

RISE ABOVE

SERVING THE **WHOLE** PERSON

Photo: Jeffrey Long

- October 10** - World Mental Health Day
- Oct. 11** - National Coming Out Day
- Oct. 12** - National Indigenous Peoples Day
- Oct. 15** - National Latinx HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- Oct. 15** - Early Voting Period (through Oct. 31, dates and hours vary depending on where you live)
- Oct. 31** - Halloween
- November 3** - Election Day
- Nov. 11** - Veterans Day
- Nov 13, 14** - Building Power Across the Spectrum Conference, NCAAN
- Nov 20** - Transgender Day of Remembrance
- Nov 26, 27** - Thanksgiving (WNCAP Offices Closed)
- December 1** - World AIDS Day
- Dec 3** - International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- Dec 17** - International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers
- Dec 21** - Homeless Persons Memorial Day
- Dec 24, 25** - Christmas (WNCAP Offices Closed)

RISE ABOVE WORD SEARCH

CASE PREP MEDICAID EXPANSION	HEALTHY VIRUS CDC ISSUE	NATIONAL ASSISTANCE EARLY VOTE	NATIVE RESTAURANT PHASE LABOR DAY
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2020 ELECTION: THE ISSUES

It's that time again.... Yard signs, billboards, countless TV and radio ads. It's election season in North Carolina. No matter what your political persuasion is (or none at all!) there are several important issues that affect all people living in WNC, especially people living with HIV. **Knowledge is power.** The more you know about the issues, the better informed your vote will be, and the more you can educate your community about the things that really matter this November.



North Carolina is one of the few states that has not expanded Medicaid, a decision that would provide healthcare to 500,000 people, including thousands of people living with HIV.

Medicaid Expansion | Now more than ever, access to affordable, high-quality healthcare is on the minds of many North Carolinians. For those who are unemployed or whose employers don't offer health insurance, Medicaid is a key issue. North Carolina is one of just 14 states that has chosen not to expand Medicaid, which would bring health coverage to more than **600,000** people in our state, including thousands of people living with HIV and substance use disorder.

HMAP (formerly ADAP) | The HIV Medication Assistance Program (HMAP, formerly known as ADAP) is a state program that helps people living with HIV afford their life-saving medications. Just a few years ago, there was a waiting list for this program in North Carolina. Fortunately, because of the advocacy of people living with HIV, including the organization **NCAAN (NC AIDS Action Network)** every person in the state who qualifies for HMAP has access. Recently, the program was expanded to include people making less than 100% of the Federal Poverty Level. ... *continue on next page*

ASK MISS VIDA...

Dear Miss Vida:

I love attending all the WNCAP events: Dining Out For Life, World AIDS Day, the Quilt Exhibits... I feel so lonely staying in my house all the time, even though I know it's the safest thing for me to do right now. How can I connect with my HIV community in a way that's safe?



Sequestered in Sylva

Dear Sequestered:

Miss Vida feels your pain. I'm like a precious gem, honey, I deserve to be out in the open, sparkling, not shut away inside. But these are strange times, and in order to protect ourselves and the people we love, it's still safest to socially distance. I'm no good to anyone if I'm sick. That's why we should all wear masks in public, and if we must get together, to do so outdoors and six feet apart.

These are the times when we need community most. I suggest you tune in to the WNCAP virtual World AIDS Day event, happening all day on December 1st. Follow @wncap on social media and sign up for their e-newsletter to receive World AIDS Day celebrations and commemorations all day on December 1st. Is it the same as gathering together in person? No. But does it help to feel a sense of connection and community, even through a screen? Child, yes. Look - this isn't our first pandemic. And just like before, we can only get through COVID one way: together. Stay safe, stay well, and stay connected.

Hugs & Kisses,
Miss Vida Precious Belle

GET READY TO VOTE!



In North Carolina, you can vote by mail, in-person during Early Voting, or on Election Day. Are you registered to vote at your current address?

How do you vote in this year's Election? **First, check if you're registered to vote.** Even if you think you are already registered to vote, it's a good idea to check your registration to make sure it's active and current. **Visit vote.org to confirm you are registered and to locate your polling place.**

If you are not currently registered or not registered at your current address, the only way to register for the 2020 General Election now is **on-site** during the One-Stop Early Voting Period. This process is called **Same-Day Registration**. Same-day registrants must attest to their eligibility to vote and must provide proof of residence. Arrive prepared to **show a document with a name and address** like a North Carolina driver's license, other government-issued photo identification, pay stub, utility bill, or student ID with a school document showing your address.

Upon completion of registration, the newly-registered voter can **immediately vote** at that same one-stop site. ... *continue on next page*

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

Questions, Comments, Criticisms?
Contact RISE ABOVE:
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P.O. Box 2411 · Asheville, NC · 28802



"Election Issues"... Harm Reduction | Harm reduction is any tool that helps prevent or reduce harm. Examples include seatbelts, bicycle helmets, and syringe exchange programs. Harm reduction saves lives and improves health outcomes, including for people at high risk of HIV and hepatitis C. Harm reduction programs are often a way people access substance abuse disorder treatment and they help properly dispose of un-sterile syringes.

PrEP and PEP | PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis, is a **daily pill that prevents HIV**. PEP, or post-exposure prophylaxis, is an emergency medication that can be taken up to 48 hours after possible HIV exposure to prevent infection. Both PrEP and PEP are vital tools to prevent HIV in the modern age, and it is important that there is adequate funding to provide access to PrEP and PEP for everyone who needs them.

Native Issues | In Western North Carolina, Native American issues are particularly important, especially for people living in and around Cherokee. One important issue is the **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Project**, which shines a light on the huge number of Native women and girls who go missing or are killed each year. Similarly, the **Violence Against Women Act**, which protects all women and girls against domestic abuse, has expired. Both of these initiatives can be supported by lawmakers at all levels of government.

