

MCAVHN

Providing service and comfort to people affected by HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C

MENDOCINO COUNTY AIDS / VIRAL HEPATITIS NETWORK

SPRING 2012

25th Annual Event of the Heart "SILVER LININGS"

The moving stories of two MCAVHN clients reminded us of the very important work that this event supports:

Betty's Story

I was 13 years old when I had my first child. I dropped out of high school. In fact, I didn't even go to high school. I started drinking when I was 13, running amok. I was 14 when I had my second child and 18 when I had my third child. I was 28 when I had my 4th child. My kids are all grown up. I have 11 grandkids and I'm going to be 50 years old. I started doing drugs when I was 35 years old. I went to prison twice. My first term was 1 year. My second term was 8 years. Then I went to multiple recovery homes. I can't count how many times I've been in the county jail.

Today I'm in recovery, but before that, I was ripping off stores, dealing to your mama and your papa and your kids. I didn't really care as long as I had them buying drugs from me, so I could get more drugs for myself. Living the lifestyle of an addict was really hard and ugly. I lost my family and my friends. At least I thought I had friends. When I was out there using everybody was my friend, as long as I had a bag of dope to share. When I went to prison, not one of my so-called friends even wrote me a letter or sent me any money. That didn't stop me though. I got out of prison for the third time, stayed clean for a little while. Then I started using again. It took my old man going to prison to realize that I didn't want to struggle like that anymore.

I got involved with MCAVHN and they helped me detox. I'd be on the couch, crying, running to whoever I could, telling them I just wanted to go out the door and use, but I wouldn't leave the building. I knew if I left I would use. John at MCAVHN got me involved at Pinoleville, and they sent me to a program called Skyway House. I spent 30 days there. I got myself grounded in my spiritual way, trying to find my spirit back.

I came straight back to MCAVHN and Pinoleville. I even got into an outpatient program at Ford Street and I've been at the Buddy Eller Center for 10 months. All these programs help me today. It's hard living out there being an addict, but it's harder being in recovery. But today I feel alive. I'm getting my kids back in my life and they're starting to trust me.

I'm working out here in society, with my head held up high, trying to pass the message to other addicts who



Betty (in white) enjoying the Event of the Heart with friends

still suffer. My heart goes out to every one of those people out there. I work for MCAVHN doing the needle exchange and to pass out clean condoms-trying to help other people not catch a disease called Hep C. I caught Hep C from using a dirty needle. Fortunately, it's going away from being clean and not sharing needles.

I don't use the emergency room anymore. I go to all my appointments, and I'm still keeping out of jail. I don't think I could've done this without the help of CUSOC (note: CUSOC helps fund both John and Brad, MCAVHN's client services coordinator and advocate).

Today I have 11 months clean, and I'm really enjoying life on life's terms. Working at MCAVHN and seeing people come in here loaded or drunk reminds me where I used to be and that I don't want to go there again. I can show them that, "Yes, I used to be an addict. Yes, I used to be a junkie and alcoholic, but I can be here at MCAVHN and not pick up because I have support". As hard as it was to be out there using drugs, it's hard- if not harder-to stay in my recovery today. I wouldn't have been this far without MCAVHN.

Anybody out there, I'd just love to help you. If you need a helping hand, reach out. A closed mouth does not get fed. Reach out. We're there for you. Thank you.

Betty Petitt

It was a wonderful evening, a celebration of 25 years of fighting HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and now dual diagnoses of substance abuse and health issues. We are grateful once again for the generosity of our donors. The Event provided 40% of the MCAVHN operating budget. With Hepatitis C infecting 1 in 12 people world-wide, the fight must go on despite scant resources available for personnel, operating costs and supplies.

Gerri's Story

I would like to thank everyone at MCAVHN for helping me on my path to a better life, especially my case worker John Weber. He has literally been a life-saver for me. Libby Guthrie has also given me much support and has helped with my healing and path moving forward in life. Bradley Wright has also been a tremendous support for me, with all his help filing for my social security disability benefits.



I must say that if it was not for the MCAVHN team I would seriously not be alive today. They have been a true miracle in my life. On May 4, 2011, I tried to commit suicide for many reasons I won't go into now. But I was referred to John Weber by Sharlet Briggs at the hospital, who also knows my daughter. I was at first skeptical about meeting John; even after the first meeting. But from there on out, what a blessing I have received.

Let's just say that I am a middle of the road person; meaning I could be worse and could be better. For the most part I raised my 3 children for 17 years on my own, including supporting them financially. After two had graduated from college and my last one still in college, and then, not being able to find permanent employment, I lost it! At 51 years of age I felt lost and beaten down in life. I worked my ass off throughout my whole life. I grew up with an alcoholic father, and was sexually and verbally abused by him. I moved out at 17 years of age. I graduated early from High School just to get out of the house, and married young. I had 3 kids by 28, and divorced at 35. Now I am homeless and on temporary disability, getting less than \$550.00 a month income - crazy! I did not ruin my life by doing drugs or being in and out of jail. But here I am in this situation, which is very frustrating at my age.

This is the first time in my entire life that someone has stepped up to help me. I consider myself aware and higher functioning than some other lower income individuals. People in my position usually get overlooked. I am only so strong, and really not so much these last 10 months. So thank you everyone at MCAVHN - especially you John. Really, he is one of my guardian angels!!

