

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR: Who's new at TWC

Another Women's Collective Initiative

One of the things I like most about the beginning of a new year is that it is a time for new beginnings. It is also a perfect time for appraising the caliber and progress of last years decisions and objectives of our agency, while consciously applying those lessons learned to the agency's ongoing strategies.

Additionally, it is a time to say "Thank you" to our enthusiastic staff who have been instrumental in moving the mission of this agency forward. Their dedicated support not only determined and elevated the level of assistance we provided to the clients of TWC in 2006, but the dynamic involvement of the staff in the areas of prevention and care management has expanded the vision of our organization's future.

We continue to do everything within our power to defeat the AIDS epidemic which is becoming more and more a Black face in America. But, with your help, we can do more and it is my desire that as you browse through this issue of *Sisters in the Struggle*, you will be motivated to become engaged in the struggle to change the course of this epidemic.

Correta Scott King said " Anyone who sincerely cares about the future of Black America had better be speaking out about AIDS". AIDS will not be over in Black America unless and until Black people develop the capacity and commitment to stop it. An article in AIDS in Blackface 2006 states that when we have courage to act we make progress, then we don't we lose ground. We can't afford to lose ground; that's why we need each of you to become involved in the struggle, so that, together we can share more stories and save more lives.

Dat

Photo by Duane Cramer



Sarah Coker comes to us by way of the Tide. The Crimson Tide that is. She is pursuing a Masters degree in Social Work at The University of Alabama and upon completing her field placement here at TWC she will have fulfilled her requirements for obtaining her degree. Although Sarah's academic concentration is in adults and their families she is interested in and passionate about working with women and on women's issues.



Sarah Coker at TWC

After learning about the organization from other interns, Sarah says she knew this was the place she wanted to be. She was specifically drawn to the agency because of the distinctive way it provides services for women, by women. Sarah says "I have always felt that no one has the ability to understand the issues that women go through as well as other women. The Women's Collective is a perfect example of an agency that brings this belief to life."

Sarah will complete her internship here at the end of April. In the meantime, she looks forward to learning more about HIV/AIDS, as well as getting to know the clients and the staff of TWC. On a more personal note Sarah says that being far away from home is sometimes difficult, but the family at The Collective has made her feel welcome and at home. Finally Sarah says "I feel honored to be a part of the unique and inspiring atmosphere found here at The Women's Collective."

Inside this Issue:

What We Should Know about HIV	Page 2
Healthy Benefits	Page 3
Client Spotlight: LaJuan Lewis	Page 4
Medical News Watch	Page 5
And more!	



MEDIA ALERT: Know your Rights/Protect Yourself

Whether you're participating in an interview for a magazine, newspaper or any other form of media, you should know your rights. Below are some simple guidelines to follow:

1. You have the right to deny the publishing of your name, picture or other information that would keep you from remaining anonymous.
2. You have the right to insist that you have a written statement signed by you and the interviewee acknowledging that you give your permission to have your picture or other identifying information printed and/or published.
3. Insist that you have a copy of the release form for your records
4. Insist on seeing the final product before it is published or released



What We Should ALL Know About HIV

5 Bodily Fluids that Transmit HIV*

- Blood
- Semen
- Vaginal Secretion
- Breast Milk
- Pre-ejaculate

*In the order from highest to lowest concentration.

HIV is not an airborne or food-borne virus and it does not live long outside the body.

What does not Transmit HIV

- Saliva*
- Urine
- Kissing
- Hugging
- Toilet Seats
- Insect bites

*Large quantities (i.e. an ocean full) is needed to transmit HIV.

Best modes of protection

- Abstinence
- Open communication with your partner about HIV/AIDS and STDs
- Condom usage with all types of sex: vaginal, anal, oral
- Stop or reduce sharing needles/works
- Use universal precautions when in contact with blood: wear gloves and clean area thoroughly with bleach
- Hands and other parts of the body should be washed immediately after contact with blood or other body fluids
- Avoid sharing razors and toothbrushes

How to Clean your Needles and Works: It's as easy as one, two, three*

Step 1: Fill syringe with water. Shake it up to rinse it. Tap it to get out air bubbles.

