The theme of this year’s World AIDS Day is “AIDS: Men Make A Difference.”

One can make many interpretations of this statement. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) who lead World AIDS Day, state that over 70% of HIV infections worldwide occur through sex between men and women, 10% through men having sex with men and 5% place in people who inject drugs, four-fifths of whom are men. They therefore want to “engage men as partners in fighting AIDS” and thus change the course of the epidemic.

This certainly is sound advice that we at the Pitt Men's Study have been advocating for years. But another interpretation that stands out to me is that you, as a volunteer male subject in our Study, have already made a huge difference in this epidemic. How so? By your unselfish and incredible concern and care for your friends, lovers and community, and yes, for yourself.

This is not a simple display of altruism that comes, for example, from donating funds to a good and deserving AIDS organization. This is the much greater sacrifice of giving your precious time and energy, and of course lots of blood, twice a year and sometimes more often to our Study.

I am truly humbled when I review the results of our Study on men who have been caring and giving for so many years. The most striking data show long lines on a graph representing the time when an HIV-infected volunteer started in the Study, usually back in 1984 or 1985, with a steady loss of CD4 T cells and rise in viral load over many years, until he developed AIDS and died in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Some of the other courses of infection were fortunately less severe, and these men are now “long term survivors” still active in our study.

And now we see the lines on the graph reversing directions, as CD4 T cell numbers increase and viral load decreases due to potent antiviral drugs that prevent AIDS. What a dramatic change this has been, and one that gives such hope for the future.

So here we are in year 2000, taking these frozen serum and blood cells from storage and using them to understand how this virus caused this disease, or failed to lead to AIDS. Samples from 1984, 1985 ... 1991 ... 1994 ... 1998 ... 2000. It is a fact that the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study, of which the Pitt Men's Study is one of only four

Special Edition in Memory of Ric Witt
clinical sites, has published over 700 scientific reports using these blood samples and the information gathered at each clinic visit. This is the best way for scientists to solve the mysteries of this virus, and has helped lead to the development of better treatments, and eventually to a vaccine for HIV.

The only way we can hope to repay you for this sacrifice is to keep using your samples and data in our fight for a cure and vaccine. In this way, you truly will keep making a "difference" for years to come.

WORLD AIDS DAY 2000

World AIDS Day 2000 marks the 13th Annual Commemoration for the Pitt Men’s Study. This non-denominational church service is offered each year for those who want to remember friends and loved ones who have died of AIDS, and all of those affected by this pandemic. This year’s service is on November 30th, and will be at Calvary Episcopal Church on the corner of Shady Avenue and Walnut Street, Shadyside. The service will begin at 7:00 pm and a reception and Quilt dedication will follow the service.

The theme for this year’s World AIDS Day is AIDS — Men Make A Difference. This broad call to action challenges men (heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual) to take leadership in addressing the crisis of HIV/AIDS. This theme initiates campaigns around the world to involve both men and women more fully in the effort against AIDS and to bring about much needed focus on men in national responses to the epidemic.

UNAIDS reports, “Part of the effort to curb the AIDS epidemic must include challenging harmful concepts of masculinity and changing many commonly-held attitudes and behaviors, including the way men view risk and how boys are socialized to become men. Focusing this campaign on men also acknowledges the fact that men are often less likely to seek health care than women. Boys are brought up to believe that ‘real men don’t get sick’, and often see themselves as invulnerable to illness or risk. This is reflected in the under-use of health services for men. Greater attention must be given to the health needs of men, including those living with HIV and AIDS.” Although this theme focuses on men, it does not exclude women; in fact, UNAIDS encourages gender awareness and sensitivity, and this campaign is designed to provide material for national and local organizations to create their own campaigns based on Men Make A Difference, which they will use to respond to their own local priorities.

Please join us on the eve of World AIDS Day as we remember and celebrate the countless lives who have gone before us. If you plan on attending this service and have questions or special needs, please contact Matthew Moyer at 412-624-5508, so special arrangements can be made.

WHY THE THEMES FOR WORLD AIDS DAY?