Despite the silliness and craziness that often dominates the news, politics and government - from the federal to the local level - has a real impact on the everyday lives of people living with HIV and everyone in WNC. No matter your beliefs, it's your right and responsibility to educate yourself on what your candidates believe - and, ultimately, who you choose to support.

Information in this article comes from the NC AIDS Action Network (NCAAN) and LakotaLaw.org

"Get Ready To Vote"... There are a few other things you should know about voting this year:

1. **Deadline approaching to Vote By Mail!** The absentee ballot request must be received by 5 p.m. October 27 in the voter's county board of elections office. To request an absentee ballot the voter or their near relative may fill out a paper form and return it to their county board of elections or make the request via the online portal. **Forms and portal found at [ncsbe.gov/voting/vote-mail](https://www.ncsbe.gov/voting/vote-mail)**. Depending on your county, you may be able to fill out and turn in your request form in-person at your local board of elections.

Absentee ballots will **require one witness** and may be returned by mail, or in-person at your local board of election or at a one-stop early voting site during any time that site is open for voting. **If you request an absentee ballot, you may change your mind and vote in-person as long as you haven't submitted your ballot.**

2. You may **vote in-person** during the **One-Stop Early Voting Period, Thursday, October 15, through Saturday, October 31**, at any early voting location in your county of residence. Persons who are not registered in a county may register at one-stop sites during the early voting period. See details above. For early voting procedures and times, visit <https://www.ncsbe.gov/voting/vote-early-person>

3. You may vote **in-person** on **Election Day, November 3rd**. Polls are open 6:30 am to 7:30 pm. Present at your assigned precinct polling place and cast your vote. **No I.D. necessary**. Any voter in line at 7:30 p.m. will be able to vote. If you choose to vote this day be prepared for long lines and wait times.

Additional Resources:
NC Board of Elections at [ncsbe.gov](https://www.ncsbe.gov)
Your local County Board of Elections
NCVoter.org online and by phone in English and Spanish at 1-888-OUR-VOTE

Information in this article comes from the NC State Board of Elections



The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Project shines a light on the huge number of Native women and girls who go missing or are killed each year.



You may vote in-person, either during the Early Voting Period (Oct. 15-31) or on Election Day (Nov. 3)

MY COVID DIARY

BY: SHANE DICKERSON, WNCAP CLIENT AND REALTOR, ZEN MOUNTAIN REALTY

Coronavirus... Who knew a word, which no one knew a year ago, would devastate our majestic mountain home here in WNC? Asheville is known across the country for our **restaurants, breweries, and hospitality**. But this tiny mutant has made an indelible impact on our service industry and the people who work within it, including many people living with HIV, like myself.

I worked at one of the busiest spots in West Asheville until March 17th of this year when everything as I knew it **shut down**. My place of business, a popular bar and restaurant, boarded the windows and removed almost everything inside. It looked like Fort Knox, dark and dreary. None of us left knowing what to expect.

As the pandemic raged throughout April and May, we were completely closed for 2 months. This was called Phase 1. No socializing with regulars, no visiting friends, no chatting with colleagues. **We were at the beginning of a pandemic.**

Fast forward two months after being isolated and we were told that we would begin Phase 2. This second phase lifted some restrictions on public gatherings, including restaurants. However, it did not include bars (defined as places that sold alcohol but not food) or music establishments, both of which are crucial to Asheville's hospitality industry.

Once Phase 2 started, my restaurant reopened, following all the guidelines from the Governor. People were hungry for in-person gatherings after months of isolation, and, as expected, we were slammed for a while. There was some **community backlash** when people saw crowds of people packed inside and outside our establishment. We had to revise a lot of our rules and hours to accommodate.

Both my partner and I are living with HIV. This was a reality check that COVID could happen to anyone and we were in a more vulnerable group due to our preexisting condition.

Then, it happened. Someone at work contracted the coronavirus and we had to shut down again so that everyone could get tested. Fortunately, I tested negative for COVID. But my partner, who I live with, tested positive. To say this news hit home in an understatement.

We self-quarantined for 2 weeks. Emotionally, it was scary and draining. Neither one of us showed any symptoms, yet we still frantically reached out to friends who we had recently come into contact with to inform them and tell them to get tested. Luckily, none of them had contracted the virus.

However, my partner took it the worst because his restaurant also had to immediately close and get all of their employees tested ASAP. For the first few days, he felt like a plague rat, like he was guilty of all the consequences that came after his test. Those two weeks were a **roller coaster** of mixed emotions.

Both my partner and I are living with HIV. This was a reality check that COVID could happen to anyone and we were in a more vulnerable group due to our preexisting condition. During this time, I decided that it was in both our best interests if I did not return to my job at the restaurant. I had been doing Real Estate on the side for about two years and this experience made me realize I should take the opportunity to focus all my work ethic on being a full-time Real Estate Agent. My partner, after our quarantine, was asked not to return to his restaurant and to continue to collect Unemployment benefits.

This whole COVID experience triggered highs and lows in our relationship and in our lives. We've both agreed that we are not going to return to the service industry. I have been fortunate to be able to set up a home office and work from home. My partner has previous experience in the communication industry and really enjoys interaction via phone. He will be looking for a job he can also do from home and we are adopting a new routine that will hopefully allow us to prosper while trying to navigate a 'new normal' that everyone is facing.

For more information and the latest news about COVID in NC, check out the Dept. of Health dashboard: covid19.ncdhhs.gov



Shane Dickerson, a Realtor and WNCAP client, explains he and his partner's close personal experience with COVID-19.