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Farewell from Keith

Keith Waltrip
Director
Office of AIDS Administration
So this is my farewell article as the OAA Director...bitter sweet it is. I must first and foremost THANK all of the OAA staff for their hard work, dedication and tenacity these past two plus years to improve and maintain the progress on the Draw Down Status (DDR) and other system-wide improvements. I will regret not being here when the DDR is lifted, but I am proud in the work done by the OAA staff and the majority of our community partners to make and sustain the needed (and required) improvements.

I also would like to thank Nilda Rodriguez, Liam Galbreth, Dr. Tony Sillemmon and Lenny Greenwood for all of their support and collaboration in making the CCPC a place to advocate, learn about and enhance the HIV services provided in Alameda County. I heard often how much the Community Collaborative Planning Council (CCPC) has improved and that it is no longer a place of contention and drama...thank you to the four of you, as well as all the CCPC members and support staff.

I have been in the field of HIV for over 20 years and I am grateful for all that I have learned while at the OAA. I can say a few experiences that did take place - good and bad - were lessons to be had and will now become part of who I am going forward. Via this, I would like to thank the Executive Directors, Program Managers and Allied Health Staff that were trusted confidants and provided supportive and respectful feedback that helped make the work a bit easier.
Summertime is always an exciting time for the Office of AIDS Administration. We bring HIV/AIDS prevention information to the community at local health fairs hosted by churches, community based organizations, and schools. One of our favorite community investments is hosting high school/college interns interested in developing a career in public health.

This summer we hosted Aliya Thongkham and Luis Zerate (above) referred to us by the Exploring College & Career Options (ECCCO) program in partnership with the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). ECCCO is a program that guides high school students through a comprehensive sequence designed to prepare them for both college and career. ECCCO’s curriculum informs all students about post-secondary education options and prepares them with the skills and knowledge they need to enroll and succeed in college; connects students to participate in a Career Exploration Visit (CEV) to a local business, which introduces students to a variety of work settings; and builds the capacity of academies to develop high quality internships for every student enrolled in the academy.

Upon completion of the internship, the students are required to create a visual presentation that reflects the new skills and knowledge they have acquired. Students are gathered to share their experiences by showcasing the visual representations they created with other interns, host agencies,
parents, and friends. OAA wishes our former interns much success and happiness as they move forward to accomplish their professional goals.

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**Outsider on the Inside: A Personal Reflection**

By: Kimberly Kasich

One year ago I began my journey into the world of correctional healthcare in Alameda County. Prior to this my experience in the field of HIV was limited to community based organizations and volunteer work for the City and County of San Francisco. As a first year graduate student studying Healthcare Administration at California State University East Bay I knew serving this population would provide me with an invaluable experience. To be completely honest, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. A year later I felt it was important to reflect on the lessons I have learned working in the correctional setting providing support for the incarcerated HIV-positive population in Alameda County.

In reflecting on my own experiences as a case worker, advocate, student, and community member, I
believe there have been great strides made in helping the incarcerated individuals with HIV. While in custody individuals receive tailored medical care and case management services. With the help of the Discharge Planning Program many clients have been successfully linked to community based organizations for assistance with housing, substance abuse treatment, job training, and case management services. This program has proven to successfully reduce recidivism among our HIV-positive clients. That being said, we have a long way to go. The physical and mental barriers of prison and jail walls prevent those in need from accessing all the services available to them, while simultaneously preventing those who seek to help from reaching the people inside.

For those of us with limited experience in the correctional system it can be easy to make assumptions about what it must be like “inside”. In my observation there is a disconnect between the reality inside and perception of the system from the outside. Oftentimes jail provides the most stability some individuals have in their lives. In this environment there is the guarantee of regular meals, housing, medical care, and social interaction. It is not uncommon to see individuals re-offend for the sake of returning to these “securities”. To me, this is one of the biggest red flags of a failing social system.

As community health workers we try hard to capture people in care through targeted outreach, however, we still manage to miss a significant portion of the people who need us the most. In the correctional setting we are presented with a unique opportunity to reach people who may otherwise slip through the cracks. Rather than focusing on the offenses that have landed them here, we have the chance to help our fellow community members address areas that are keeping them from achieving their personal goals of happiness, health, and prosperity. We all share these goals; some of us are just granted better tools for achieving them.

With this in mind, I believe we must find a way to overhaul the correctional system to not only provide increased access and care for the HIV-positive population but for the incarcerated population as a whole. As advocates we are not only concerned with those who are chronically ill, but all those who are marginalized. We must invest in the overall enhancement of people’s lives if we hope to spur sustainable change. Our role is more than identifying, treating, and linking HIV-positive individuals We have a responsibility to better our communities. This starts with meeting people where they are. And sometimes that’s in jail. On the inside, we will continue to work diligently to provide our clients with the most comprehensive care and linkage to services, but we need help. We must call on our fellow citizens and community leaders to address the issues that lead to increased poverty, negative health outcomes, and the overcrowding of jails and prisons. We have a lot on our plates as it is, but in order to truly rectify that which ails our community we must address the roots of the problem.

“We must use time wisely and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right.”-Nelson Mandela
Welcome Kelly Stemple to the OAA team!

Kelly is a Public Health Investigator (PHI) whose job is to link those newly diagnosed with HIV to care and treatment. He works in partnership with Georgia Schreiber, who continues to work with the chronically out-of-care clients. Kelly is also the OAA’s partner services coordinator, offering help to clients who need assistance disclosing their status to their partner(s).

Kelly hails from Boise, Idaho, and has been in the Bay since 1990. He served in the Navy for eight years as a corpsman, or medical specialist, and landed in the Bay area at the Navy Hospital in Oakland.

Kelly began working as an LVN in several HIV clinics before coming to Alameda County in 2006 as a PHI in the STD unit. His goal in his current position is to create a smooth linkage from HIV testing to HIV
Kelly enjoys reading and is a devout fan of the series Downton Abbey.

It is time again to nominate co-workers and other community members providing HIV services in Alameda County. Please take the time to follow the link provided to tell us about people who have done extraordinary work in the past year.

The link for the nominations is:  https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NX7V35S

The deadline for nominations is Friday November 20, 2015

The categories are:

- Care and Treatment
- Prevention
• Caregiver
• Volunteer
• Youth
• Non-Traditional Community Partner

Please take the time to clearly write why you think they should receive the award. Items such as accomplishments, efforts, community involvement, etc. The awards are chosen based on the comments written in the nominations, not by the number of nominations.

The winners will be announced and presented at the on December 1, 2015 at the OAA World AIDS Day event at Oakland's Lake Chalet Restaurant.

• The site visits for the Ryan White Part A Site Visits are currently under way. Your Program Monitor will be contacting you to set a date, if they haven’t already.
• Part B chart reviews are also currently under way, also with your Program Monitor.
• State-Funded Prevention site visits are also currently in process.
• The end of the Prevention contract year will be coming up at the end of December. Please remember to enter you data into LEO to avoid any invoice issues.
• Shelley is currently coordinating for a Group Level Intervention (GLI) Training in Alameda County. We will be sending out registration information as soon as we have a date and location.
• We will be having a Partner services (PS) training in Oakland sometime in January 2016. We realize that we might have to bring a second PS training to the county, so it will be important to register your staff as soon as possible when we have a definite date and location.
• We are currently seeking Graduate-Level interns at the Alameda County Office of AIDS
Administration. If you are interested, or know someone, please have them contact Shelley Stinson at Shelley.Stinson@acgov.org.

- Shelley also has condoms to distribute to programs. If you need condoms, please contact Shelley at Shelley.Stinson@acgov.org.