The Oneida County Health Department has issued an alert following a 200% increase in early syphilis cases in the county in 2018. Of particular concern: three of the cases were among women. In 2017, Oneida County had no new syphilis cases among women.

Oneida County Health officials are advising all medical providers to screen patients for syphilis. Women who are planning to become pregnant should be tested and (if needed) treated before pregnancy.

“Syphilis is a highly contagious sexual infection that can cause serious health problems if left untreated,” ACR Health’s John Arcaro, Director of Community Initiatives told reporters at a press conference. Syphilis is spread through contact with a sore during oral, vaginal, and anal sex. You are at risk for syphilis if you have unprotected sex, sex with multiple partners, or if you are a man who has sex with men.

“If you are experiencing symptoms like firm round sores, in or around your mouth, anus, and genitals; a faint to prominent rough reddish brown rash on your torso, palms of your hands, or bottom of your feet accompanied by a fever, headaches, and sore throat you should make an appointment to get tested,” Arcaro said.

ACR Health tests for Syphilis, HIV, Gonorrhea, Chlamydia, and Hepatitis C. Our syphilis test is a rapid antibody test that provides results in as little as 10 minutes. If you are positive, we’ll help seamlessly navigate you into confirmatory testing and treatment.

Call 315.475.2430 to schedule a test; email testing@ACRHealth.org; or simply walk in to our offices in Utica at 287 Genesee Street and ask to be tested. Testing is also available at various sites in the community; on our mobile unit; and at ACR Health offices throughout our service area.

In New York State, diagnoses of congenital syphilis (syphilis passed from mother to child during pregnancy) increased 167% in 2017. Congenital syphilis can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, or death shortly after birth.

The CDC reports a sharp increase in the number of babies born with syphilis in the United States. Up to 40% of babies born to women with untreated syphilis may be stillborn or die from the infection as a newborn.
HEPATITIS C IS AN EPIDEMIC

We’ve heard for some time now about Baby Boomers and hepatitis C. Be aware that a new hepatitis C epidemic has hit the local scene, and it is affecting not the old, but young people ages 18-30. This hepatitis C outbreak is being fueled by opioid use. According to the New York State Department of Health, 80% of new HCV infections are among people who inject drugs.

- Hepatitis C infections have tripled nationwide since 2010 (CDC)
- The greatest increases are among young people, 20-29
- In CNY the rate of HCV cases is up 55% since 2012 – higher than any other upstate region
- In Onondaga County between 2012-2016, HCV rates were higher than the rest of the State; 105.3 (Onondaga); 73.9 (NYS)

Last year, when Governor Cuomo announced a hepatitis C comprehensive elimination strategy, we knew what to expect. As with the Campaign to End AIDS by 2020, the governor began investing in programs to test, educate, and treat individuals with hepatitis C.

The priority population for HCV testing is injection drug users. Through our Syringe Exchanges and our Drug User Health Hub, we have relationships with thousands of people who inject drugs, so that was where our HCV testing program started.

In November-December 2018, our HCV Patient Navigator tested 18 individuals who inject drugs but did not know if they had hepatitis C. Of the 18, 10 tested positive. Overall, the Navigator worked with 47 clients who inject drugs; 39 of them are positive for hepatitis C. All are in the process of taking the next steps to start treatment. One individual had previously been successfully treated for HCV but had become re-infected.

Hepatitis C has gained a deadly foothold on America. In 2007, more people died from hepatitis C than from HIV/AIDS; and by 2013, more people died of HCV related causes than the combined number of deaths from 60 other infectious diseases.

These numbers are astonishing to me. The governor is right: this Hepatitis C epidemic must be stopped. It is not enough for injection drug users to use a clean syringe every time they shoot up. They must not share any part of drug paraphernalia, cookers, cotton balls or the substance being injected. If you use injection drugs, use responsibly. Come to ACR Health for a supply of sterile needles and other injection materials.

Reach out to us and get tested for Hepatitis C. If you have it, we can treat it. 315.475.2430

Wil Murtaugh
NewsChannel 9 Chief Meteorologist Jim Teske is plotting a big comeback at ACR Health’s upcoming Sled for RED. Last year, Teske finished well down the pack with a time of 30.91 seconds (the top sled clocked in at 12.81).

This year, Teske’s Storm Team is entering three sleds and is talking aerodynamic styling – at least in the sled Teske is piloting. “I think the problem last year was weight distribution. I’m sitting in the back and we need more weight in the front,” said Teske. “I spent the entire heat moving down the hill backwards.” Teske hopes his prediction of a win on the slopes is his most accurate forecast of the year.

The 9th Annual Sled for RED Cardboard Sledding Derby is at Four Seasons Golf & Ski Center in Fayetteville at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 2, 2019. *NEW THIS YEAR* A family marshmallow-roasting/S’mores-making fire pit area sponsored by Wegmans.

