



## HOUSING FIRST

One of the core services requested by individuals living with HIV/AIDS and is central to providing a high quality of life is housing. At the beginning of the new millennium, Four A's was providing housing subsidy to less than 20 individuals and providing homeless prevention funds to another 25-30 households. A waiting list existed to obtain a subsidy and each month, it seemed to grow longer. To eliminate this list, we needed to not only seek new sources of funding, we also needed to examine how our current funds were being utilized. By assisting clients to increase their annual income (i.e. their portion of the rent), acquiring an additional \$50,000 a year and strengthening our case management services, we were able to greatly reduce the length of the waiting list. Currently, we house nearly 60 households and over 40 households receive support that prevents homelessness each year. Most importantly, by providing stable permanent housing, individuals then have the time to focus their attention on other issues, like managing their HIV/AIDS treatment.

As the housing program grew in strength, it became more evident that one core group of individuals still remain hard to house. These individuals usually have an extensive history of homelessness and experience a mental illness and/or substance abuse. They have been unable to live in traditional housing and have blown out of most supportive housing programs. Four A's did not have the resources needed to build a program to meet the needs of this population. So, we did what we do best, we reached out to the community to find a partner. That partner became RuralCap. RuralCap has an extensive history working with this population and has established a housing program that eliminated many of the barriers that caused individuals to lose their housing. By pooling our resources, we have been able to house nearly 10 individuals in their program and the majority of them have been able to maintain permanent housing for longer than a year. This is a major accomplishment, especially for an individual who has lived on the streets longer than they have in any type of housing.

In November of 2011, RuralCap expanded their housing program to include Anchorage's first Housing First project; Karluk Manor. Housing First is a relatively new concept in the treatment of homelessness. The premise behind the concept is to move homeless directly into permanent housing versus through the different levels of housing (i.e. emergency housing, transitional housing). Housing First approaches are based on the concept that a homeless individual or household's first and primary need is to obtain stable housing, and that other issues that may affect the household can and should be addressed once housing is obtained. Basically, allow individuals to enter housing with no strings attached and with minimal rules, much like what any person would experience when renting an apartment. This concept includes allowing individuals to continue to drink in their own homes; again the same as you or I get to do when we rent an apartment.

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## FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

As president of the Four A's board of directors, I write to inform you that Trevor Storrs, Executive Director, has decided to leave the Alaskan AIDS Assistance Association to pursue new opportunities. For over nine years, Trevor has been a valued member of the Four A's team.

Through these years, we have seen the agency transform into an organization that has had lasting systemic impact in our community. With Trevor's leadership, we have expanded our services, found new funding sources, increased our visibility in the community, strengthened existing programs, and expanded our partnerships.

Most of all, our clients continually tell us that the services we have provided them have improved their quality of life, for some it has saved their lives. The team has and continues to make great strides towards achieving our mission.

Over the next few months, Trevor will continue to support Four A's and it will be "business as usual." During this time, the board of directors will begin the process of identifying our new executive director. The Board and staff are working closely with Trevor to ensure a smooth transition.

On behalf of the board of directors and staff, I want to thank Trevor for his years of dedication to our mission and wish him the best of luck in his new endeavors. He has truly made a difference in our community and he will be greatly missed. I trust that you all will join me in thanking Trevor for making possible the progress we have experienced at Four A's during his time as executive director.

Heather Harris, President  
Four A's Board of Directors

## A MAGICAL EVENING

Stars were out and shining on the night of January 11th at Mad Myrna's. The energetic, talented and generous cast and crew of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* hosted a cabaret to benefit Four A's. The evening was packed with a variety of numbers ranging from well-known show tunes to some lesser-known songs from up-and-coming shows. A total of \$4,500 was raised for Four A's.



Four A's would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the cast and crew of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, and of course, the staff at Mad Myrna's for making the magic happen. THANK YOU!

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR ALASKA AIR RAFFLE WINNERS

1st Prize = 150,000 miles: Joireen Cohen

2nd Prize = 75,000 miles: Gayle Schuh

3rd-5th Prizes = 50,000 miles: Dan Seiser, Cindy Conway, Greg Weber

6th-10th Prizes = 25,000 miles:

Barbara Brink, Heather Harris, Kevin Meiners, Kristy West, Butch Lincoln

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH YOUR PFD



When you file for your PFD, be sure to **PICK** the Alaskan AIDS Assistance Association, **CLICK** and follow the instructions, and **GIVE** a portion of your PFD, whatever amount is right for you.

Your gift will make a difference in not only the lives of those living with HIV/AIDS, but also in our quest to end HIV transmission and its stigma.

### Here's how your donation goes to work

- **\$25** pays for one HIV test. Those that know their status are more likely to protect themselves and their partners.
- **\$50** pays for 50 safe sex kits, helping high-risk individuals remain HIV-negative.
- **\$100** supplies our food bank with enough groceries to feed 10 clients for a week.
- **\$250** pays for 10 hours of educating the public and high-risk individuals about HIV-transmission.
- **\$500** moves a homeless HIV-positive individual into stable housing, improving their quality of life.