Digging through the PMS archives, I found programs from past commemoration services for World AIDS Day. Each year there is a global theme encouraging special observances internationally, on or near December 1st. Each year since 1988, the World Health Organization (WHO), and Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) select a theme to motivate people and communities to speak out on issues and to educate one another. These themes provide ways to come
together in support of preventing and stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS.

On September 5, 1986, under the coordination of the Reverend Louis F. Kavar, and the Metropolitan Community Church, the Pitt Men's Study held an AIDS Vigil of Prayer. This allowed the many people suffering from the loss of loved ones, as well as those living with HIV/AIDS, to come together for prayer and support. Each year since, we have carried on this annual tradition of allowing people of all denominations to come together for worship. Local spiritual representatives and long-time supporters of HIV research volunteer each year in the Pitt Men's Study Commemoration.

Since 1988, the Pitt Men's Study has held commemorations at various churches and synagogues in Pittsburgh, in light of the annual World AIDS Day themes. A few hundred people participate in the service each year, including spiritual representatives from many different denominations and from around the area. Special readings and personal perspectives are presented each year. Woven throughout the service are performances by local artists, dancers, singers, and choirs.

The Pitt Men's Study, each year, has been dedicated in providing this commemoration for all of the volunteers in our local Study, as well as, the entire community who are in support of HIV prevention and who have been personally affected by HIV/AIDS. Thanks to all of the churches and synagogues, spiritual representatives and participants who continue to dedicate their time and effort supporting those living with HIV/AIDS and remembering those who have gone.

THEMES:

1988 – A World United Against AIDS
Calvary Episcopal Church

1989 – Our Lives, Our World – Let's Take Care of Each Other
Calvary Episcopal Church

1990 – Women and AIDS
Calvary Episcopal Church

1991 – Sharing the Challenge
Calvary Episcopal Church

1992 – AIDS: A Community Commitment
Calvary Episcopal Church

1993 – Time to Act
Calvary Episcopal Church

1994 – AIDS and the Family
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church

1995 – Shared Rights Shared Responsibilities
First United Methodist Church

1996 – One World One Hope
First United Methodist Church

1997 – Children Living in a World with AIDS
Temple Sinai

1998 – Be a Force for Change
St. Paul's Cathedral

1999 – AIDS: End the Silence. Listen, Learn, Live
Third Presbyterian Church

2000 – AIDS: Men Make a Difference
Calvary Episcopal Church

Spiritual Representatives & Participants:

Paul Alarcon, Michael Anderson, Roger Anderson, Rev. Margaret Austin, Freddie Bainbridge, Sylvia Barksdale, Rodger Beatty, Jon Benfer, Barbara Benvin, Rev. James Bishop, John Bogaard, William Buchanan,

(We apologize to those we may have forgotten on the above list)

CHUCK LOCY
REST IN PEACE

We recently learned that Chuck Locy died in Pittsburgh earlier this fall. Chuck, the former owner of the Crossover, died from cancer. In typical fashion, Chuck had told his friends that he was in remission when, in fact, he was not. Until the last weeks of his life he continued to work in his garden and to help his old friend Lucky prepare food for the Sunday buffet.

Chuck was a strong supporter of the Pitt Men's Study. He worked hard to recruit men into the study and would often stop the music at the Crossover to give a pitch for people to join the study. On occasion he would give a free drink to anyone who joined the study. Under Locy, the Crossover produced some memorable theatrical moments. How can one forget Chuck playing the Wizard and Jerry Stoner playing the Good Witch Glenda. Chuck, we will miss you.

PERSONAL
PERSPECTIVES FROM
WORLD AIDS DAY
PARTICIPANTS

Mr. August "Buzz" Pusateri

I became involved with the Pitt Men's Study at the very beginning and have been both a volunteer and a member of the Community Advisory Board (CAB) of the Study serving as Co-Chair for over 16 years.

The study has been an important part of my life since I am a person living with AIDS. It was through the Study that I
first became aware that I was HIV positive. It was also through the Study that I became educated in the ways to lead a lifestyle that would help to insure good health: what to avoid, safe sex practices, and the latest developments in AIDS research and treatments. The biannual checkups have been a valuable apparatus to keep me aware of my health through good and bad times. After almost 16 years (has it been that long?!), I still keep my appointments every six months.

