**Youth Services Mission EXPANDS**

**Pregnancy Prevention Program Will Employ Six**

Syracuse and Onondaga County have a significant teen pregnancy problem. Teen pregnancy rates per 1,000 are some of the highest in Upstate New York.* High rates of pregnancy among teens in the City of Syracuse contribute decidedly to the rate of unplanned pregnancies in Onondaga County.

ACR Health has been selected to implement a comprehensive program to mitigate teen pregnancy in Syracuse and Onondaga County. In a strategy developed by the NYS Health Department’s Adolescent Health Unit, ACR Health will receive an estimated $2.8 million over five years to place health educators in Syracuse middle and high schools and community centers to work with young people aged 11-21 at increased risk for unintended pregnancy.

“We have been working with youth since 1992, and we know from experience that they need and respond positively to comprehensive, culturally competent information about reproductive and sexual health,” said Marissa Rice, Director of ACR Health Youth Services. “CAPP (Comprehensive Adolescent Pregnancy Program) educators will be in school every-day which will allow them to establish relationships of trust and free exchange of ideas with young people.”

ACR Health will provide comprehensive, evidence-based sexual health education utilizing Be Proud! Be Responsible! as well as parent or caregiver education to improve parent-child communication surrounding sexual and reproductive health. ACR Health will increase access to family planning services through active referrals, assistance with scheduling appointments, and transportation assistance. ACR Health is collaborating with Planned Parenthood of Central and Western NY, Reach CNY, and Syracuse Model Neighborhood Facility’s Community Connections to provide accurate information about sexual and reproductive health care and local family planning services to be made available to teens through web-based platforms and public service announcements; and the development of a Healthy Teens Coalition.

“These strategies were developed with input from young people participating in focus groups,” said Jeanette O’Connor-Shanley, Deputy Executive Director for Programs at ACR Health. “We add to that mix our background in prevention of transmission HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Our goal is equipping teens and their parents or caregivers with knowledge, skills, and access to services to prevent unintended pregnancy.”

*Continued on page 3*
Health Insurance: Repeal and Replace Threat is REAL

Being in the business of “creating healthy communities by opening doors to services that enhance the wellbeing of all,” as ACR Health’s mission statement declares, it is painful to watch Congress threatening to dismember the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This truly exceptional law that provided a pathway for more than two million New Yorkers to obtain health insurance is on the chopping block. Republicans promise to repeal it and, at some point, replace it with “something better.” What exactly will replace it, when, and how are unknown at this point.

The Affordable Care Act has changed the healthcare landscape in America and there is no way we can go back. According to Governor Cuomo:

- • Repeal of the Affordable Care Act would result in more than 2.7 million New Yorkers losing health coverage.
- • In the nine counties served by ACR Health, 128,439 people could lose insurance if ACA is repealed.
- • ACR Health has helped more than 30,000 people sign up for health insurance, thereby changing countless lives.

What benefit could there possibly be to Congress or the new president with millions losing their health insurance? Families that finally have coverage for a serious pre-existing condition could lose it; hospitals would be forced to, once again, treat the indigent for free; those without insurance might lose their primary care physician and thereby revert to using emergency rooms for basic care, hiking healthcare costs for all.

People need affordable insurance. I strongly advise that if you have health insurance, keep it current. Call us at 800.475.2430. ACR Health will be here to help you fin and maintain coverage.

In the meantime, we must take action – to stand up for our beliefs. Advocate to preserve affordable health coverage. Contact your elected official and speak your mind. I have and will continue to do so.

- In the North Country: Congresswoman Elise Stefanik at 315.782.3150.
- In the Mohawk Valley: Congresswoman Claudia Tenney at 888.216.0048.
- In Central New York, call Congressman John Katko at 315.423.5657.
- Statewide: U.S. Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (202.224.4451) and Chuck Schumer (202.224.6542) strongly support the Affordable Care Act – tell them how you feel as well.

If you have a story about the difference affordable insurance has made in your life, email us at PR@ACRHealth.org. We’d like to share your story.
“The Syracuse City School District is fortunate to be partnering with ACR Health to bring this program to our students who may have an increased risk of having an unintended pregnancy,” said Jaime Alicea, Interim Superintendent of Syracuse Schools. “ACR Health has a long track record of providing comprehensive and appropriate sexual health education in our community and we are confident this program will improve students’ overall health, well-being and development.”

ACR Health launched its first comprehensive sexual health education program targeting youth in 1992 in response to the rising rates of HIV infections in young people aged 13-24. We began providing targeted services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning youth in Syracuse in 1998 and, in 2006, opened the Syracuse Q Center, a standalone building and project that serves LGBTQ youth, their allies and families, and children of LGBTQ parents.

