



# The Networker

April 2011

Vol 3 | Issue 5

The Newsletter of the  
Rural Aids Action Network

### Contents:

HIV Outreach & Prevention	2
New Board Members	2
Intern Spotlight	2
2010 Service Highlights	3
Opportunities to Support RAAN	4
Increasing Rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections	5
Calling All Community Leaders!	5
Summer Fun - 2011	6
Thank You Contributors!	7
HIV/AIDS Awareness Days	8

### RAAN

Rural AIDS Action Network

208 Second Street NE  
Little Falls, MN 56345  
Phone: 320.631.0404  
800.966.9735  
Fax: 320.631.0405  
Email: [staff@raan.org](mailto:staff@raan.org)  
Website: [www.raan.org](http://www.raan.org)

The Networker is a publication of the Rural AIDS Action Network, a 501(c)3 organization.

You can view this newsletter online at [www.raan.org](http://www.raan.org), where it is in color.



Follow RAAN on Facebook!

The Rural AIDS Action Network exists to organize, develop and sustain caring communities of professionals and volunteers who serve and support persons living with, affected by, or at risk for HIV/AIDS in the rural Midwest.

## Director's Deliberations *The Best Laid Schemes...*

"The best laid schemes of mice and men Go often askew," is a standard English translation of a famous quote from the Robert Burns' poem To a Mouse. The original version reads as follows, "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft agley." Though beautifully written, one can see why the original language is not often used for the quote.

The gist of this line is no matter how well you plan something, always expect the unexpected; in other words, just because you think you've done all you can for something to go right, always have a contingency plan in place. I think most people would agree this is sage advice to follow.

This line has been running through my mind as RAAN is rolling out a 3 year strategic plan that was finalized in 2010. A strategic plan is often used by non-profits as well as for-profit organizations to help guide and measure success of the organization. Carter McNamara from [managementhelp.org](http://managementhelp.org) states, "Simply put, strategic planning determines where an organization is going over the next year or more, how it's going to get there and how it'll know if it go there or not."

One might ask, why is it important to plan so carefully when there is a pretty good chance that something will happen to mess up those plans? This is a fair question and one that needs to be addressed in the planning process for a strategic plan. One way to deal with it is to understand a strategic plan is not static; but a living/breathing document that will need flexibility to adjust to forces outside of agency control.

As a person who has participated in multiple strategic plans over the years I am glad to report how impressed I was with the work of both board and staff and how this document not only gives the agency a road map for the next three years, but also allows for adjustments when needed.

Within the strategic plan there are 6 Critical Issues RAAN hopes to address that will help us meet our mission:

- *Critical Issue 1: How can we create diverse and flexible funding to maximize our mission-based outcomes?*
- *Critical Issue 2: How can RAAN most effectively meet the diverse needs of rural communities impacted by HIV/AIDS?*
- *Critical Issue 3: How can we educate rural communities to reduce stigma while creating a supportive environment?*
- *Critical Issue 4: How do we engage others (partners, funders, volunteers, and clients) to help us fulfill our mission?*
- *Critical Issue 5: How can we improve our operational infrastructure?*
- *Critical Issue 6: How does the board ensure excellent governance?*

As RAAN continues to move forward in meeting the needs of our consumers and our communities, I look forward to sharing the outcomes of the strategic plan with our supporters, partners and the broader community.

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.

## HIV Outreach and Prevention

In 2010, we conducted a record number of rapid, HIV tests - 736 people living in Greater Minnesota received free, confidential testing. We also provided one-on-one risk reduction counseling sessions with an additional 272 people. In addition to this accomplishment, we offered outreach and education at 19 GLBT events, 58 treatment center groups, 34 college events and 35 additional community groups. At these events, we distributed 12,404 condoms, 2,891 risk-reduction kits/supplies, and 7,674 educational items.

We made concerted efforts this last year to improve the diversity of the population of people accessing testing services. Considering the racial composition of Greater Minnesota, we are very pleased with our efforts. Nearly 24% of our tests were conducted for men who have sex with men (MSM), 19% of our tests were provided to Latino Minnesotans, 7% were Native Americans, 7% were African-Americans, 5% were African-born, and 4% were Asian. We owe a huge thank you to our Latino partnership agency, our Latina outreach worker and the African-born intern at another of our partner agencies.

