



# Being ALIVE!

Volume 1, Number 1 Summer / Fall 1995

## Study Numbers and Dollars

### *They DO NOT tell anyone who you are!!!*

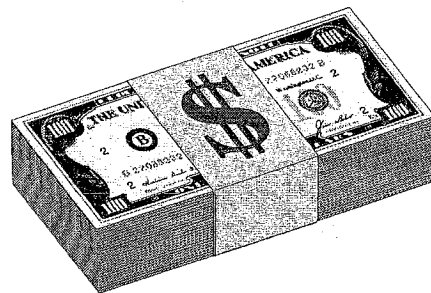
Study participants will often talk to each other. Some topics include study numbers, or dollar amounts you get at each visit. Some think this is an indication of your status.

Simply, THE ANSWER IS NO.

Study numbers were put in random order when they were first assigned. The reason was to not allow anyone to find out about someone else.

Say two people registered together for the study--they would not get sequential numbers (unless it was by chance). This way, one person could not come back and find out information about the other person by guessing the second person's study number. This is a safeguard.

It also means that if you talk to another person about who joined the



study first, this cannot be figured out by the sequence of the study numbers, since they were assigned randomly in blocks of 400 numbers. So, lower study numbers tend to be for people who registered early, but only by groups of numbers.

Different dollar amounts

Another issue is the dollar amount people receive for different study visits. Some people get \$15, others get \$35, and so on. The people who get \$15 dollars are usually (but not always) HIV seronegative. More importantly, the people who get \$35 (because they get more tests done) include both HIV negatives and HIV positives.

The study included both negatives and positives together to make sure that it would not be possible to

**Please see *Numbers*, Pg. 4**

## *From the Advisory Board...*

**Hello fellow ALIVE study members:**

We would like to take a few minutes to introduce the ALIVE study newsletter and make you aware of the Advisory Board and what it does. Through these two efforts, the ALIVE study staff hope to be even more helpful and informative in the future.

The ALIVE study over the years (as well as other studies) has tried to help monitor your health and provide you with information about certain health issues. This newsletter is yet another way to keep us informed and "in the know".

Some examples of areas that could be covered in this and upcoming issues include:

- Information on how we are helping others by participating in the ALIVE study and allowing us to update our results.
- Information on how we can prevent infection of various diseases, including hepatitis, syphilis, and HIV.
- Updates on general health issues and ways to improve our health information on local providers and services.

**Please see *A Word...*, Pg. 4**

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# Finally . . . The 411

## *Should I be taking Vitamin A?*

*By Dr. Neil Graham*

Even if you are healthy, vitamins are relatively cheap, easily available, are not toxic, and are good for you.

Although it hasn't been proven, increased survival and a better disease outcome of HIV infection has

been linked with Vitamin A. There is evidence that vitamins in general increase your immune system's function.

If you plan on supplementing your diet with vitamins, we recom-



mend Multivitamins, making sure it has Vitamin A, Beta Carotene, B-complex, Vitamin C and Vitamin E.

It has been shown that the HIV virus uses ZINC when replicating (making many copies of itself). Early evidence shows that zinc supplements might not be a good idea if you are HIV positive.

## **ALIVE Notes**

### ***We miss you!!***

Most people who joined the ALIVE study come back for repeat visits. This is very important and we appreciate the dedication of the ALIVE participants.

Some people have not come back (and for good reasons). However, even if you or someone you know has not come back it is never too late to return. We are very interested to see everybody who ever joined the ALIVE study. So, even if someone has missed appointments, it is not too late. Call up!! Make an appointment!! We really want to see you !!

### ***The Tuberculosis Skin Testing Program***

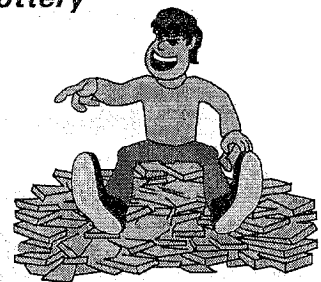
You asked for it-- You got it.

ALIVE offers TB skin testing and evaluation for tuberculosis. Also, ALIVE offers therapy for people who need it. If caught early, this usually means medicine for infection to prevent disease. The testing is handled with confidentiality and it is convenient because it is right in the ALIVE clinic. So far, one in five people tested shows evidence of TB infection, although very few people have disease. It is important to be tested and treatment is available.

Ask for testing.