*Syracuse teen birth rates were twice that of Onondaga county teens overall with teen pregnancy rates ranging from 42.3 per 1,000 for the County to 107.7 per 1,000 in the City of Syracuse. Although Blacks and Hispanics represent less than 25% of the County’s population, they have significantly higher rates of pregnancy.

Adolescent pregnancy rates per 1000 by race/ethnicity:
- 65.6 - Black
- 53.3 - Hispanic
- 13.2 - Caucasian
(Onondaga County Health Department, 2014)

Adolescent pregnancy rates by age:
- 10-14 is 1.0, compared to 0.6 for NYS;
- 15-17 rate is 21.8, compared to 14.5 for NYS;
- 18-19 in the county is 55.5, compared to 47.6 for NYS
(NYSDOH, 2016)

“If you would like a calendar, call 800.475.2430 or email: events@ACRHealth.org and we will mail you one.

ACR Health’s annual report is a calendar for 2017. The cover of the calendar is an original piece by nationally known artist Amy E. Bartell, which depicts Q Center youth at Pride Day at the Great New York State Fair, with rainbow flag draped over their shoulders, and each raising a fist in determination and pride.

The legend “Courage” – is painted across the sky. That’s a good word to describe ACR Health. Courage is something this agency has always had plenty of – and it’s a good way to approach 2017, don’t you think?

Inside, the calendar contains important reminders about HIV testing days and agency programs as well as the dates of ACR Health events – a good way to keep up with our Development Department and enjoy yourself while supporting ACR Health.
December 1, World AIDS Day, is a time when we pause and reflect on AIDS – those who died, those who fought the battles for recognition and for medications to combat the killer disease.

World AIDS Day is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against AIDS; to show their support for those living with HIV; and to remember those who have died. ACR Health’s World AIDS Day events in Syracuse, Utica, and Watertown acted as springboards to release compelling evidence that the incurable and deadly disease can be contained.

In 2014, New York announced that it would “End AIDS by 2020,” by reducing the annual HIV infection count to 750 statewide. Indications of progress are:

- In 1997, 99 babies were born with HIV
- In 2015, no babies were born with HIV
- At the height of AIDS, NY had 14,000 new HIV cases each year
- In 2007, there were 4,211 new HIV cases
- In 2014, there were fewer than 2,500
- Between 2006 and 2014, the HIV infections dropped by 41%

There are three important steps to ending AIDS: Identifying persons with HIV who remain undiagnosed and linking them to health care; getting them on anti-viral medication to suppress HIV; and providing access to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for those at high risk.

“PrEP is the game changer,” said ACR Health Executive Director Wil Murtaugh. “We now have a daily pill that prevents HIV transmission. It’s 99% effective and it’s the real key to ending the epidemic.”

Staff and volunteers at ACR Health have been in the fight against HIV/AIDS for the past 34 years. “New York’s goal to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2020 renews and inspires us and we are “all in” to #endAIDS,” said Murtaugh.

Panels of the AIDS Quilt were displayed as ACR Health commemorated World AIDS Day, Thursday, December 1, 2016 with a morning service of Hope and Remembrance at Panasci Chapel at LeMoyne College in Syracuse.

ACR Health commemorated World AIDS Day with a service of Life and Remembrance of Friends and Loved Ones at Grace Episcopal Church, 6 Elizabeth Street, Utica, where opera singer Anthony Maida of New York City performed Hallelujah and Amazing Grace.

In Watertown, ACR Health commemorated World AIDS Day with a midday event at Jefferson Community College. Panels of the AIDS Quilt celebrating the lives of those lost to AIDS were on display at Indian River High School.

New York State leads the nation in the number of people living with diagnosed HIV/AIDS. Approximately 18% of AIDS diagnoses in the US have occurred in NYS.

- 202,341 New Yorkers have been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.
- 123,348 of them have died; and
- An estimated 123,100 individuals with HIV/AIDS are presently living in New York.
- In ACR Health’s nine-county service area, 3,681 people are living with HIV/AIDS.
Thank you, Holiday Angels

For a few heart-stopping hours in mid-November we thought we might ruin a perfect decade-long record of matching clients in need with an equal number of Holiday Angels willing to share holiday gifts. At 371, we had more clients (including family members) than ever before, but had depleted our list of Angels. With 74 people left un-served on our list who would go without gifts this Holiday Season, we sent out an emergency appeal that struck a chord with our community. You responded, you shopped, you shared, and we reached our target – to help all ACR Health clients in need.

“This is how we make the holidays meaningful,” one Angel said. “It’s how we acknowledge with gratitude all of the ‘plenty’ that surrounds our lives. We love being Holiday Angels.”

Director of Major Gifts, Fran Hradil said, “It was amazing to watch how the program unfolded so seamlessly – like clockwork. I was moved by the generosity and spirit of our community. I was so impressed how the basic human needs of those we serve were fulfilled.