Step 2: Shoot the water out. Repeat Step 1 and 2 *until you can't see any blood.*

Step 3: Draw bleach through the syringe up to the top. Shoot the bleach out. Fill the syringe with water to rinse out the bleach, repeat this step at least 3 times.

*Use these steps for cleaning your works as well, however always use new cotton. Equally important is cleaning needles and works as soon after use as possible, before blood can clot on them.



The Mind Will Always Be Our Primary Business.

By: Dr. Benjamin Mays

There are times when it is difficult to make sense of the experiences we have in life. How are we to get ahead without money? How are we to overcome intangible obstacles? How are we to move through the challenges, difficulties and limitations we face at every turn? It may seem that no matter how hard you try, something or someone is there to block you. In those times remember the words of Dr. Benjamin Mays:

- It is not your environment;
- It is not your history;
- It is not your education or ability;
- It is the quality of your mind that predicts your future!

Take time to develop your mind!

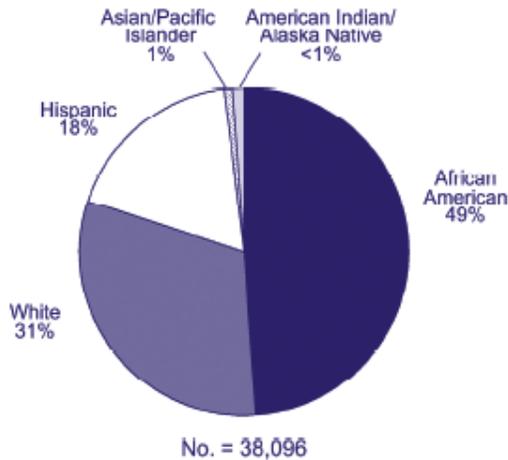


HIV/AIDS and the Black Community

In the United States, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is a health crisis for African Americans. At all stages of HIV/AIDS—from infection with HIV to death with AIDS—African Americans are disproportionately affected compared with members of other races and ethnicities.

It is important that our community understand the devastating impact of this disease through our stories and by looking at the numbers. Below are some facts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) HIV/AIDS Fact Sheet: HIV/AIDS Among African Americans published in January 2007.

Race/ethnicity of persons (including children) with HIV/AIDS diagnosed during 2005



Note. Based on data from 33 states with long-term, confidential name-based HIV reporting.

According to the 2000 census, African Americans make up approximately 13% of the US population. However, in 2005, African Americans accounted for 18,510 (49%) of the estimated 38,096 new HIV/AIDS diagnoses in the United States in the 33 states with long-term, confidential name-based HIV reporting.

Of all African American men living with HIV/AIDS, the primary transmission category was sexual contact with other men, followed by injection drug use and high-risk heterosexual contact.

Of all African American women living with HIV/AIDS, the primary transmission category was high-

risk heterosexual contact, followed by injection drug use.

In celebration of the **National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** on February 7, 2007, the TWC Prevention Team conducted HIV testing at Community Action Group (CAG) from 1-5 p.m. CAG is located at 3321 13th Street, SE Washington, DC. In house testing from 9-5 p.m. was also conducted.

HEALTHY BENEFITS: Did You Know?

- Omega-3 fatty acids in salmon help prevent blood clots that can cause heart attacks
- Red fruits such as strawberries, cherries, pomegranates, raspberries and watermelon help improve memory function, lower the risk of certain cancers and help maintain urinary tract health

Below are two recipes to keep you in good health!

Baked Salmon Fillets

2Tbsp. Lemon Juice
 1/4 cup Packed Brown Sugar
 4 Salmon Fillets
 8 Tsp. Brown sugar



Heat oven to 375 degrees. Pour lemon juice into an un-greased rectangular baking dish. Sprinkle with 1/4 cup of brown sugar. Add fillets and drizzle with butter. Bake uncovered 15 minutes; turn. Place one lemon on each fillet. Sprinkle with 2 teaspoons brown sugar. Bake 15 to 20 minutes longer. Serve with juice from dish.

