

Fall/Winter 2003

So long from Lisa Purvis, Previous Director

Dear ALIVE Participants:

It is with great sadness that I write to let you know that in April 2003, I moved from Maryland to Vermont and, therefore, left the ALIVE program. My time with the program was a blessing because I learned so much from all of you and from the devoted ALIVE staff. Each day with the program was a gift.

I will truly miss the program in so many ways but I am delighted to know that an exceptionally talented person, Lisa McCall, has taken over as the new Project Director. I have known Lisa for many years and know, firsthand, of her dedication and enthusiasm. I believe that the ALIVE program will truly benefit from her wisdom and efforts.

Even though I am no longer working with the program on a day-to-day basis, I have been fortunate to have been asked to serve on the ALIVE Community Advisory Board (CAB) and will come to the meetings that take place four times a year. I look forward to seeing many of you at the future CAB meetings.

Until then, you are in my thoughts and many thanks for an enriching experience serving the ALIVE program!

Sincerely,

Lisa Purvis

Welcome from Lisa McCall, New Director

Have you ever walked into a room where there were people you didn't know? There are varying ways that people approach this situation - from walking in showing total confidence and becoming the center of attention to fading into the background trying not to call any attention to themselves. Well, I am somewhere in between. As the new director, I will be walking into the waiting room and right now, I don't know all of you. But give me time and there will be a moment when we will connect. I have already connected with some of you - it may be to chat about the new directions you are taking or about the ironies of life, to pass out lollipops, give a hug, or point out that there are free books available. Eventually, we will connect. And now that you know that there is a new director, (and by the way, my name is Lisa too, just like the last director), let me know who you are. Even if I may not speak up (I still have a shy streak running through me from childhood) I will give you a smile. If there is one thing we all need in our daily life, it's a smile.

What do I believe in? That everyone deserves respect and to be treated with care. I am sure that if the ALIVE Study hadn't done these things over the past 15 years, then you all would not still be coming back for your visits. I have had numerous people point out how they have been participating in this study since it started. That is a lot of consistency on your part and I know that it is not always easy to consistently show up.

I actually have a history with ALIVE myself. From 1987 to 1990, I was part of the team who processed your blood and did data management. Since then, I got my degree in public health, a couple of other jobs, some adventures to learn more about the world, and now I am back. I can say that I wouldn't be here if I too didn't have a good feel about all aspects of ALIVE and the staff involved.

I will be continuing the good work of Lisa before me. You will notice: a growing number of plants showing up, free books, lollipops, magazines, videos playing, puzzles, candles burning, more art hanging around, etc. These things may not make your overall world better, but hopefully for the few hours you sit in the ALIVE environs it will make it a more pleasant and comfortable visit.

I look forward to learning more about who you are and what you believe. Also know that I welcome all suggestions and comments at your next visit. My door is always open.

Sincerely,

Lisa McCall

**Here is some Information you Need to Know to Make your
Visit at the Clinic Smoother**

- **Cashing Checks** - Where to go to cash your checks?

Broadway Pharmacy at 1645 East Baltimore Street will cash ALIVE checks. The best method is to have 2 forms of ID including a valid state issued ID that you can get from the MD Department of Motor Vehicles. This will allow you to cash checks more easily and at local banks.

- **Appointments** - Always make an appointment if you need to reschedule, either by phone or at the front desk. We do not encourage walk ins, but if you do happen to walk in to make up a missed appointment, please make sure you do so before 1:00 PM.
- **Medical Records** - The ALIVE Study is a confidential research study. We will only release your records if you ask us to. We have a consent form that you must sign before we will release your records.

If your doctor or other health provider needs to see your records, please let us know when you come in for your visit and you can sign our consent form. If you want to take a copy of your records with you, there is a 2-day turnaround time for our staff to prepare them for you.

- **Visitor/Children Policies** - For health reasons, some ALIVE participants have caretakers. Because ALIVE is a confidential study, participants are not allowed to bring escorts with them inside of the Clinic. If you need an escort, ask him/her to drop you off at the Clinic. After you complete your visit, you may use our telephone to call your escort to pick you up. Unfortunately, children are *never* allowed in the Clinic.