ACR Health Deputy Executive Director of Operations, Carrie Portzline-Large, said “We are immensely grateful for the generosity of the Angels. Poverty is a constant companion for some of our clients and their families, who struggle financially year-round. They have very little for themselves or to give to their loved ones. Now, thanks to the Angels, they do.”

134 individuals and groups participated as Holiday Angels.

Amber Preston
Andreea & Damien Marquise
Anthony Adornato
Anthony McEachern
Aubry Panek
Becky Corbin
Beth Cefalu
Beth Linderman
Beth Maclean
Betty Williams
Bill Louer & Wil Murtaugh
Bob Ford
BNY Mellon
Carol & Julian Lanna
Carol Wolkendorfer
Carrie & Stacey Portzline-Large
Catherine Green
& Lambda Kappa Mu Sorority
Charles Panacci
Cheri Giancola
Cheryl Goodwin
Cheryl Lincoln-Lovely
Christy Tubbs & Syr VA Social
Work Dept.
Cindy Phillips Gordon Family
Michelle Duchano & Clifton-Fine
Cindy Phillips Gordon Family
Connie Palumb
Craig Donnelly
Cuba Scout Pack 620 & Randy Steffen
Cynthia Lambrinos
Dave Mevold & Janice McNamara
Deborah Hardy & Vivian
Derrickson
Diane Maziarz
Don Kils & Craig Lupini
Donna Scanlon
Elizabeth Jansen
Elizabeth Sinclair Cady
Ray Stoffel - Family of Janet Hours
Frances & Elizabeth Hradil
Gerald Mager
Gina Cuccio
Gloria & Ramon Becerra
Gracecyln Musci & Family
Helen Bobbette
Hilary Remington
Kristie Fuller & Indian River TATF
Cindy Squillace & ITC @
Central HS
Jack Condon & The Eventful
Group
Jack Pflan
Jackie Millard
Jackyn Grace
Jaggi Farrel & SOS North Syr.
Janice Harvey
Janice Saxton & SOS East Syr.
Jeanette O’Connor Shanley
Jennifer Lashley
Jennifer Plis & Old Navy Dewitt
Jessica Harney & Camden HS
Amnesty Club
Jessica Kordas & Old Navy Great
Northern
Joe Massie
Karen Teitzlaff
Karen Davenport & SCSD
Communications Office
Kate McKnelly
Kathleen De Moya
Kathy Miller
Kathy Zappala
Katie Reid
Kelly Johnson
Kenneth Hudson
Kevin & Paulette Quinn
Kim & Steve VanDuren
Kim Fox & My Teens for a Better
World
Kim Riepepp - Old Navy Utica
Krista Taskey & Design
Specialists, Inc.
Lee Ann LaVanch
Lenore Vaceckello
Linda LeBlanc
Lizbeth Salvatore & Oriskany
Central Schls
Lori Babcock
Lori Kaiser & Time Warner Cable News
Lori Perault
Louise Tyo
Lucinda Elliott
Lynne Elmer
Margaret Wicks
Martha Bruch
Marianne Higgins
Mary Ann Cilagero
Mary Doody
Mary Hughes-Hoistin
Mary Murphy & Denise Buford
Mary Santy
Matt Miceletti & Richard Mackin
Maureen Nosik
Megan Croft
Mike Jones & SOS Onond. Hill Ofc.
Mike Shleton
Moe Harrington O’Neill
Mr. & Mrs. Parment
Nancy & JoAnn Walker
Nancy Gardner
Nicole Weakfall & Colton-
Pierrpoint TATF
Nina Santiee & ATT&T
Paige Garney
Patricia Nolan & Family
Patriciea Barber
Hilary Davis & Q Center NNY
Rachel Kama & Lighthouse
of Love
Rachelle Lackette
Rick King
Ryan Barone & Family
Sally McSwen
Sandy Jarvis
Sandy Spencer-Florczyk
Sarah Bornmann & Assemblyman Brindisi
& Office
Shannon McAdam & SOS-Camillus Ofc.
Sharen Barboza
Sheri Eerto
Stacie Godwin
Stas Thompson
Susn Conklin
Susan Cook
Syr Gay & Lesbian Chours
Thomas Angiolillo
Tom & Nick Shires & Family
Trina Skeele
Wayne Saddaby & ESM HS Health
Classes
Wendy Fitzgerald, Belinda Felder &
Nicole Gibbon
Westhill HS TATF - D. D’Angelo
Will Sadlerth
ACR Health has appointed Julia LaVere to the newly created position of Assistant Director of Prevention Services: Syringe Exchange Programs. Ms. LaVere is in charge of syringe exchange efforts and Narcan (naloxone) Trainings throughout ACR Health’s nine-county service area. Her duties include overseeing fixed syringe exchange sites in Syracuse and Utica (with a Watertown location to be added soon), a mobile unit, voucher programs in Syracuse and Utica, and “backpack peers” across ACR Health’s nine-county service area.