In the coming year RAAN outreach staff will work to extend outreach efforts in counties where we have not had a significant presence. While RAAN has a positive presence across the state, we know there are people and communities out there that need our support, advocacy and services. While this won't happen overnight, it is fundamental to our mission and those we serve to reach out to the at-risk populations that often times go unnoticed and underserved.

## New Board Members Welcomed

***RAAN welcomes Christine Black-Hughes and Cathy Perry to its board of directors.***

**Christine Black-Hughes, Ph.D., LICSW**, is an associate professor in the Department of Social Work at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She is also currently volunteering with a NGO in East London, South Africa called Caring Affirming and Training Children (CATCH). They provide education and diversionary programs for children and teens so they can develop healthy ways to socialize and increase their skills to be successful adults. CATCH also provides AIDS clinics and gardening space for extra income and a source of food for local residents. Chris' hopes and goals for participating on the board are simple to state, but complex to obtain: increase in public HIV education, especially the youth; and a decrease in the number of new HIV infections.

**Cathy Perry** is the current Programs Director of the Hospitality Initiative Project of Servant Hearts and was already working collaboratively with the RAAN office on community projects throughout the Bemidji area before she joined the board. Some of those projects include community outreach and speaking, mentoring high school and college age Gay-Straight Alliances, meeting with community partners and developing new project events/educational offerings. Cathy hopes to bring new ideas, a fresh perspective, and seasoned knowledge to the board and her goal is to support the current and future work of the organization.

## Intern Spotlight

**Chelsea Skluzacek** joined the RAAN Team in January of 2011 as a Medical Case Manager Intern. She is attending Minnesota State University, Mankato for a Bachelor degree in Social Work. She will be graduating in May of 2011 and is excited about her future career possibilities. She has plans to join the Peace Corps after graduation and would like to go overseas to advocate and educate people about HIV/AIDS prevention and care. "This internship has changed my life. I never expected to be working in the field of HIV/AIDS and through this internship I have

found a new passion." She hopes to obtain a Masters degree following the Peace Corps and find a career in the field of HIV/AIDS. "This field is fascinating! There is new research coming out every day and new ways to care for our clients. I can't imagine where the field will be in five years." Chelsea will also be walking and volunteering in the Minnesota AIDS Walk with her new puppy, Lucy, a six month old pit bull/mastiff mix. "Both of us are anticipating the walk and to be a part of something with so much meaning."

## 2010 Service Highlights

In 2010, PLWHA in greater Minnesota along with those affected by or at-risk for HIV transmission, accessed essential, supportive, and preventative services through RAAN's regional service networks.

This year's service achievements included:

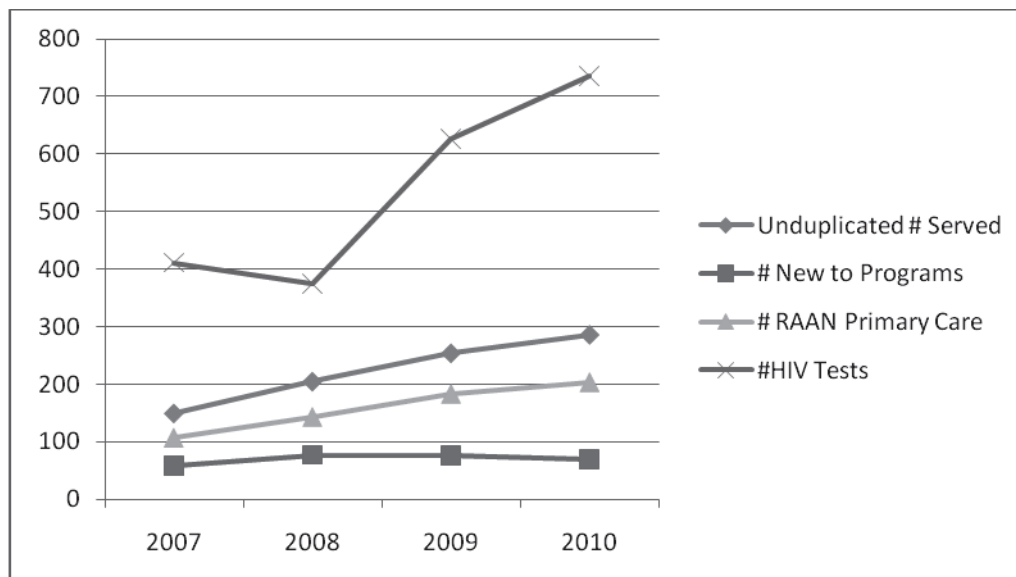
- RAAN served **286** PLWHA. Of those served, **69** were new to the agency.
- RAAN's partner clinics and infectious disease Specialists provided primary medical care to **204** PLWHA, who made **941** visits for medical care.
- RAAN staff and partner agencies conducted **736** free rapid HIV tests. Each participant received a personal risk assessment and prevention education session.
- RAAN Medical Case Managers served **225** clients through **6883** visits or contacts.
- RAAN helped **95** clients access medical services and adhere to treatment regimens by paying for doctor visits and prescription medications.
- **30** PLWHA attended at least one meeting of RAAN's support groups in Mankato and Hibbing.
- RAAN provided medical transportation to **195** clients.