### ***Play our "Address Lottery"***

We would like to start the "ALIVE Lottery" to thank those that have consistently given us correct addresses. It's really simple to play and if you are the lucky participant, YOU could win up to \$20 next time you look in your mailbox!!



#### **Here are the rules:**

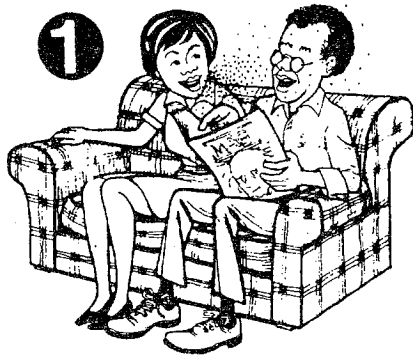
1. Every month, we will randomly select one participant from the active ALIVE participant list.
2. A coupon for dollar amounts ranging from \$5 to \$20 will be mailed to the address given by the participant at their last visit. You must call the clinic with the password written on the coupon so we can prepare a check especially for you.
3. You can come into the clinic to pick up your check.

Of course, the only way you can receive your coupon is if you give us an address that will get to you. Remember, you can't win if we can't find you!!

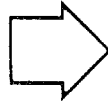
# Fighting the TB Man

*'Education can be your key to prevention'*

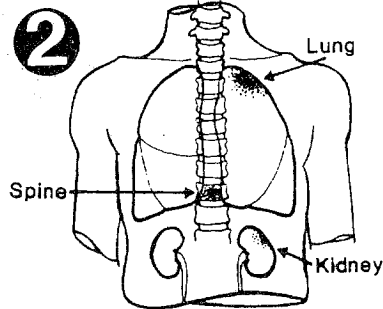
TB is spread when a person with active TB coughs, sings, or speaks and you breathe the air contaminated with TB germs.



**1**

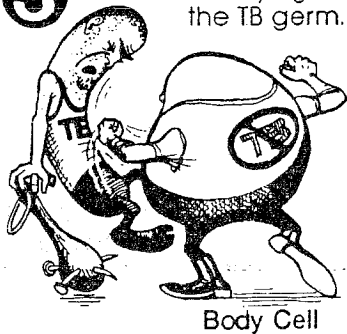


The germs reach your lungs. From there they can go to other parts of your body.



**2**

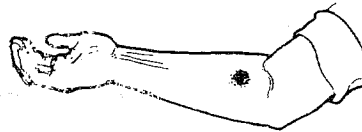
**3** Your body fights the TB germ.



**4**

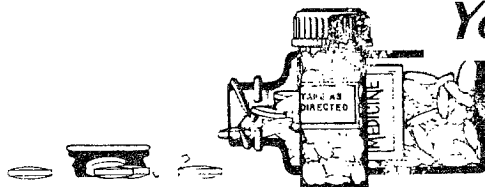
Usually the germs go to sleep in your body. This is called TB INFECTION.

- You have a positive skin test.
- You don't feel sick.
- You can't give TB to others.



**5**

**YOUR WEAPON...**



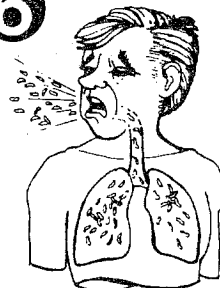
You can take medicine to keep you from getting active TB.

**BUT...**

If you don't take medicine, the TB germs may wake up and attack your lungs and other parts of your body. This is called TB DISEASE.

- You feel sick with fever, weight loss or cough.
- You have active TB germs in your body.
- You may give TB to others.

**6**



You need to take your medicine to help you get better and to prevent you from spreading the TB germs to others.



**7**

**So...**

**Remember to keep your appointment with your TB nurses!**

## Welcome new clinic staff members

To my friends of ALIVE,

Just as in "Life", the ALIVE study changes over time, too. Change isn't good or bad - it actually can add a fresh, new outlook to things. It is also exciting to see people move on to new horizons.

For those of you that knew Liza Solomon as our project director, you probably will be happy to hear that she has taken the lead at the State AIDS Administration. It will be great having her there to "look out" for our interests. We'll all miss her, but we are sure she'll do a terrific job.

Change brings new faces and new responsibilities to the study as well.

As of June, Grace Macalino, MS, MPH, had joined us as the new project director. Look for her in the clinic as she should be doing interviews sometime soon. She has a lot of energy and is willing to rise to the challenge of such a successful study track record.