A Snow Tubing Party follows the Derby at a reduced cost of $15 per person; inside the heated tent, enjoy warm beverages, Food and Beer Sampling for $10 per person; $5 for ages 10 and younger.

For adults: The Best Wintry Drink competition challenges area bars and restaurants to design a new winter libation. Bells Brewery will sample some seasonal favorites from behind a custom-made ICE BAR.

All proceeds from Sled for RED support ACR Health’s mission to create healthy communities by stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS; leading the charge for LGBTQ Equality; and the fight against addiction and poverty.

For more information or to register, call 315.475.2430 or visit ACRHealth.org.

World AIDS Day Observed

2018 marked the 30th anniversary of the first World AIDS Day on December 1, 1988. World AIDS Day is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against AIDS; show their support for those living with HIV; and to remember those who have died.

ACR Health commemorated World AIDS Day, Friday, November 30th with events in Syracuse, Utica, and in Watertown where members of the Indian River Drama Club displayed panels of the AIDS Quilt at a service of Hope and Remembrance at Indian River High School Theatre of Performing Arts in Jefferson County.

“The first step to preventing the spread of HIV is knowing your status, being tested to see if you have HIV,” said ACR Health Executive Director, Wil Murtaugh. “If you have HIV we will link you to care and get you virally suppressed so you cannot spread HIV to your partners. If you don’t have HIV, ACR Health will help you stay that way.” For more information or to arrange an HIV test, call 315.475.2430.
Dear Holiday Angels,

Thank you so much for participating in the 2018 Holiday Angel program! You helped make an enormous difference in the lives of the people and families ACR Health serves. Many who use our services come to us with serious conditions like HIV/AIDS, without jobs or health insurance, unstable housing, a lot of fear, and are in fragile health. While we are happy to say that ACR Health addresses many basic needs, it is you, Holiday Angel, who satisfies other basic human needs, like the desire to be valued as part of a larger community.

You created many heartwarming memories this year through ACR Health’s Holiday Angel program. You, as well as other individuals, community and church groups, and companies joined in to make this year’s program a magnificent success. Together, we made the holiday brighter for more than 215 adults and youth, throughout our nine-county region. This would not have happened without your kindness.

Many thanks for your generosity and for lifting the spirits of families who needed an Angel’s helping hand during the holiday season.

Best Wishes for the New Year,
Frances B. Hradil, Director of Major Gifts

Thank you for your kindness

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Holiday Angels
Alisha and John Graf
Michelle Rost
Amanda White
Aline Bertrand
Ann Hotchkiss
Audra Albright
Becky Corbin
Beth Linderman
Beth Machin
Bill Louie and Wil Murtaugh
BNY Mellon, Jennifer Woodman
Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, Inc.
Carol Sween
Carrie and Stacey Portzline-Large
Charles Pannaci
Christy Tubbs and The VA
Cindy Phillips-Gordon
Connie Pulumb
Dale Pierce
Deborah Hardy and Vivian Derrickson
Donald and Barbara Caughlin
Elizabeth J. Murtaugh
Elizabeth Janison
Elizabeth Sinclair Cady
Eventful Conferences
Frances and Liz Hradil, & David Farrell
Fringe Salon
Gloria and Ramon Beccerra
Ginger Ruddock
Homer Family
Jane Guiles
Jean Kessner
Jeannine Murtaugh Reath
Jerry Magaz
Jessica Harney, Camden High School
Amnesty Club
Joan Kennedy
John Zwir
Julie Besanson Noboa
K. Dale Pierce
Kate Ingerson
Kate McElroy
Kathie Liberatos
Kathleen De Maya
Kathryn Nickerson
Kathy Miller
Kathy Miller & David Friedman
Kenneth Hudson
Kim Fox, Oneida High School
Krista Taskey, Design Specialists, Inc.
Kristie Fuller, Indian River High School
Warriors Fight AIDS
Lighthouse of Love
Linda Lalliance
Linda Loomis
Louise Tyo
Margaret Gioia
Margaret Wicks
Mary Ann Gladysz
Mary Doody
Mary Hunter
Mary Jane O’Connor
Matt Micheletti and Richard Mackin
Maureen Nolik, OCRDA
Michelle Rost, ACC Technical Services
Musci Family
Nancy & Martin Levine
Nancy Gardner
Nancy Walker
Old Navy Dewitt
Old Navy Great Northern Mall
Pat Catalano
Patricia Barber
Patty Nolan
Pitcher Hill Community Church
Ray and Denise Van Cuyck
Ray Stoffel
Richard Bunce
Rick King
Robert Case and Family
Rosanna Fiore (in memory of John Fiore)
Sally McSween and Mary Cornellius
Sandy and Chuck Spencer-Florczyk
Sarah Norcross
SEFCU
Sharon Barboza
Sharon Ranthje
Steve Wagner
Syracuse Gay and Lesbian Chorus
Terry Deegan
The Hartford
Thea Van Der Ven
TSgt Tim and Lindsay McClelland, US Air Force
Tom Angiolillo
Victoria Schermerhorn
Wendy Powers
William Blake
A New Kind of Justice: Intervene and Treat Addiction

