



# The Networker

Fall/Winter 2011

The Newsletter of the  
Rural AIDS Action Network

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The Network is a  
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organization.



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The Rural AIDS Action Network exists to foster knowledgeable, caring communities which ensure quality services and support for people affected by HIV/AIDS.

## Director's Deliberations *Time to adjust our sails...*

A co-worker of mine has a small plaque in his office that reads "You cannot control the wind, but you can adjust your sails." This simple proverb is a good reminder that there are many things out of our control, but how we respond to those changes is within our control. This saying has never been more appropriate than it will be over the next three years in the world of HIV/AIDS.

There are many changes in the world of HIV/AIDS around HIV treatment, prevention and federal priorities. I would like to focus people's attention on the federal priorities that will have a major impact on RAAN and Minnesota over the next few years.

**The National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS)** was released in July of 2010 and is the nation's first- ever comprehensive, coordinated HIV/AIDS roadmap with measurable targets to be achieved by 2015. The three main goals of NHAS include 1) reducing HIV incidence, 2) increasing access to care and optimizing health outcomes, and 3) reducing HIV related health disparities; and an additional goal of achieving a more coordinated response to the epidemic. As you will read below, NHAS is already influencing how HIV funding will be allocated across the United States.

**High-Impact HIV Prevention** is a new approach from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to reduce HIV infections in the United States. It is influenced by a need to align with the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) and the shift in focus will be: 1) new emphasis on working with HIV positive individuals to prevent transmission; 2) based on treatment as prevention; and 3) HIV testing and linkage to care.

**Enhanced Comprehensive HIV Prevention Planning (ECHPP)** is a CDC funded initiative in response to the NHAS. It is a three year demonstration project for the 12 municipalities with the highest number of cases of HIV/AIDS in the United States (Minneapolis/St. Paul does not qualify). ECHPP directly corresponds with the 12 Cities Project that is part of the Operational Plan of the NHAS.

The **Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment and Modernization Act** is scheduled for reauthorization in September of 2013. With the Affordable Care Act scheduled to be fully implemented in 2014 and the immense deficit of the federal budget there is fair amount of uncertainty in the HIV/AIDS community about potential changes to the Ryan White Care Act. Ryan White funding plays a big part in the budget of many AIDS service organizations including RAAN.

The **Affordable Care Act** is scheduled to be fully implemented in 2014. There are many changes that will go into effect that will help support people living with HIV/AIDS but some of the main ones include: 1) prohibiting discrimination due to pre-existing conditions or gender; 2) eliminating annual limits on insurance coverage, 3) ensuring coverage for individuals participating in clinical trials and 4) increasing access to Medicaid.

RAAN is already looking at how we can adjust our sails and best position ourselves to respond to these changes and ensure that our mission is met well into the future; and that people in rural MN impacted by HIV/AIDS continue to receive quality services.

Peace,

Executive Director

**Help us save a tree**, and staff time, paper cost, printing cost and postage. If you have email send a note to [staff@raan.org](mailto:staff@raan.org) and tell us that you would like to receive our newsletter and other updates by email. We will be happy to add you to our growing list.

## World AIDS Day – Getting to Zero

December 1st marked the 23rd annual observance of World AIDS Day.

Since 1988, World AIDS Day has represented a day of remembrance and hope for a future where HIV will no longer exist. At a time when HIV is on the rise both nationally and locally, please join us as we remember our friends & family who have died of AIDS in rural Minnesota.

World AIDS Day was initiated by health ministers from around the world who called for a spirit of social tolerance and a greater awareness of HIV/AIDS on an international scale. "Getting to Zero" was the theme selected by the World AIDS Campaign (WAC) to commemorate this year's World AIDS Day on December 1st. The new theme, that will be used until 2015, echoes the UNAIDS vision of achieving "Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths."



Additionally, 2011 marks the 30th anniversary of the first Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report on AIDS. There have been many accomplishments in those 30 years and today, we are able to discuss HIV/AIDS in ways that would not have been possible even a few years ago; additionally new drug therapies help many people live longer and healthier lives. But that does not mean we can become complacent. We need to keep the goal of "Getting to Zero" going through out the next few years to ensure the focus remains on ending this disease.

To find out how you can protect yourself, educate others and fight stigma; contact RAAN at [www.raan.org](http://www.raan.org) or 800-966-9735.

## 2011-2012 Client Workshops

For the past several years we have been offering several educational events each year for persons living with HIV/AIDS. We will be offering a minimum of three such events this year and possibly more. By the time you receive this newsletter, the first will have been held in the Grand Rapids area.

All three workshops will use the curriculum "Making Sure Your Healthcare Is the Best It Can Be" which was designed by persons living with HIV/AIDS. It provides information on standards of medical care. It allows participants to reflect both on their personal standards of quality care as well as professional standards of HIV care. The workshop normally generates quite spirited discussion.