Living ALIVE

Articles on living by ALIVE staff

Wake Up Call... Are you hitting the snooze button? By Lisa McCall

So you've experienced those close calls, emotionally wrenching experiences, something that made you say, "If I get through this, then..." (fill in the blank with promises to avoid the situation again). It's a wake up call. An awakening to the radio alarm going off to alter your life in a way that is hard and challenging and boy does hitting that snooze button look tempting.

"Let me be!" you may cry out. "Just let me go back to my sleeping life and it'll be okay." Maybe for awhile, but one thing is an absolute in this world and it is this: If you choose to ignore the purpose of those close calls, you will encounter more. And those events will be trying to jar you into a state of awareness and get your attention to work on some area of your life. Below is a story that illustrates what every one of us as human beings can surely relate to.

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters by Portia Nelson

I.

I walk, down the street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I fall in

I am lost... I am helpless

It isn't my fault.

It takes forever to find a way out.

II.

I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I pretend I don't see it.

I fall in again.

I can't believe I am in the same place

but, it isn't my fault.

It still takes a long time to get out.

III.

I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I see it is there.

I still fall in... it's a habit.

My eyes are open.

I know where I am.

It is my fault.

I get out immediately.

IV.

I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I walk around it.

V.

I walk down another street.

There is no easy formula to the conditions we walk through in this world. But a formula that one can work towards is to seek support for the needs that call up from within. That may mean seeking a treatment program or therapy, surrounding yourself with people who do not make you feel bad about yourself, talking your truth with someone you trust, etc. It may take time and several falls in a hole, but by focusing on what is true for you, walking down another street can become a reality.

To Heal Within By Tiawana Edge

Many people have gone to church as a child. Many of you may still attend some type of group worship. There are those who choose to pray in silence. If you are like most people, you have experienced some form of "Spirituality" in your life.

Spirituality entails recognizing that there is a "Higher Power". This belief provides us with inspiration, love, safety, comfort, and direction. The act of healing happens when spiritual energy is transmitted within the person or to another person. This will affect the mind, body and soul. Spiritual healing can help mental, some physical, and emotional dilemmas.

You can use prayer and meditation as a venue for reaching inner healing. Try to think about the mind, body and soul each as one unit. You may sometimes say to your self, " I feel sick" however, if you believe that you are not sick, this may help you to start to feel better. This is a form of "Mind Over Matter" The following studies demonstrate outcomes that have been positive due to some form of spirituality:

- In a study of more than five hundred African-American men conducted by Wayne State University in Detroit, significant correlation was found between the participants' religious involvement and their health. The researchers identified a number of indicators of true religious commitment, including overall religiosity and church attendance. They found these were linked to various beneficial health effects, such as less depression, little or no smoking, and infrequency of alcohol consumption.

(Source: November 1994 issue of the Journal of the National Medical Association)

- A research study involving more than 1,100 healthy men and women aged seventy to seventy-nine, was reported by Yale epidemiologist Lisa Berkman at a January 1995 meeting of the American Medical Association. She confirmed that strong emotional support and social ties help lower blood pressure and enhance survival after a heart attack. Berkman concluded that significant social ties, including close friendships and family relationships, improved the levels in the brain of the chemicals norepinephrine and cortisol, which have been associated with excessive stress.
- In an Australian study of patients with cancer of the colon or rectum, 715 cancer patients were compared with 727 "controls" without cancer. The researchers found that the respondents who saw themselves as most religious were less likely to have cancer than those who were not as religious. In other words, self-perceived "religiousness" was a statistically significant protective factor against the disease.

(Source: November 1993 issue of the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine)

Many people have experienced major turnarounds in their life as a result of cultivating their spirituality. They feel by developing a relationship with a "Higher Power", that this will provide a sense of understanding, encouragement, and faith that enhances their healing process.

Clinician's Corner

News from Eileen Hollander, Nurse Practitioner

Here's some information on drug treatment programs:

Acupuncture

Did you know that Acupuncture treatment has been shown to significantly decrease:

- Cravings for alcohol and drugs,
- Withdrawal symptoms,
- Relapses,
- Anxiety, and
- Trouble sleeping?

Acupuncture involves the painless gentle placement of five small, sterilized disposable needles into specific places in each ear. Treatments take about 45 minutes and may be given every day or as often as needed. It is okay to receive acupuncture even if you are already receiving other treatments for a drug addiction.