ACR Health was front and center on January 3 as Syracuse City Court officials opened a new court, the Court for Addiction, Recovery, and Education (CARE), which is designed to divert individuals arrested for opioid use away from jail and into treatment as soon as possible.

The CARE court will target high-risk individuals with opioid use disorders and offer immediate intervention and stabilization, including access to medication for addiction treatment. ACR Health personnel will work directly with individuals diverted to the court. “We are proud to participate in this progressive and much needed intervention,” said ACR Health Executive Director, Wil Murtaugh. “As an agency who has seen Harm Reduction work to decrease overdose rates and increase health and recovery, this court will provide another opportunity to individuals to engage in a treatment model that is evidence-based and patient-centered.”

Those arrested in connection with opioids in the city are now screened for opioid use and referred to the CARE Court program if they are appropriate candidates who have been charged with misdemeanors or non-violent felonies. Criminal cases will be put on hold while defendants are in addiction treatment. ACR Health will provide rapid engagement in evidence-based treatment and intensive case management.

Syracuse City Court Judge Rory McMahon will oversee the court, which will put treatment first, before prosecution. While defendants are in opioid addiction treatment they will be required to go to court every day to meet with Judge McMahon. He volunteered to oversee the new program because of an opioid overdose death in his own family. He said his cousin who died two years ago was a talented athlete who “couldn’t kick the habit no matter what he did.”

“Seeing the pain on his parents’ faces is something I will never forget. That’s why I am so energetic about this.”

Judge Rory McMahon

Opioids are a highly addictive class of drugs that include prescription painkillers like Oxycodone and illegal street drugs such as heroin and fentanyl. ACR Health has extensive Harm Reduction programs to help individuals and families impacted by drug use. Our Syringe Exchange Program reduces the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C; our Drug User Health Hub provides acute medical care and Medication Assisted Therapy; ACR Health’s Narcan program has trained thousands of individuals how to reverse an opioid overdose. All of our services are free.
ACR Health has named Stephen Simone the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) Program Supervisor for the agency’s Youth Division. As Program Supervisor, Simone oversees Q Center programming in Syracuse, Utica, and Watertown, as well as the Rapid Rehousing program for LGBTQ Youth, and the Y MSM (Young Men who have Sex with Men) program.

Simone has been with ACR Health since 2016, originally hired as an HIV tester. He worked in the Young Men’s Project and received a first-ever $150,000 grant to target Y MSM, ages 13-29, to combat new HIV infections.

The Young Men’s Project has greatly increased ACR Health’s ability to reach Y MSM with access to HIV/STD testing and other prevention services like PrEP (a daily drug that prevents HIV infections with 99% effectiveness.) The Young Men’s Project serves 150 young men through testing for HIV, Hepatitis, and STDs; provide youth-friendly services and a safe space.

“Stephen is an incredible asset to the Youth Services Department at ACR Health,” said Marissa Rice, Director of Youth Services. “His passion and knowledge surrounding the LGBTQ+ community, especially individuals experiencing barriers to health and well-being, are apparent in everything he does. We are so pleased to have him in this role!”

Simone graduated from Cazenovia College in 2010 with a BS in Psychology.

“His passion and knowledge surrounding the LGBTQ+ community, especially individuals experiencing barriers to health and well-being, are apparent in everything he does. We are so pleased to have him in this role!”

Eddie Future Greatness Awards
Winners for Fall 2018 awards are:

Nina Onoff attended the Q Center Central New York beginning in 2012. Associate’s degree in hand, she is now a junior majoring in psychology at SUNY Stony Brook.

“I have never received outside support for my education before. I am honored that I have received an Eddie Award!

“Equality means having the freedom to be wholly, unapologetically you. It’s knowing that you can thrive not in spite of yourself, but because of who you are. It’s a feeling everyone should know and grow from.”

Kenny Millson, who attended Q Center Mohawk Valley, is a first year student at Gettysburg College majoring in music. He plays a number of instruments, his favorite being the trumpet.

“I am reminded that the Q Center was one of my favorite parts of the week and my time there made it easier to make friends in college. I am incredibly grateful to be able to have received this education award. This money is going to be extremely helpful to me. I am going to use this money to help offset tuition costs for next semester.”