The CUSOC team (MCAVHN, UVMC, MCHC, Jail Medical Services, and Ford St.) deserves a "Big Thank You"!! Really, they (UVMC and MCHC) paid for all my medical needs for 9 months. This includes paying for all my medications to keep me stable for the past 9 months. Again, thank you all so very much for all your help and support. I am very humbled to accept your kindness and wisdom. This includes other clients and volunteers I have met at MCAVHN. Everyone is so accepting and nonjudgmental of who you are, and where you came from, and where you are going in life.

I honestly wish that this community, as well as other social service organizations - whether non-profit or not, support MCAVHN and appreciate all that they do for our community. I do get frustrated hearing about all the financial cuts, and still watching everyone work their butts off at MCAVHN; helping any individual that comes to them in need.

I have major depression and am an alcoholic. I do not have HIV or hepatitis C. Point made - they also help people with drug/alcohol addictions too, as well as depression.

Love you all, and thank you again for just being you,

Gerri

WANT TO HELP?
please make checks payable
to MCAVHN or visit
mcauhn.org to donate
using PayPal

SPECIAL THANKS

For 25 Years of Support and Service to these founding members of MCAVHN, pioneers in providing services to persons with AIDS and HIV:
Dr. Marvin Trotter, MD and Rosalie Anchordoguy, RN

And for sponsoring this newsletter
Ukiah Valley Medical Center

A Note from Libby Guthrie, Executive Director of MCAVHN

After 25 years of service, there are many in our communities who do not know or understand the mission of MCAVHN. Even though we began as an entirely volunteer organization to care for and support people with HIV/AIDS, our mission has expanded over the past two decades.

MCAVHN continues to provide care coordination services for people with HIV - and has also expanded that mission to care for persons with hepatitis C as well as those with the co-occurring disorders of substance abuse and mental health diagnoses.

We provide client advocacy, help with housing, food resources, transportation, and we offer one-on-one counseling and support groups. We have a drop-in center where community members can relax and access health and psychosocial resource information. We continue to offer HCV (hepatitis C) counseling and testing, harm reduction materials such as condoms and clean syringes, and essential referrals.

Our newest program is referred to as CUSOC (Chronic Users System of Care) and it is a collaboration which exists between Ukiah Valley Medical Center, Mendocino Community Health Clinic, Jail Medical Services, Ford Street Project and MCAVHN. This program assists persons who have been historically the hardest to engage. These may be persons who have generally accessed only emergency care within E.R.'s and/or sporadic healthcare during incarcerations. MCAVHN has been providing services to these individuals through our prevention work with homeless individuals and through our syringe exchange program. This provided us with the ability to be the prototype for the Recovery-Oriented case management we use within CUSOC. We are seeking funding to carry this program into the future, as the dedicated pilot project funding sunsets on June 30, 2013.

The basic approach practiced at MCAVHN is that of harm reduction. Harm reduction refers to activities designed to minimize the damage caused by high risk behaviors, with the ultimate goal of eliminating them. Harm reduction is based upon compassionate pragmatism instead of moralistic idealism. It views people as responsible for their own choices. They are helped at the point where they enter the system of care. The concept is also based on the premise that behavior change is regarded as incremental and that people are more likely to initiate and maintain behavior changes if they have the power to shape their own goals and enact them.

The staff at MCAVHN are here for the long haul, and with the help of our community, we will continue to serve as long as we are needed.

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MCAVHN is participating in the "Human Race" again this year on May 5. Libby is walking and is beginning to collect sponsorships. Let us know if you would be willing to pledge \$5, \$10, \$15, \$25, \$50 or \$100 !!!!!!! All pledges are welcome. 621-1072.



SAVE THE DATE

Saturday
June 9

We're kicking off summer with another benefit dance in conjunction with the Ukiah Senior Center. Watch for details on our website & Facebook page.



Mendocino County AIDS/Viral Hepatitis Network
 P.O Box 1350 Ukiah, California 95482

25th Annual Event of the Heart 2012-A super thank you to our cash and in-kind donors:



Thanks also to those who generously provided auction items. The Moss Camp Catering meal and the Puerto Vallarta stay were big hits. We could not have managed the event without the generous support of all the volunteers who helped set up, decorate, serve, ensure security, take photos, manage the auction and clean up. Thank you all!

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Ukiah Valley Medical Center	Caren Callahan - Attorney at law
Anonymous	Rick Bowers, CPA,CMA
Majide Music-Machiko and Paul	Haines Financial Management
Mariposa Market	Hawkes Construction
Mendo Lake Credit Union	Mason & Morrison Attorneys at Law-
Savings Bank of Mendocino County	Mountanos Family Foundation
Coyote Valley Casino	Madlem Construction Co.
First American Title	Banners and Signs
Weibel Family Vineyards & Winery	Price Waterman
Jaxon Keys Winery	Tony's Barber Shop
Kilkenny Kitchen	West America Bank
K-Wine	SASSI
MAX	Rain Forest Fantasy
Mendocino Community Health Clinic	Wil Gonzalez

MCAVHN's Mission:

to care for people affected by AIDS and HEPC and to prevent the spread of these diseases in our County.