The remaining two workshops in our program year are open to anyone living with HIV, whether you are currently a RAAN client or not. Caregivers can also attend with prior consent from RAAN. If you are interested, mark your calendars now and contact us a couple of weeks prior to the workshop to let us know of your interest. The tentative dates and cities are:  
**Thursday, January 5th – St. Cloud & Tuesday, March 20th – Mankato**

## Camp Benedict 2012

Camp Benedict is an educational/recreational family camp for persons living with HIV/AIDS and their family members. It strives to improve the quality of life for households who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. The camp offers a variety of educational and recreational opportunities and treats all campers as equals in abilities and values Honesty, Respect, Acceptance, Empowerment and Unconditional Love. There is no charge for eligible applicants.

We at RAAN have seen what a phenomenal opportunity this camp is for all of our clients and encourage eligible persons to apply. Applications are now being accepted. Please apply online at [www.campbenedict.org](http://www.campbenedict.org).

Also, Camp Benedict is also seeking additional persons to serve on its Board of Directors. An application form and more information is available on the same website.

## Remembering David Hanson *By Charles Hempeck*

David Hanson, a long time AIDS advocate, RAAN volunteer/ supporter and all-around good person, passed away earlier this year. David was not only an active board member from 2005-2008 he volunteered in other capacities as well. In the fall of 2006 David helped organize the effort to bring several panels of the AIDS quilt to Bemidji at Bemidji State University. This was the first time I had seen any part of the quilt; it was quite moving and the people of Bemidji were incredibly lucky to have it displayed in their home town.

This was the style of David's advocacy and education; to bring HIV information to people where they were. I am not speaking about their physical location, but emotionally and mentally. He was very generous speaking with many groups; both large and small; and not only about living with HIV but living as a gay man. He was able to break down so many barriers and stereotypes by just being himself.

He also volunteered his time to staff RAAN booths at different LGBT PRIDE events around the state. These events are important for RAAN to keep our name out there and ensure people have accurate information about HIV. We wouldn't be able to cover them all if not for volunteers such as David; and he would have many people that would look for him to catch up on what was going on in his life.

David and the Red Ribbon Ride: he was the captain of Team RAAN and participated in the first eight Rides. There was even a year or two when David was the only member of Team RAAN. The RRR is a 4-day nearly 300 mile bike ride that raises awareness and money for people in MN living with HIV. Everyone that has been involved with the RRR for any amount of time knew David and if they didn't know the name you just needed to describe him as the guy with the suspenders and people would know who you were talking about. I think the only person better known for suspenders was Larry King. Last year each benefiting agency was able to get a promotional video made and I asked David to be the voice/face of RAAN and of course he agreed and did a great job. The video is posted on our website.

These are some highlights from David's time with RAAN and I know there are countless others that could be included that I may not be aware of. I am thankful to have known David and grateful for everything he did for RAAN, people living with HIV in rural MN and helping educate the general public. I know what he taught me went way beyond HIV.



## Moving and Shaking in 2011

The 2011 Red Ribbon Ride is complete and we are gearing up for the 10-year anniversary of the ride in 2012! This year's ride was successful with a total of over \$400,000 raised. Team RAAN grew tremendously, with five riders and many crew members. It was fantastic to see all of the matching Team RAAN jerseys out on the road! We rode through every weather condition starting with a chilly and rainy first day. The rain stuck with us into the second day, and the ride was closed for the first time in history due to dangerous weather conditions. Day three and four were the complete opposite with oppressive heat and humidity! We truly want to thank all that have supported the riders and crew members, and we look for your support again in 2012. If you are interested in being a part of Team RAAN for the 2012 ride, you may register for the ride at [www.redribbonride.org](http://www.redribbonride.org).



On May 16, members of Team RAAN joined the Minnesota AIDS Project's Minnesota AIDS Walk at Minnehaha Falls. The beautiful spring day brought together thousands of people and hundreds of volunteers to raise awareness and funds to support those affected by HIV and AIDS. The Walk raised over a half a million dollars and Team RAAN raised over \$1,600 that went directly back to RAAN. Kathryn Hansen, RAAN Program's Manager, participated in her first Walk on Team RAAN and remarked, "It was incredible to see all the people gathered together to support those living with this disease and remembering those that have died because of it." Thank you to the walkers of TEAM RAAN for joining this important event and representing RAAN.



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Rural AIDS Action Network  
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We need your help in the fight  
against HIV in rural MN! Support  
RAAN by contributing online  
today. [www.raan.org](http://www.raan.org)

**You Are Invited**

The Board of Directors and Staff of the  
Rural AIDS Action Network  
cordially invite you to attend an

*Open House*

*at our new Saint Cloud office*

**December 8th 2011**

**3:00-6:00 p.m.**

**300 East St. Germain Street, Suite 220  
Saint Cloud, MN 56304**

There will be a short program commemorating  
World AIDS Day at 5 p.m.  
Refreshments will be provided as well  
as interesting conversation.

For directions visit our website at [www.raan.org](http://www.raan.org).

**RAAN Board of Directors**

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**Make a Difference!**

Want to make an impact on HIV/AIDS in your  
community? Join the RAAN board of directors! RAAN  
is looking for passionate, thoughtful individuals to join  
this outstanding organization. To find out more about  
this exciting opportunity contact Charles Hempeck,  
Executive Director at 800-966-9735.