Ms. LaVere has worked with ACR Health’s Prevention Services since 2012, starting as a Prevention Health Advocate, becoming the supervisor of the Criminal Justice Initiative, and was most recently promoted to Community Prevention Coordinator for the North Country.

“I firmly believe in the ACR Health value of respect for people and community. We are not here to judge – we are here to promote public health; to prevent the spread of HIV and hepatitis C through use of clean and sterile syringes,” said Ms. LaVere.

As ACR Health grows and diversifies in the services we deliver, it is critical that we cultivate and maintain collaborative relationships with residents of the North Country,” said ACR Health Executive Director, Wil Murtaugh. “Julia’s hard work in the field of substance abuse and harm reduction includes working closely with injection drug users. She has demonstrated the ability to establish trust and work through challenges to better health outcomes.”

K. Daniel Reed and Janae Velardi have been promoted to the positions of Community Prevention Coordinator for Central New York and the Mohawk Valley respectively. As Community Prevention Coordinators, Reed and Velardi will play a key role in implementing New York State’s plan to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2020.

Among their tasks, Velardi and Reed will coordinate community-focused events and meetings that will bring the best of HIV prevention services, such as National HIV Testing Day, to their communities. They will collaborate and maintain relationships with other organizations to meet community needs and to ensure that services are not duplicated.

ACR Health’s Community Prevention Coordinators will provide direct day-to-day supervision of staff, deliver services including: Linkage and Navigation, testing services, individual and group interventions, and peer training/supervision.

“With more than four years of knowledge as a Prevention Health Advocate, K. Daniel Reed has been a resource for the Prevention Department, his peers, and his clients,” said Erin Bortel, Director of Prevention for ACR Health. “Simply stated, he is an asset to our organization and the field of public health.”

“Janae Velardi hit the ground running in the Mohawk Valley where, as a Prevention Health Advocate for the Communities of Color and Substance programs, she quickly established strong relationships with community partners working for our common goals,” said Bortel. “I am excited to announce her promotion to Community Prevention Coordinator.”

Please join us in congratulating Janae and Daniel on all their hard work!
Two upcoming ACR Health events offer a great opportunity for some lively winter merriment. Up first the 7th Annual Sled for RED, the family-friendly Cardboard Sledding Derby, is Saturday, February 11 at Four Seasons Golf & Ski Center in Fayetteville. This year we’ve added CNY’s Best Wintry Drink to the mix to bring competition inside the heated tent to complement the action out on the slopes.

Meet 95X “Morning Mess” celebrities and Sled for RED emcees Marty and Shannon, seen here live on the air with ACR Health’s Director of Events and Business Development, Anthony McEachern, and Development Associate Will Sudderth on a recent Friday morning getting the word out for Sled for RED. “Sled for RED embraces and celebrates our winter season. Let’s have fun while we raise money for ACR Health and the thousands of people we serve,” said Sudderth.

The fun continues with a Tubing Party ($15) and food and drink Sampling ($10, $5 for kids 11 and under). To enter the Wintry Drink competition or the Cardboard Sledding Derby, teams must fundraise a minimum of $250. Learn more or register: ACRHealth.org/events.

Central New York’s most glamorous event, returns for another celebrated romp down the runway on Sunday, February 19. Named last year’s “Non-Profit Fundraising Event of the Year” by the CNY Business Journal, BLOWOUT 2017 FreeForm, presented by Goldwell NY, pits beauty salons head to head in a fantasy hair show on the Main Stage at the Landmark Theatre in downtown Syracuse.

Guest host, Michael Benny will again preside over the competition as professional hair and makeup artists create fantasy hairstyles and send their models strutting down the runway across the main stage, to compete for cash, prizes, and bragging rights.

“BLOWOUT is a great team building challenge and an opportunity for stylists to be creative,” said Maureen Harrington O’Neill, ACR Health’s Q Center Development Manager. “It’s also our way to showcase primarily women-owned businesses that give back to their community.”

There still time to compete and make your beauty mark on the local scene. Contact Moe at 315.475.2430 or moneill@ACRHealth.org.

To buy tickets: ACRHealth.org/events.

All proceeds from BLOWOUT, presented by Goldwell NY, benefit the Q Center. Proceeds from Sled for RED will support ACR Health’s youth prevention programs and emergency client needs. For more information or to register for either or both events, call 800.475.2430 or go to ACRHealth.org
ACR Health offers its services to anyone without discrimination based on age, race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, political affiliation marital status, handicapped status, or mode of transmission.

ACR Health is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Follow us on:

Supported by:

Non-Pro

fit Or
g.

This newsletter is printed with soy ink.

If you wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter: information@ACRHealth.org or 800.475.2430.