### 2010 Client Demographics:

- Sixty-six percent of RAAN's clients were male and 34% were female.
- Forty-three percent were people of color.
- Eight percent were under the age of 25, 48% were between 25-44, 43% were between 45-64 years old and 2% were 65 years or older.
- Sixty-two percent were living below the federal poverty level.
- Fifty-one percent were HIV positive, 48% were CDC defined AIDS and 1% HIV positive AIDS status unknown

The chart below shows the steady growth RAAN has experienced the past four years. During the four year period of 2007-2010 RAAN saw an increase of 91% (150 to 286) in the number of unduplicated people served; increase of 90% (107 to 203) in the number of primary care/medically case managed patients; and an increase of 79% (411 to 736) in the number of people receiving CTR.

	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Unduplicated # Served</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>286</b>
<b># New to Programs</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>69</b>
<b># RAAN Primary Care</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>203</b>
<b># HIV tests</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>736</b>



# Opportunities to Support RAAN!

## Minnesota AIDS Walk

Join **RAAN** at the 24<sup>rd</sup> annual Minnesota AIDS Walk! Team RAAN is walking because HIV education and prevention is continues to be vital across the state. In 2009 Minnesota saw a 13% increase in the number of new HIV cases. The money



we raise goes directly back to RAAN to assist people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS in rural Minnesota. It is important more now than ever because funding is being cut while the number of those being affected by HIV increases. Please support the Rural AIDS Action Network and the Minnesota AIDS Project as we work towards stopping HIV in Minnesota.



Registration to walk, run, volunteer, or donate is easy. Simply go either to the RAAN website ([www.raan.org](http://www.raan.org)) and click the AIDS Walk link, or go directly to the AIDS Walk site ([www.mnaidswalk.org](http://www.mnaidswalk.org)) and follow the tabs to the activity level of your choice. Be sure to enter "RAAN" in any blanks that ask you to identify your team.

The walk will take place on **Sunday, May 15**, at Minnehaha Park in Minneapolis. The seven mile route takes participants along the scenic Mississippi gorge and across the Lake Street and Ford Parkway bridges. Even if you are not a walker, the event itself provides inspiration and support to all who are living with or affected by HIV / AIDS.



## Red Ribbon Ride

**Team RAAN** is gearing up for the 9<sup>th</sup> annual Red Ribbon Ride with its largest team of nine members. If you enjoy bike riding or just want to get out and enjoy a Minnesota summer while raising funds for people living with HIV/AIDS, we would love to have you join Team RAAN. The Red Ribbon Ride is a four day, nearly 300 mile bike ride that will start with an Opening Ceremony at the Mall of America East Rotunda on

**Thursday, July 14th**, and end

with a closing ceremony at the beautiful State Capitol in St. Paul, **July 17th**.

Not a bike rider-Not a problem. You can also support Team RAAN as a crew member or by donating money. It is really easy to do; visit [www.redribbonride.org](http://www.redribbonride.org), click on "Register" or "Donate", search for Team RAAN and follow the instructions.