**Everyday, the Four A's makes a positive difference in the lives of individuals living with HIV/AIDS thanks to the support of community members like you.**

## PICK.CLICK.GIVE. 2011 RESULTS

Thank you to those that picked, clicked and gave a total of \$8,265.60 to Four A's in 2011! Due to our deadlines, we were unable to list these generous donors in our 2011 Community Impact Report. Thank you to all of our Pick.Click.Give. donors listed below!

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## CONGRESS BANS FEDERAL FUNDING FOR CLEAN NEEDLES

In December, Congress reinstated a ban on federal funding for syringe exchange programs, just two years after lifting a 21-year ban. The use of federal funds for syringe exchange was first banned in 1988, but the ban was lifted in 2009. The policy was reinstated as part of a broad spending bill passed by Congress in mid-December.

Syringe exchange programs provide sterile syringes to injection drug users to help reduce the spread of HIV and hepatitis C and often include counseling, HIV-testing, and referrals to substance abuse treatment. Studies show these programs are effective in reducing HIV and hepatitis infections and encouraging injection drug users to enter treatment.

Alaska's second highest exposure category for HIV is injection drug use. Four A's has been proactively working towards reducing this risk by establishing the Alaska Syringe Access Program (ASAP) in May 2007. Injection drug users can access sterile syringes, clean cookers, alcohol wipes, condoms, and other harm-reduction supplies in both our Anchorage and Juneau offices. Regular HIV testing is also encouraged and incentivized with a \$10 grocery card.

Although a controversial program, Four A's has seen dramatic growth in the program which indicates a void in services. Currently,

we distribute an average of 12,000 needles a month and the numbers are growing. We anticipate a 10-15% increase in demand over the next two years.

More than the numbers, the anecdotal remarks and stories from the ASAP clients have the biggest impact. Many of our clients struggling with substance abuse have later thanked us for helping them avoid HIV and hepatitis until they got into treatment and got clean. Others have stopped a staff member out in public and thanked them for caring enough to provide clean needles. For some others, the syringe exchange is just one step along the way towards treatment. Here's a recent story by Sarah Brewster, our Jesuit Volunteer, who works with our syringe exchange clients.

"One client in particular was always very forthcoming with what was going on with his life. Many of his stories were about his kids, and sometimes he would bring pictures and videos from dance recitals. He couldn't have been any prouder, and it was obvious that he appreciated that I would ask about them. One day he came in with his exchange, but as I started to enter the information, he stopped me. I turned around to see him throw in his entire 'kit,' spoons and all. He looked at me and very seriously said, 'I'm done. I'm going to treatment for my kids.'"

## Housing First (continued from page 1)

This project was faced with great opposition from the community. However, research completed on existing programs throughout the lower 48 shows that it both saves community funds and greatly improves the quality of life for both the individuals entering the program and the community as a whole. Four A's endorsed the project and actively participated in the discussions. When the project opened a few months ago, we were able to house four of our most vulnerable and hard-to-serve clients. We were able to do this because of a generous grant (\$25,000) from the M.A.C. AIDS Fund. These funds help cover deposits and a year's worth of rental subsidy for each individual.

Within weeks of entering the program, we began to see changes in our clients. They began to drink less; they drank beverages with lower alcohol content; their overall appearance improved. They re-entered medical services to address their HIV. Most are about to start medications again which they have gone without for months to years. Their utilization of emergency services and their strain on the neighborhoods has been reduced. If it was not for this project, these clients would most likely no longer be with us today. Housing first is helping us build a stronger community and save lives.

## A NEW YEAR

By Trevor Storrs, Executive Director



As we embark on another year, it is customary to not only reflect on the past year but to make resolutions for the year to come.

2011 was a year of change for Four A's. We said good bye to long time friends (staff and clients) and welcomed new members to our team. In February, we traveled through time and recognized the excellent adventure we have had over the past 25 years. Over the summer, we completed a floor to ceiling

remodel that removed physical barriers to accessing services. Most of all, we strengthened our services by securing new funding to absorb the increase in demand.

Our 2012 resolution is to complete an introspective analysis of who is Four A's, what needs do we meet, what needs go unmet, and how do we prepare for the coming changes in how services are provided to those living with HIV/AIDS and how we prevent the disease. We know that HIV prevention will greatly change over the next

three years because the prevention funds received by the State of Alaska will be cut by nearly 50%. This will greatly impact the funds available to grant to local social service organizations like ourselves. Plus, the scope of work the funds will support have greater restriction compared to past years. We will be challenged to do more with less. Health care reform will open new doors for treatment, while potentially changing how we currently support those living with the disease. It will be important to expand core prevention services to one of the fastest growing communities in Alaska, the Mat-Su Valley, to ensure our new infection rate remains low.

Although the coming year will be filled with challenges and looming change, Four A's will continue to embrace optimism and positivity. With the support of our board of directors, staff, volunteers, donors, clients and community partners, we will continue to provide the highest quality service to our community and make strides to achieving our mission. Thank you to everyone who stood with us in 2011. We look forward to working with you to continue our efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS in 2012.

## THANK YOU TO OUR RECENT DONORS

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ALASKAN AIDS ASSISTANCE ASSOCIATION

IT'S ALL ABOUT LIFE

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**FOUR A's**  
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IT'S ALL ABOUT LIFE

**Our Mission:** To be a key collaborator within the state of Alaska in the provision of supportive services to persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families and in the elimination of the transmission of HIV infection and its stigma.

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