

Co-County Wellness Services Board of Director's Meeting July 26, 2011
Annual Report of Board President

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of you for your service to Co-County Wellness Services and begin by asking each of you to pause and consider your life. Picture your friends and perhaps members of your family as they were in their twenties, thirties and forties. They are dynamic, talented, gifted people in the prime of their lives, contributing to the world around them, on the cusp of greatness. Now picture a situation where, without warning, those who you know and love become sick with life threatening illness that no one can explain. Imagine their deaths, often times painful and many times lonely. Think about the feeling of rejection, the absence of touch, the loss of love and life and one can begin to understand the beginnings of the most powerful pandemic to ever strike the human race. Consider the indescribable sadness of burying one friend after another, the lives lost and potential never realized. The fight against this disease no known as AIDS began 30 years ago.

This organization was born from the pain and fear and loss of those who experienced it the lives that were lost to the disease. This agency was formed by deeply caring and very courageous activists to do something - anything to support those whose lives were affected by HIV and AIDS.

Co-County Wellness Services bears little resemblance to that organization that was started so many years ago and AIDS is very different than it was back then. Gone are the days of panic, poor information, societal ignorance and gross intolerance towards the disease and those whose lives were touched by it.

Although the cure continues to elude, HIV, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, today these are perhaps some of the best understood of all diseases. Treatments have evolved rapidly, the educational strategies are well developed, prevention information is consistently available and accurate, and the disease has begun to be perceived as a chronic health concern that minimally affects longevity.

Yet within the ongoing evolution of the disease and this organization, some key facts remain. Our collective memory is sometimes short and despite education, prevention strategies, media attention and personal knowledge, people can and do develop HIV, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. And although lives given up to the disease are thankfully fewer than they once were, it does kill, it does ruin lives, people do face discrimination, rejection happens, and loneliness, isolation and loss can and do occur.

CCWS was organized to address and support the needs of people with HIV, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and as long as these health concerns continue as a part of our community, our mission continues. Our work is differently than the initial focus when CCWS was created, yet remains similar in so many ways.

While we all wish that we could preside over the ceremony where the doors of CCWS are locked forever. But the fact is we can't as long as need exists. The people we serve and the disease itself dictate require that we be here and long as they do, we will be here to help. On this thirtieth anniversary of HIV and AIDS, I encourage each of you to rededicate yourself to the mission of CCWS. Take a moment to reflect on what life means for those we serve and those who need us. Know that what this agency does matter in ways that deeply affect the people we serve and our community in general. This board oversees the magnificent work of a very talented and deeply committed staff as they go about the day to day business of supporting and changing lives, and making our community a healthier and better place to live, learn, work and play. Please work to help our community know us and to understand and value our work. Be angry that there is no cure after these long thirty years, but take pride that we are here to support and enhance the quality of the lived for those we serve. Our work continues to be noble, worthwhile and very much needed.

Respectfully Submitted by: Timothy C. Greusel