If you'd like more information about the Red Ribbon Ride, please visit [www.redribbonride.org](http://www.redribbonride.org), or contact ride director **Theresa Fetsch** at [admin@redribbonride.org](mailto:admin@redribbonride.org) or **612-822-2110**. You can also check out the Ride on YouTube and Facebook.



**The dollars raised for this event benefit eight amazing Minnesota AIDS service organizations:**

African American AIDS Task Force  
The Aliveness Project  
Clare Housing  
Hope House of St. Croix Valley

Minnesota AIDS Project  
One Heartland  
Park House  
Rural AIDS Action Network

## Increasing Rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections

The Minnesota Department of Health recently announced that infection rates for Chlamydia, Syphilis, and Gonorrhea all increased in 2010. These increases are a cause for serious alarm.

**Chlamydia cases reached a record level last year.** There were 15,294 cases reported to the state. Nearly one in three cases were in Greater Minnesota. Though women are examined and tested routinely, there is concern that there may be large numbers of infected males who are undiagnosed. There are often no symptoms, but the disease can do serious damage to the reproductive organs. It can also be passed to an infant during childbirth. All sexually active women under age 25 and any women over 25 with risk factors such as a new sexual partner should be screened each year for chlamydia. Males with multiple partners should also be screened.

**Syphilis cases have increased by 62% compared to 2009.** A decade ago we had cautious hopes that this disease could be eliminated entirely from the state. Syphilis is a highly infectious disease. If it is untreated, it can cause severe complications and eventual death. It also makes it easier to contract other diseases. The CDC recommends that health providers provide annual syphilis screenings to their high risk patients. Those at highest risk include persons with multiple partners, men who have sex with men, and patients who are HIV positive. The CDC recommends testing as often as every three months. Persons who tests positive for syphilis should also be tested for HIV and vice versa. The risk of getting or spreading HIV when syphilis is present is two to five times higher.

**Gonorrhea remains the second most commonly reported STD in Minnesota.** There were 2,119 cases reported in Minnesota in 2009. Nearly two-thirds of all gonorrhea cases occur among the 15 to 24 year old age group. Health officials emphasize that it is important to remain diligent in identifying and treating gonorrhea cases. Untreated gonorrhea can lead to infertility in both men and women. Gonorrhea can spread to organs and joints and these conditions can be life threatening. Gonorrhea can be passed to newborns during childbirth causing blindness if the infant is not treated.

**RAAN is pleased to announce a new partnership with the Red Door Clinic.** Staff members from Red Door will attend a significant number of Pride events with RAAN this summer. In many of the places where we are already offering HIV tests, they will offer tests for syphilis and possibly other STDs as well.

In every state it is mandatory for clinics and labs to report new infections for certain diseases. While most diseases do not need to be reported, these three plus HIV are monitored. Though HIV infections will not be released until later this month, there is deep concern for HIV as well because the same risk behaviors lead to infections of either HIV or STIs.

## Calling All Community Leaders!

RAAN currently has two great opportunities for individuals that are concerned about the impact of HIV on their community.

**Board of Directors:** Members of the board of directors are stewards of RAAN, and, as such, are responsible for the business and affairs of the organization. Major responsibilities include: policy administration; long-range planning and evaluation; finance oversight and development; and supervision of Executive Director.

**Quality Improvement-Consumer Advisory Committee (QI-CAC):** QI-CAC provides an opportunity for HIV positive individuals an opportunity to provide advice on developing and implementing service quality improvement activities--particularly for Ryan White Services. They meet twice a year face-to-face with conference calls scheduled as needed.

RAAN is looking for passionate, thoughtful individuals to join this outstanding organization. To find out more about these exciting opportunities contact Charles Hempeck, Executive Director at 800-966-9735.