If you are interested in finding out more about an acupuncture program you can call or visit:

Maryland Community Health Initiative, Inc.
Located in the Penn North Neighborhood Center
2410 Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 200
Baltimore, MD 21217
410-728-2080

YOU DO NOT NEED TO HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE TO BE ACCEPTED.
NO ONE IS TURNED AWAY BASED ON INCOME.

Gaudenzia at Park Heights

A New Program in West Baltimore

Gaudenzia has been well known for many years in Pennsylvania because of its excellent drug-treatment programs. It expanded to Baltimore last summer and provides a wide range of services:

- Adult Residential Services - Short and long-term services for adults including women with children
- Adolescent Services - Residential and outpatient services to teens
- Outpatient Services - Standard or intensive outpatient programs
- Mental Health Residential Services - For those with both a substance abuse problem and mental health needs

For more information call:

Gaudenzia at Park Heights

4615 Park Heights Avenue

phone: 443-423-1500 (website: www.gaudenzia.org)

YOU DO NOT NEED TO HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE TO BE ACCEPTED.

If you need help with a drug problem please feel free to ask to speak with the ALIVE clinicians or call Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems (BSAS) at 410-637-1900.

A REMINDER

√ If you are HIV positive, it is important to have your Viral Load checked every 3 to 4 months so you will know if you need treatment. Although medications can't cure (get rid of) the virus, they can be very effective in controlling the virus and in keeping you healthy.

Overview of CAB

The Community Advisory Board is made up of study participants, study staff, and community representatives who have an interest in the ALIVE activities and want to make a contribution to the study. The CAB serves as a place:

- § To exchange information
- § Provide feedback from the community about programs
- § Discuss new and continuing projects

Specific activities include:

- § Commenting on the design of the study
- § Reviewing surveys used in the study
- § Contributing to the ALIVE newsletter

The CAB meets four times a year over lunch. The next CAB meeting will be **Friday, 13 February 2004 from 12:00-1:00 PM**. If you are interested in becoming a CAB member, please call Lisa McCall, at 410-955-7510.

Update on New Studies and On-Going Studies

DUIT/STRIVE

- This is an educational and harm reduction project. The study is enrolling Hepatitis C positive and negative individuals.
- To be eligible, you must be between the ages of 18 - 35.
- Please call Janet at 410-614-5799.

The Heart Studies

- This is a study about a heart condition known as subclinical atherosclerosis. This condition happens when cholesterol and calcium form fatty plaque that can lead to blocked heart arteries.
- To be eligible for the Heart I Study, you must be between the ages of 25-45 and HIV+. Eligible participants will be required to complete three painless visits.
- To be eligible for the Heart II Study, you must be between the ages of 25-54 and HIV+ or -. Eligible participants will be required to complete visits that include an MRI.
- Women must not be pregnant.
- Please call Barbara at 410-955-7514 or Debbie at 410-955-7515 between 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. to see if you are eligible.

Liver Study

- Chuck is still seeing participants already enrolled in the Liver study. If you have not seen Chuck for a while, please call him at 410-955-7510.

Project GIVE

- This is a program to help children in Baltimore that are affected by homelessness and/or intravenous drug use by family members. The program is for families with children between 2 and 18 years of age.
- This program will provide the opportunity to get free hepatitis C testing and free hepatitis B shots for children.
- Please call Buffy at 410-274-7472 to learn more about the program.

VITAMIN

- This study is interested in problems with "low blood" or anemia, which is a common problem among women in Baltimore.
- The Vitamin Study is currently enrolling women who are at least 18 years of age or older.
- Please call Farrah at 410-614-6550 to schedule an interview. All eligible participants will be enrolled for a period of 12 months.

TANG II

- You may have been wondering whatever happened to the TANG study. We recently hired a new coordinator, John, and he is now seeing those participants enrolled in the TANG study. If you have not been seen for the TANG study in a while, please call John at 410-614-6550.

Participants enrolled in studies are reimbursed for their time. Please call the individuals listed above to find out the specifics of the studies.

HEALTH RESOURCES in BALTIMORE

Baltimore Crisis Response Inc. (BCRI)

BCRI is a helping organization serving Baltimore City. It is for those persons who are experiencing mental health problems including feelings of depression, suicidal thoughts, and feelings of being out of control. BCRI operates an Information and Referral Hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They also provide in-person and residential care. Please call 410-752-2272 for more information.