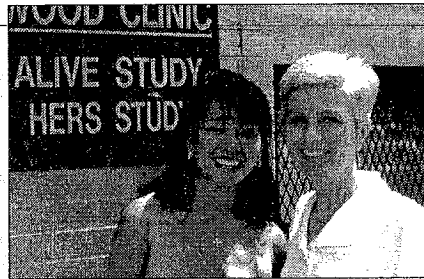
Carol Hilton, a familiar face to many, will now be dedicating all of her efforts to the ALIVE study as far as the clinic goes. She brings with her years of experience and we are fortunate to have such competent leadership.

We look forward to the sensitivity and insight these two will bring to the study and clinic. You may want to make a special point of introducing yourself to Grace and Carol and make them feel welcome.

Warmly,

*Dave*

Dave Vlahov, PhD  
Senior Investigator, The ALIVE Study



Grace Macalino (left) and Carol Hilton

## A Word..., from Pg. 1

- Profiles on local people (participants and nonparticipants) who are actively involved in the community.

To make this newsletter even more successful, they need our contributions. Articles, artistic work, and announcements are only a few possibilities for how we can contribute and truly make this our newsletter.

As members of the ALIVE Advisory Board, we are also here for you. Our purpose is to serve you and represent your interest in the ALIVE study. This could range from being able to tell one of us if you think you have been treated unfairly, to providing us with ideas and issues that could be brought up with the investigators.

If you have a strong opinion about something, you must play an active role. We need the advice of experts to help us continue our research efforts in areas where you need it. Luckily, there are many of these experts available to advise us — YOU!!

Your advisory board members include: James Commander, Frederick Cox, Christine Jackson, Rodney Moore, Cornell Smith, John Wallace (see Pg. 6 for phone #'s).

## Numbers, from Pg. 1

say a person was HIV positive because of the amount of money they received or because they had a physical exam done by a nurse practitioner/physician's assistant.

It also allows comparisons for our findings. But most importantly, including positives and negatives is an effective way to protect confidentiality.

While we're at it, let's discuss another issue. The ALIVE study could (or maybe is) known on the street to be a study of IV drug users.

THE TRUTH IS... the ALIVE study includes not only current users, but also former users (ex-users) and people who have never used drugs. This allows for comparisons, but again - it is a means to protect confidentiality.

Just because someone knows you're in the ALIVE study doesn't mean they've identified anyone as a current drug user, because many participants are ex-users or non-users.

We hope this makes membership in the ALIVE study more clear and answers some common questions we hear often.

Individual confidentiality is just as important to us as it is to you.

## *At the playground . . .*

We recently invited you to make contributions to this newsletter in the form of poetry, artwork or short stories. Thank you for your wonderful response!!

Look for your artwork or poems in future issues if you don't find yours here. . .

### *Untitled*

Its nice that there are nice days. . .

It gives a great excuse to put a lot of compliments and friendly thoughts to use

And I am always grateful for the chance this day provides to send out heartfelt greetings and the friendly thought besides

— (70033)

### *"Winning"*

Victory's not too sweet

To a man who's never seen defeat

Overconfidence has caused many men to weep.

Slowly, conscience's steps will keep me on my feet

Humanity, Joy, and Happiness I intend to reap

— (12898)

# ***Alive Study helps establish Needle Exchange Program***

Your participation in the ALIVE study has made a difference you can feel proud of. The information you provided was summarized for all the participants and presented to the Health Commissioner, the Mayor, and the State Legislature.

This information was very important to help persuade these officials to allow and establish this program in Baltimore. Congratulations!! You made a difference!!

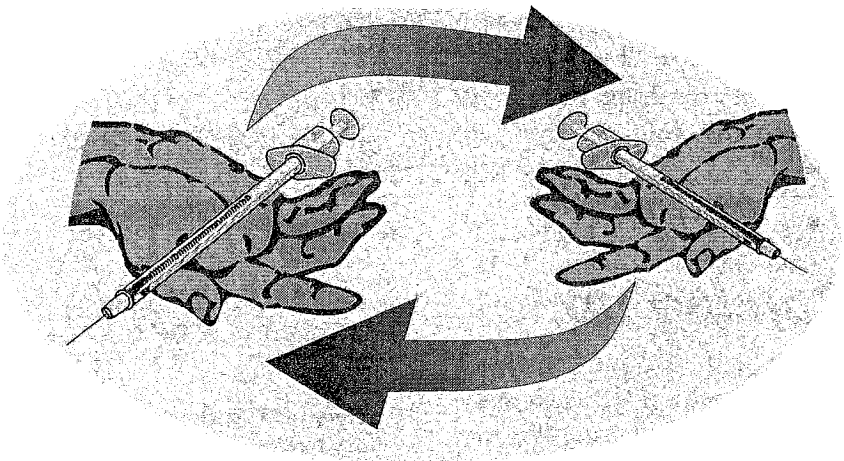
The Needle Exchange Program operates weekly Monday, Tuesday,