Whip up a healthy, fruity "soda"

We all crave a sweet, fizzy beverage from time to time. But sodas are a nutritional zero, offering empty calories and artificial sweeteners. For a healthier yet equally satisfying spin, mix one part club soda with two parts fruit juice. This guilt-free soft drink delivers the fizz you love. Plus, it contains less refined sugar and more of the nutrients you need.



CLIENT SPOTLIGHT: LaJuan T. Lewis



LaJuan Lewis at TWC

"If I stay out of my own way, anything can happen!" LaJuan makes this declaration with a clarity and knowingness that speaks volumes about where she has come from and where she is today. She is a beautiful woman with a face that always seems lit

up with a genuine smile and glittering eyes that appear to defy her past challenges and experiences.

As the oldest of five, she has always had to be the adult. Even as a child, she assumed the role of an adult, a protector, and caretaker. She would mimic and do adult things, that included beginning to drink at a very tender age after watching adults do the same things at parties. That began her journey as an alcoholic. It was with her grandmother that she could be the child she really wanted to be. Her grandmother had a strong spirit and has been her mother, protector and her inspiration. And, importantly, as the gospel song goes "she had a praying mother..."

LaJuan's journey through life has not been an easy one as she struggled with her life, her sexual identity, her alcoholism, her own role as a mother, and then her HIV diagnosis in 1985. Her healing began when she stopped drinking at the age of 20. "I was tired" she says. Anchored by the ever-present spirit of her grandmother, her own growing faith and the responsibility she felt towards her daughter, LaJuan began her own remarkable transformation that is evident and in process today.

She knew that as part of her healing she needed to look for support and other inspiring women. This quest brought her to The Women's Collective in 1989, as a result of a referral from Whitman-Walker Clinic. At The Women's Collective she says that she has found a place to be surrounded by positive things; to be still; to learn; to grow; to dream; and to see those dreams come true. Since coming to the Women's Collective, she has received a lot of assistance and has taken advantage of the opportunities to prepare for her GED; receive complementary care; and to participate in Propser!,

the skills building group she is proud to be a graduate of. She volunteers her time, her positive energy, and her laughter to The Women's Collective thus the relationship is a reciprocal one.

LaJuan's greatest joy seems to be her relationship with her 22-year old daughter, who she says rescued her. She sees her regularly and enjoys when she comes over and snuggles up close to her even as a young adult. Her daughter often expresses her pride of and love for her mother, who is now clean and sober. She looks at her daughter and feels blessed to see how she has internalized the proper morals and values. LaJuan's desire is to be someone her daughter can be proud of is being satisfied. And she has been able to let her daughter be the child she never felt she was with her own mother.

LaJuan's life is moving forward, decisively and surely. She has goals and dreams and believes she can fulfill them. She has begun her GED course and hopes to one day obtain her commercial drivers license. She says she might even go to college and there is no doubt in conversing with her that she can do that and succeed if she wants.

She has moved from a shelter and into her own place and has begun to look for work, preferably with the elderly and others in need of loving support and assistance. Her life is full. She has enjoyed excellent health and has nurtured healthy relationships and friendships, many formed with the women of The Collective.

She has hobbies such as bike riding, skating, and playing basketball. She is feeling good about who she is and how she defines herself. She is clear, though, about her sources for her continuing progress: a good strong spiritual foundation; a daughter, who gives her added purpose; and, yes, those ever-loving arms of her now-deceased grandmother, who remains a constant spiritual presence in her life.

CARRY ON, LAJUAN!

"There can be no deep disappointment where there is no deep love."

MLK

the struggle

MEDICAL NEWS WATCH: Having a Healthy Negative Child when You're a Positive Woman



So you're planning on having a child or already pregnant and positive. Congratulations! Motherhood is a great blessing.

Now lets get down to the facts you need to know for your baby's health. Most positive women who are not on medications have a 25% chance of transmitting HIV to their children. By adhering to medication regimens viral loads can be lowered which reduces the risk of the baby coming into

contact with maternal blood; thereby contracting HIV.