# SUMMER FUN - 2011

## **MAY**

Sunday, May 15

### ***National Hepatitis Awareness Month***

***Minnesota AIDS Walk***, Minnehaha Park, Minneapolis  
(see article in this newsletter)

Thursday, May 19

### ***National Asian and Pacific Islander HIV / AIDS Awareness Day***

## **JUNE**

Sunday, June 5

Noon-5:00 pm

### ***East Central MN Pride Picnic***, Voyageur Park, Pine City

RAAN Information Table and Testing Tent

For more information, see [www.menscircle.org](http://www.menscircle.org)

Saturday, June 11

2:00-5:00 pm

### ***Brainerd Pride Picnic***, Kiwanis Park, Brainerd

RAAN Information Table and Testing Tent

For more information, contact [diversitynight@hotmail.org](mailto:diversitynight@hotmail.org)

Saturday, June 18

### ***Bemidji Pride Picnic***

RAAN Information Table and Testing

Call Cheryl at 218-444-4561 or Roger at 320-631-0404

Thursday, June 23

6:00 pm

### ***Grand Rapids Pride Picnic***, (location TBD), Grand Rapids

RAAN Information Table and Testing

For more information, contact [news@itaskaalliance.org](mailto:news@itaskaalliance.org)

Sat-Sun., June 25-26

### ***Twin Cities Pride***, Loring Park, Minneapolis

RAAN Information Table

For more information, see [www.tcpride.org](http://www.tcpride.org)

Monday, June 27

### ***National HIV Testing Day***

## **JULY**

Thursday, July 14

### ***Red Ribbon Ride Kick-Off Event***, Mall of America, Bloomington

For more information, see [www.redribbonride.org](http://www.redribbonride.org)

Saturday, July 16

11:00-4:00

### ***Rochester Pride***, Peace Plaza, Rochester

RAAN Information Table and Testing Tent

For more information, see [www.glcsmn.org](http://www.glcsmn.org)

Sunday, July 17

### ***Red Ribbon Ride Closing Ceremony***, Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul

For more information, see [www.redribbonride.org](http://www.redribbonride.org)

## **AUGUST**

Saturday, August 14

Noon-5:00

### ***Fargo-Moorhead Pride***, Davy Park, Moorhead

RAAN Table and Testing Tent

For more information, see [www.pridecollective.com/fmpride](http://www.pridecollective.com/fmpride)

August 22-26

### ***Camp Benedict***

This is a camp for persons with HIV and their families.

For more information, see [www.campbenedict.org](http://www.campbenedict.org)

## **SEPTEMBER**

Saturday, Sept. 3

### ***Duluth Superior Pride***, Bayfront Festival Park, Duluth

RAAN Table and Testing Tent

For more information, see [www.dspride.com](http://www.dspride.com)

Saturday, Sept. 10

Noon-5:00

### ***South Central MN Pride***, Riverfront Park, Mankato

RAAN Table and Testing Tent

For more information, see [www.scmnpride.org](http://www.scmnpride.org)

Saturday, Sept 17

### ***Alexandria AIDS Walk***

For more information, contact the RAAN office.

Saturday, Sept. 24

### ***St. Cloud Pride***, (location TBA), St. Cloud

RAAN Table and Testing Tent

For more information, see [www.stcloudpride.org](http://www.stcloudpride.org)

Tuesday, Sept. 27

### ***Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day***

## **OCTOBER**

Saturday, Oct. 15

### ***Latino HIV/AIDS Awareness Day***

# Thank You Contributors!

RAAN would like to thank all of the people and organizations that invested in RAAN in 2010. Your contributions and in-kind donations made a difference in the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS in rural Minnesota.

## Organizations

HRK Foundation  
Hugh J. Andersen Foundation  
Entertainment AIDS Alliance  
Bob Tracy Consulting  
Otto Bremer Foundation  
MARDAG Foundation  
Sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict  
Gamma Mu Foundation  
Red Ribbon Ride  
United Way of Bemidji  
Savvy Fit – Alexandria

St. John's Abbey  
Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS  
Alexandria AIDS Walk  
Beverly Foundation  
Minnesotans Fighting AIDS on Bikes  
Jay & Rose Phillips Family Foundation  
Cambria Presbyterian Church  
First Congregational UCC  
South Central MN Pride  
Imperial Court Of Minnesota

