

AIDS Community Awareness Project (ACAP)

Rick Wold

The AIDS Community Awareness Project (ACAP), which has been serving the Caledonia and Southern Essex county area for five years as a volunteer non-profit AIDS service organization, decided at a recent meeting to incorporate and elect officers and a board of directors. ACAP will continue to function as a non-profit AIDS organization, of which there are currently nine in the state of Vermont. The officers elected were Darlene Newpher, head of the local Department of Health in St. Johnsbury as President, Kathy Goslant, community educator with Planned Parenthood of Northern New England as Vice President, Anne Coulter, a community member as Secretary, and Rick Wold, Program Director of WNKV-FM in St. Johnsbury as Treasurer. Other board members include: Tonya Howard, Ellie Russell, the Rev. V. Mitchell Hay, Marilyn Magnus, Marcia Eliot, the Rev. Howard Boardman and Travis Randall.

ACAP helps people in the Northeast Kingdom with HIV/AIDS through support group meetings, individual support, a buddy program, and non-medical case management which includes help when and if needed with transportation, information and referrals, with the Social Security Administration and at home. ACAP also is very involved with community education and will go to local schools, church groups, service organizations, etc., to provide information on HIV/AIDS. Vice President Kathy Goslant said she is "delighted with the direction that ACAP is taking to provide services to people who are HIV+ and living with AIDS in the Northeast Kingdom. One of the hardest things People living with AIDS experience is the isolation and the need to talk to someone who understands."

The two support groups that ACAP is affiliated with are completely safe and confidential. The one for people with HIV/AIDS is held on the second and fourth Mondays of the month in St. Johnsbury. The second, sponsored by the Northeast Kingdom AIDS Coalition, is for family, friends and loved ones of people with AIDS is held on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month. For information about either support group call Kathy at 748-8194 (days), or 748-3391 (evenings).

ACAP has recently contracted with two people to run the support group meetings. One is Marilyn McEnery, a local nurse

practitioner who has a Masters in Social Work. McEnery said, "The purpose of the support group is to provide a place where people who are HIV+ or living with AIDS can come together. There is a feeling of caring which helps decrease isolation. It is a place where people can feel free to express themselves concerning the impact of this diagnosis and life threatening illness on their lives." She can be contacted at 684-3698. Robert Wing, a local social worker, is co-facilitator of the support groups.

By incorporating as a non-profit organization, ACAP is making a further commitment to the community it serves and will be making greater strides in AIDS education throughout the North-

east Kingdom. Although ACAP has been for years a non-profit organization dealing primarily with education, it is now able to focus more on direct service to people in the community, especially those with HIV/AIDS. As one HIV+ person said, "You aren't immune to this virus. Be careful, get educated and please support those of us who are HIV+."

Interested community members are always encouraged to come to meetings held on the first Monday of every month at Caledonia Home Health, to find out how they can become involved. For more information call 748-8116 (Caledonia Home Health) or the Vermont AIDS Hotline at 1-800-882-AIDS (1-800-882-2437). ▼

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