Thursday, and Friday from 9:30-11:00 a.m. in front of the Eastern Health District Building and from 1:30-3:00 p.m. on the corner of Fremont and Riggs.

For the program, no names are taken and the needles, syringes, cotton, and cookers are sterile, free, and legal to have.

Also, the program has referrals to drug treatment with 90 slots set aside for program participants. So far, the needle exchange program has served 3,000 people.

## **Baltimore City Needle Exchange Program**



***East Side Location***  
620 N. Caroline Street  
in front of the Health Dept.

***HOURS OF OPERATION***  
Mondays, Tuesdays,  
Thursdays, and Fridays  
from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

***West Side Location***  
On the corner of  
Fremont and Riggs

***HOURS OF OPERATION***  
Mondays, Tuesdays,  
Thursdays, and Fridays  
from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

# Participant Profile

*"I not only celebrate this year — I celebrate daily"*

By Grace E. Macalino

These are the words of one of the ALIVE participants that has changed his life.

10063 is a mild-mannered gentleman with a calm voice and a great positive outlook on life. One look at him and it's obvious he has his life in order.

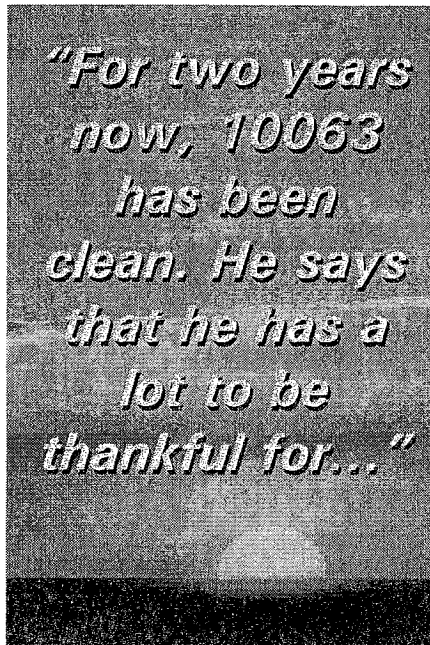
But it wasn't always like that.

10063 remembers the days when life was out of control. An alcoholic since he was 13 and a drug addict since 23, he remembers being powerless over most things--alcohol, sex, drugs-

"Anything I tried, I liked, and I liked too much."

He tells of the event that shook him out of that life and made him "stop chasing the ghost":

July 25, 1993 — "I was made an offer of sex for drugs with a twelve-year-old child by her mother who was an addict. For a



split second (in my drug induced state) I considered the offer, but by the grace of God I did not cross that line.

*"I knew then that for me, this was a reality check in its ultimate form."*

He realized that for thirty-five years, all he was doing was

existing. Through it all, he was surviving in the only way he knew how -- where his life meant little and thoughts of suicide were common.

He speaks of July 26th, the "Day After" as the "first day of the rest of my life." Slowly, with a lot of setbacks along the way, he learned to accept "life on Life's terms", but more importantly, he learned that these terms were fair and that he could make a difference in his life.

For two years now, 10063 has been clean. He says that he has a lot to be thankful for everyday of his life. Having hit rock bottom, he is proud of how he has turned his life around.

But he feels no better than anyone else—if anything, he hopes that his story might provide inspiration to someone out there.

His hope for all addicts. . . "Sobriety — Life has never been this good!!"

## Coming up...

Our newest service provides participants results of Hepatitis testing and liver function tests. We anticipate that by fall, someone will be available to give results and answer questions (if someone has abnormal results they are already being notified).

Also, we will be beginning a pneumococcal vaccine trial with Vitamin A. Additional details including eligibility will be posted in the near future.

## Being ALIVE!

*Being ALIVE* is published biannually by the ALIVE Staff for the participants of the ALIVE Study. It is intended to provide participants with updated information regarding issues that affect their health and lifestyle. Content is provided by both staff members and participants.

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