## Individuals

Richard Allendorf  
Sue Ann Anderson  
Anonymous Donors  
Nan Bailly  
Debbie Bednarczyk  
Mary Bergland  
David Bjork & Jeff Bengtson  
Courtney Busch  
Winston Cavert & Carol Witte  
Jo Ann Chalgren  
Cathy Dunmire  
Amy Engebretson  
Diane Evans  
Perry Evans  
Daniel & Melissa Folsom  
Rob Gamble  
Amy Gudmestad  
Kathryn Hansen  
David Hanson  
Glenn Harman – *In memory of David Eckert*  
Charles Hempeck & Heidi Runyon  
Amy Hennessy  
Diane Hermes  
John & Ann Heydt  
Judy Hoffman  
Les Hohenstein

Kimberly Kardonsky  
Marie Kistler  
Abbot John Klassen  
Jennifer Kolstad  
Lawrence Krantz & Diane Pittman  
James Larson, DVM  
Peter Lee  
Jane Lien – *In memory of Neil Sandstad*  
Patrick Lochwood  
Richard Madigan  
Paul W. Markwardt  
Joe & Linda Martin  
Ruth McIver  
Jay Meekin & Steven Golat  
Kirsten Minnerath  
Mark & Nichole Mohr  
Kelli J. Moore  
Patricia Neal  
Mark & Lauri Nellerroe  
Linda & Joel Nelson  
Donna & Howard Ogaard  
Ken Oltman  
Mark & Amy Opp  
Cathy Perry  
Tammy Peterson – *In memory of Kevin Rudlang*  
Curt Peterson, CFRE  
Rajesh Prabhu, MD

Patty Puyer  
Don Quaintance – *In memory of many friends that are no longer here*  
Ronald & Jana Rebrovich  
Allison Rojas  
Curtis A. Rotto  
Jeff & Jane Schlotfeld  
Rachel Schuneman  
Francis Sheehy  
Rose Shorma  
Dave Super  
Evelyn Svenson – *In memory of Dave Hajek*  
Thiha Tin, MD  
Stephen Triplett  
John Vener, MD  
Donald & Terri Walter  
Deb & Fred Walter  
Katherine Walter  
Pauline Weisel  
David & Chris Wiencke  
Clair Wood  
Marcy Yarger  
Cheryl Yarnott  
Edward Zapp – *In memory of Robert Hoheisel*

We make an effort to publish all donations received (unless requested not to do so).  
If you notice an omission or error, please contact Debbie at 800-966-9735 or at debbie @raan.org.



**RAAN**  
Rural AIDS Action Network  
208 Second Street NE  
Little Falls, MN 56345

PRSR STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
LITTLE FALLS, MN  
PERMIT NO. 9

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)

## HIV/AIDS Awareness Days

During 2011, we are highlighting ten National HIV/AIDS Awareness Days or special-focus events. The Awareness Days are designed to focus education and testing for persons in high-risk groups. We will be scheduling local events for some of these days. For more information on local events, you may contact your local RAAN office or check our Facebook page.

Here is a list of Awareness Days which we will highlight this year.

- **February 7 – National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**
- **February 14 – National Condom Day**
- **March 10 – National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**
- **March 20 – National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**
- **April – STD Awareness Month**
- **May – Hepatitis Awareness Month**
- **June 27 – National HIV Testing Day**
- **September 27 – National Gay Men’s HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**
- **October 15 – National Latino AIDS Awareness Day**
- **December 1 – World AIDS Day**

### RAAN Board of Directors

Lois Bergman, Vice-Chair  
Christine Black-Hughes  
Peter Lee  
Sherry Mergens, Secretary  
Rob Peitzman, Chair  
Cathy Perry  
John Vener

### RAAN Staff

Debbie Bednarczyk, Program Assistant  
Chris Bernard, Business Manager  
Courtney Busch, Medical Case Manager  
Roger Ernst, Outreach & Education Coor.  
Maria Guerrero, Medical Case Manager  
Kathryn Hansen, Programs Manager  
Charles Hemeck, Executive Director  
Diane Hermes, Medical Case Manager  
Tammi Hoard, Medical Case Manager  
Jeni Kolsted, Medical Case Manager  
Pam Vetter, Medical Case Manager  
Marcy Yarger, Medical Case Manager  
Cheryl Yarnott, Medical Case Manager

### 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 Hemeck, Executive Director at 800-966-9735.