The $500 Eddie “Future Greatness” award supports and promotes higher education. This award is dedicated to helping youth with the desire and ambition to succeed. It is available to all LGBTQ youth and their allies, 16-26, who are registered in an accredited post-secondary institution. Four $500 awards are given each year: two in the Spring semester (deadline to apply is March 16th) and two in the Fall semester (deadline September 16th).

To apply: ACRHealth.org/youth/Eddie.
What’s Your New Year’s Resolution?

If you want to make a difference in people’s lives, come volunteer at ACR Health!

Dawn Haskins started volunteering in 1994, spending her time with us while she waited to get into nursing school. The program wanted individuals to volunteer while they waited for admission. Dawn chose AIDS Community Resources, now ACR Health, specifically because no one else would. Other nursing students were afraid of AIDS and not willing to be near persons that were infected. Dawn thought if everyone acted this way then she should show her children how to be different from others and to care for all people equally.

Dawn had worked at Syracuse Developmental Center when her son was young, so he was familiar with people and children with disabilities. Dawn saw volunteering with her children as an integral part of their education. She was a person who cheerfully accepted assignments and attacked them with enthusiasm. Due to her volunteer time in ACR Health, Dawn immediately got involved with the AIDS Walk/Run and other after-hours events with her children in tow. Devon, the youngest was 4 years old. There was always a volunteer task that could be done even at 4 years of age. As a single mom, she incorporated a work ethic, generosity, and community in all of her children by her example. Dawn was typically coming to the AIDS Walk/Run after finishing the overnight shift.

Dawn has definitely accomplished her objective of teaching her children to care for everyone equally and to not be afraid. Jeremy, Danielle, and Devon follow their Mom’s lead of always being personable, friendly, outgoing, and hardworking. They made friends with people living with HIV/AIDS, and volunteer in memory of friends that have passed away.

As for why they come back each year, in Dawn’s words: “That part is easy. The people are the best, be they staff, volunteer, runners, or just there to cheer on others. We have made many friends and look forward to this event every year. Not all of the family makes it each year because life happens, but each child of mine that can make it does and we always have the best time. Volunteering at ACR Health been a Family Affair.”

Dawn Haskins and her family have invested 23 years of consistent volunteer support to the AIDS Walk/Run Hospitality Tent. You can volunteer for a few hours, a few months, or a few years. We’d love to have you!

Volunteer@ACRHealth.org or call for Mary Doody at 315.475.2430. Thank you!
ACR Health offers its services 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:

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 31, 2019 - Thursday
Sled for RED Pre-party
Come enjoy great BBQ, celebrity bartenders, live music, and a sneak peek of Limp Lizard’s surprise cocktail in the Best Wintry Drink Competition at Sled for RED. Beginning at 5:00 p.m. at Limp Lizard in Western Lights.

February 2, 2019 - Saturday
9th Annual Sled for RED
Cardboard Sledding Derby, Tubing, and Food and Drink Sampling at Four Seasons Golf and Ski Resort, beginning at 4:00 p.m.

April 28, 2019 - Sunday
21st Annual Hike for Life
Join us at SUNY Polytechnic Institute in Utica, for a fun event featuring games, lively festivities, and prizes. The Hike for Life begins at 1:00 p.m.

June 2, 2019 - Sunday
27th Annual AIDS Walk/Run - 5K
Central New York’s oldest and most successful AIDS fundraiser begins at 10:00 a.m. at Beaver Lake Nature Center, Baldwinsville.

All proceeds support ACR Health’s mission to create healthy communities by stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS; leading the charge for LGBTQ equality; and the fight against addiction and poverty.

Q CENTERS FOR LGBTQ YOUTH
Resources throughout Central, Northern, and Mohawk Valley regions. For information call 800.475.2430 or email QCcenter@ACRHealth.org
Group times listed ACRHealth.org/youth

TESTING SERVICES
HIV, gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, and Hepatitis C. Testing@ACRHealth.org

NARCAN TRAINING
Monthly trainings at ACR Health offices. Appointments: Narcan@ACRHealth.org

SYRINGE EXCHANGES
• Syracuse: 637 West Genesee Street and Outreach Van at corner of Dudley and Fitch Streets
• Utica: 287 Genesee Street
• Watertown: 135 Franklin Street
SEP@ACRHealth.org

DRUG USER HEALTH HUB
Provides onsite access to acute medical care, medication assisted therapy, and linkage to additional medical resources.

HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAMS
Health insurance enrollment and advocacy. Navigator@ACRHealth.org

GET INVOLVED. JOIN THE TEAM.
Current positions listed at ACRHealth.org/careers.
For more information on all programs or if you wish to unsubscribe from the newsletter:
information@ACRHealth.org or 800.475.2430