The Broadway Center/Comprehensive Women's Center (911 Broadway/CWC)

911 Broadway and CWC are programs providing treatment to individuals suffering from substance abuse and/or dependence. The programs also offer additional services like job training and family therapy as well as referrals to other programs. Please call the following for more information:

- 911 Broadway 410-955-5578
- CWC 410-502-7778

Hepatitis C Support Group

Anyone interested in Hepatitis C or in the support group is welcome to attend. Meetings are on Tuesdays from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. in Carnegie Room 240 in the Johns Hopkins Hospital. Call Chuck at 410-614-8353 or just come to the meeting. Food and coffee will be provided.

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

NA is a society of men and women for whom drugs are or had become a major problem. The group meets regularly to help each other stay clean. Anyone may join, the only requirement is the desire to stop using. Please call 1-800-317-3222 (24 hours/day) to learn more about meeting times and locations.

Needle Exchange

The Needle Exchange provides new needles for free as well as HIV/AIDS education. To become a participant, you must register on the mobile van or at a participating pharmacy. Participants must be injecting drug users. This program is confidential and no identification is required. Please ask our interviewers or clinicians about specific locations and times of operation for the vans and pharmacies.

These are just a few examples of the resources in Baltimore - there are many more resources available. Please ask to speak with one of our interviewers or clinicians for more information.

More News

News Flash: When do I treat Hepatitis C?

In general, when to start HCV therapy is based on each person's individual situation. Current guidelines recommend that people with the following conditions consider starting HCV therapy, as they can be a sign of liver damage:

- Increased liver enzymes (called ALT)
- A liver biopsy that shows some degree of fibrosis or moderate inflammation

There are different opinions as to when to treat people with chronic HCV infection who show no signs of liver damage. Many liver specialists recommend monitoring the health of the liver and starting treatment when there are signs of damage. For example, if you have normal or slightly above normal levels of ALT with little or no fibrosis, your doctor may recommend postponing treatment and closely monitor your liver health.

As you think about anti-HCV therapy there are several factors to consider that can help guide your decision. It is important to consider each of these points:

- Results of blood tests (elevated ALT levels, etc.)
- Liver biopsy results
- HCV viral load
- HCV genotype
- Overall health
- Readiness to start therapy
- Ability to tolerate side effects

Reference: Wise Words, a publication of Project Inform, Information, Inspiration and Advocacy for People Living with HIV/AIDS (www.projectinform.org)

News Flash: ALIVE Study in the News

Treatment is the Solution

August 23, 2003

Response by *Steffanie Strathdee* (Principal Investigator for ALIVE 2) to Baltimore Sun article entitled:

"Following addicts, methadone debate migrates to suburbs" (8/18/03)

As a public health researcher who has studied drug users for more than 15 years, I feel compelled to reply to the suggestion by some community members and politicians that methadone clinics are "bad for business" and should be blocked in certain areas. Nothing could be further than the truth.

Studies conducted by my research group and others over the last three decades have repeatedly shown the benefit of methadone programs in curbing dependence on heroin and other opiates. In fact, every dollar spent on drug treatment saves \$10 in future health care costs.

Yet a disturbingly high number of community residents suffer from "NIMBYism" (Not In My Backyard), a condition in which people approve of drug treatment "anywhere but here."

A promising solution to this problem is to offer mobile methadone clinics, which bypass the NIMBY problem and offer clients anonymity in treating their opiate addiction, taking treatment to people where they live.

Our research group evaluated a mobile methadone clinic in the city and found that it had excellent success rates and prompted no community concerns. Still, this program and others like it suffer from funding shortfalls, even though every indication suggests they should be expanded.

Methadone treatment is a necessary and vital medical intervention that is urgently needed; to deny addicts such treatment is to inadvertently perpetuate the problem.

Calling all ALIVE Participants!

This is a chance to let the staff and all your fellow participants know the talents and views that are among you. If you have any stories you have written or art you have made, we are looking to make them a part of the next newsletter. Feeling shy? Only your study number will be used as an identifier.

We know you are out there, so bring us your best at your next visit. Just ask to see Lisa.

Suggestion Box

We welcome your thoughts and suggestions! Please feel free to provide us with your input by leaving a message in our Suggestion Box that is in the waiting room.

THE VOYAGER'S PATH IS MEASURED BY THE STARS, NOT BY THE SAND
DUNES. African Proverb