where they're at," said Thomas.

"Our program exists to provide a stable, friendly, resource to create positive change and reduced stigma within our community." We are here to be a stable resource and to create positive change within the community." Action plans depend on the individual's interests and concerns. Their options are dictated on a case by case basis using the client's goals as the starting block.

*"The harm reduction program is designed to reduce risk, prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis C, reverse overdoses, and provide safer use education for participants, thereby saving lives."*

WNCAP offers a volunteer-based, community service called **"syringe pickup"** where WNCAP staff and volunteers go out into the community to safely dispose of used syringes.

There are several different ways that community members can contact Thomas and the rest of the WNCAP Harm Reduction team. The first is to come to the physical offices in Asheville or Franklin. The **Asheville office**, open from 9 am-5 pm, Monday-Friday is located at **554 Fairview Road**. The **Macon County office**, open from 9 am-6 pm, Monday-Friday is located at **3257 Georgia Road, in Franklin, NC**.



WNCAP staff John and Emma helping to clean up discarded syringes around the community.

You can also call **(828) 301-2185** or email [tcospito@wncap.org](mailto:tcospito@wncap.org). Be sure to like the new **WNCAP Harm Reduction Facebook** and the WNCAP Instagram page for Harm Reduction news and information.

*Information in this article comes from WNCAP Harm Reduction*

**"HIV Medications"...** The HIV virus can mutate and become resistant to a single medication. Therefore, most healthcare providers today prescribe several HIV medications together. A combination of two or more antiretroviral drugs is called **antiretroviral therapy**. It's the typical initial treatment prescribed today for people living with HIV.

These powerful therapies were first introduced in 1995 and immediately changed everything about HIV treatment. **Because of antiretroviral therapy, AIDS-related deaths in the United States were cut by 47 percent between 1996 and 1997.** New medications also come with far fewer side effects than the first generation of HIV drugs.

A key advancement that's making medication adherence easier for people undergoing antiretroviral therapy is the development of **combination treatments**, which contain multiple drugs within one pill. These medications are now the most commonly prescribed drugs for people with HIV who haven't been treated before. This approach has ushered in a new era of highly effective HIV treatment, with about half of all Americans living with HIV having achieved undetectable status.

Every year, new treatments are gaining more ground in treating, and possibly curing, HIV and AIDS. Researchers are investigating **"Nanosuspensions"** of antiretrovirals for both HIV treatment and prevention. These medications would be taken every 4 to 8 weeks. They could improve adherence by reducing the number of pills people need to take.

Similarly, researchers are working on an **injectable HIV treatment** that only has to be administered once a year, which would greatly increase adherence and viral suppression. **PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis**, is also being experimented on as an injectable treatment. None of these are cures for HIV and AIDS. But they would help people live **longer and healthier lives**, and that's something we can all celebrate.

*"Researchers are working on an injectable HIV treatment that only has to be administered once a year, which would greatly increase adherence and viral suppression."*

*Information in this article comes healthline.com, Newswise, and the National Institutes for Health*

# SUMMER GARDENING WITH "THREE SISTERS"

BY: JEFFREY LONG, MEMBER, EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS

Starting a **garden** – whether full-fledged or just a raised patio bed – is a great way to get fresh air, sunshine, and grow something with your own two hands. Especially now, when **COVID-19** makes grocery stores and farmers markets a little more risky, starting a garden guarantees you a supply of **fresh fruits and vegetables**.

As a member of the **Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians**, gardening has been a part of my cultural tradition for centuries. I would like to introduce you to a **"Three Sisters Garden"**, a tradition that has been handed down in time from Elder to Elder, from tribe to tribe, and from nation to nation as well.

A Three Sisters Garden is a **"companion planting"** agricultural method where corn, green beans, and squash are all grown together. Each plant's growth helps the other two, while saving space in the soil. The **Iroquois** started this tradition over three centuries ago.

First, **sweet corn** is planted in order to stalk up above the other crops. As older sisters often do, the corn offers the beans a necessary support system. The **beans**, which should be planted when the corn is a few inches tall, acts as the "giving sister", pulling nitrogen from the air and thus enriching the soil for all three crops. The beans should start sending out tendrils which attach to the corn stalks.

About one week after the green beans emerge, you will plant your **squash**. You do not want the large squash leaves to shade out the young corn and bean seedlings before they have time to establish.

As the beans grow through the squash vines and wind their way up the cornstalks into the sunlight, they will hold each sister close together. The large leaves of the sprawling squash leaf protect the threesome by creating living mulch that shades the soil, keeping it cool and moist while preventing weeds from taking over. The prickly squash leaves will keep critters away as well as other pests which do not like to step on them.

Together, the Three Sisters are a sustainable method of **maintaining fertile soil**. And once they are ready to be harvested, the corn, beans and squash are part of a **healthy, organic diet** - perfection!

The Vegetable trio sustained Native Americans for centuries, both physically and spiritually. In legend, the plants were **gifts from the gods**, always to be grown together, eaten together, and celebrated together. Each of the sisters contributes something to the planting. Together, the sisters provide a balanced diet from a single planting.

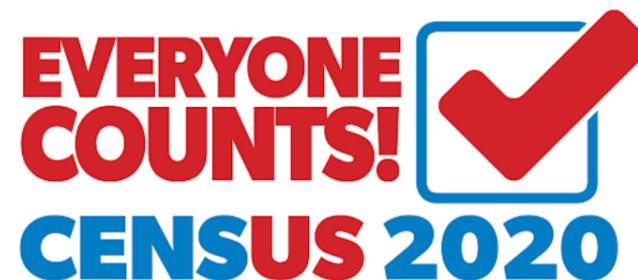
Good luck on your Summer gardening projects! **Sgi (Thank you)**.

*Information in this article comes from almanac.com and nativeseeds.org*



A "Three Sisters Garden" is an ancient Native American form of companion planting, where corn, green beans, and squash are grown together and help each other thrive.

## LAST CHANCE TO FILL OUT YOUR CENSUS FORM!



This is your **last chance** to be counted and **bring cash** to your county! Did you know that for every person counted during the 2020 Census in NC, more than **\$4,000** in federal dollars will be brought back to your region each year? Do your part today. The Census is scheduled to wrap up **September 30**. Take 10 minutes to complete the Census if you've not done so already. You can visit [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov) or call **(844) 330-2020** (English) or **(844) 468-2020** (Spanish). You can also fill out the **paper questionnaire** sent to your home and return in the **envelope provided**.