Also, women can deliver babies via C-section or vaginally depending on their viral load and prenatal treatment.

C-sections are recommended for women with viral loads greater than 1,000 and who have not received prenatal care at 26 weeks of pregnancy.

Vaginal delivery is an option for women who have received prenatal care throughout their pregnancies and have viral loads of less than 1,000.

We encourage you to speak to your physician. The joy of being a mother is not diminished once you are positive. However you need to have an open discussion with your physician to keep yourself and the baby healthy.

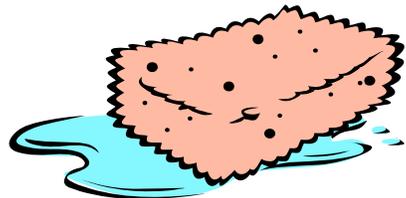
"Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only have to have a heart full of grace; a soul generated by love".

MLK



7 Easy Ways To Outsmart Germs

1. **Wash You Hands Frequently.** Use regular soap (antibacterial soap isn't necessary), and scrub for at least 20 seconds.
2. **Carry an alcohol Based Hand Sanitizer** for germ free hands on the go.
3. **Close The Toilet Lid Before Flushing.** Otherwise germs can soar up to 20 feet in the air
4. **Don't Share Cosmetics.** They can harbor Bacteria that spread infections.
5. **Flush Used Tissues** rather than sticking them in a pocket or bag, to help prevent the spread of germs.
6. **Clean Kitchen Sponges.** They're the primary source of germs in the kitchen. Dip them in a solution of one part bleach, nine parts water, and air dry.
7. **Load Up On Fruits And Vegetables.** They help strengthen your immune system by supplying the nutrients it needs to keep bacteria and viruses at bay.



The Cold Truth

You won't catch a cold by kissing someone who has one.

Touching something like a door knob or a keyboard that's contaminated with the virus, then touching your eyes or nose, is how germs are usually transmitted.



FROM THE PREVENTION TEAM: Reducing the Risk of Infection



A Talk with Tammy, Risk Reduction Counselor/HIV Tester

Tammy Otero-Pams

Alongside the important care for those infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS is the equally important and critical focus on the prevention of new infections of HIV/AIDS. Tammy Otero-Pams is energized about bringing her personal journey and her experiences with and passion for working with high risk populations to reduce the risk of infection in the DC area.

Tammy is clearly prepared for the huge task of getting into the very high risk communities and areas of DC with on-the-ground outreach. Having worked previously in Florida and Georgia with high risk populations, Tammy approaches her new role fully aware of the challenges of getting prevention information and resources out while offering counseling and support to those wishing to remain negative and willing to reduce risky behaviors.

Tammy spoke about the complexity of what may seem to some to be a rather simple question: ***“Why put yourself at risk for a disease that is completely preventable?”*** She sees the answer to the question as being very individual and personal and includes the complexities of self-esteem; drug abuse; the issues faced by those in and out of the prison system, their wives and lovers; and mental health issues.

She is prepared to confront the often uncomfortable topics of the lives and needs of sex workers; men who have sex with men (MSMs) and their potential impact on the women in their lives; IV drug users; needle sharing; and multiple partners; and an array of STD's.

REACH US AT:

1436 u street, nw, suite 200, washington, dc 20009 • P: (202) 483-7003 • F: (202) 483-7330 • www.womenscollective.org

Tammy's work with TWC provides her with the opportunity to work with women, the biggest high risk population, and she enjoys now having that focus to her work in DC.

Tammy's vision is to get out there with the testers, and go to homeless shelters, treatment facilities, parks and street corners to provide information and loving support and counsel to those struggling to live and thrive with safety and dignity. It is, indeed, a very tall order but one that needs to be addressed head-on.

Having said that: **Look for Tammy in a community near you!**

Interview by Marcia Ellis



Upcoming Events

- Easter basket distribution
- Trip to the National Aquarium in Baltimore
- Mother's Day Event

More details will be available from TWC!