The research that resulted from the volunteers such as myself has resulted in the study of the epidemiology of AIDS. Important findings have resulted from the Pitt Men's Study. Hundreds of papers have been published and many presentations have been given around the world at HIV/AIDS Conferences. This is something of pride for those many men who have volunteered their time to be part of the Study through the years.

As for CAB, I find my work there very rewarding knowing that I am helping to make the Study as accessible and stress free as possible for our cohort of volunteers. Drs. Rinaldo and Silvestre and staff have made it a pleasant experience along with my fellow CAB members, past and present. Without the Pitt Men's Study, I feel that a valuable part of my fight against AIDS would be taken away from me.

Reverend Howard J. Cherry, OSL

As I look back over the past twelve World AIDS Day Commemorations I am aware of how profoundly I have been touched by these services. They have truly served to remind me of our "connectedness" with one another and our "responsibility" for one another.

In a unique way, the many memory pictures of my friends whose lives have been snuffed out in the early years of this epidemic are brought back to me with a sweet vividness. I am aware of their presence, their spirit, the songs they sang, the work they did and the love they shared. In these moments I know that all of us are still connected.

And then, I am back to the moment at hand as I view the faces around and before me. Once again, I am reminded of our connectedness with each other but with something added. That which is added is our responsibility for one another because all of us do make a difference. World AIDS Day brings this before me in a forceful and tangible way and the World AIDS Day Commemoration calls me to an awareness of the work that I specifically must do.

Mr. William G. Buchanan, M.M.

In preparing for this newsletter, I found it coincidental that the first World AIDS Day occurred in 1988, the same year that I was employed by the Pitt Men's Study. I was recruited to join the Study in 1984 as a volunteer while at Penn State. Those days were dark indeed. No one yet knew what even caused AIDS! We were all scared and searching for answers, and joining the Pitt Men's Study seemed the natural thing to do. No, more than that, it was the ONLY thing to do. I remember coming down from State College twice a year for appointments, and I remember being quite anxious each time I stepped into the Medical Arts Building. But the clinic staff always made me feel better, and I always walked away knowing I was in good hands. When I joined the PMS staff, I was very proud to have joined such a great group of people doing such important work.
When HIV was discovered and determined to be the cause of AIDS, all study participants were invited to attend intensive educational sessions and to learn their results. I elected to not learn my results at that time — I figured that the result wouldn't lead me to change my already safe behavior and that a positive result would cause me unnecessary anxiety, particularly since no drugs were available and all I could do was to continue being safe and living a healthy lifestyle.

The Pitt Treatment and Evaluation Unit changed all that with the first AZT trial. Finally, a potential treatment was available, and it made sense to me to learn my results. So I attended an education session conducted by Kerry Stoner, and I faced Ric Witt for a results appointment. Fortunately, there was no need to join that PTEU trial, and I took learning my result as reinforcement that I must continue to play safe and that I should continue to do anything I could to advance our knowledge against this dreadful epidemic.

Although I was and continue to be HIV-, HIV and AIDS affected and continues to affect me in my everyday life, not just at work. I have, as many of you have, lost many dear, sweet friends, acquaintances, and colleagues to this disease. Many more live with the burden of HIV infection every day. But I take great pride in being one small cog in the wheel which led us to more effective treatments and a reduced mortality rate — and YOU SHOULD TAKE GREAT PRIDE TOO!

Yes, men DO make a difference! You and I make a difference every time we walk into the PMS clinic for an appointment. Sixteen-plus years and counting, we all make a huge difference by devoting ourselves to perhaps the most important scientific adventure of our lifetime: finding a cure for AIDS and a vaccine that will help us once and for all rid the earth of this terrible scourge. I applaud all of you who continue to make the effort to come in, and I invite anyone who has not kept an appointment within the last six months or so to renew his participation by calling 412-624-2008 or 1-800-987-1963.

As we take time on this World AIDS Day to reflect on how HIV/AIDS has affected us and those we love, let's not forget to give ourselves (and our dearly departed) a good pat on the back for taking a stand, chipping in, and making a difference.

COMMUNITY NEWS AND NOTES

PATF QUILT DEDICATION AND DISPLAY

Kerry Stoner – Recognized

Eight panels of the AIDS Memorial Quilt will be on display at Calvary Episcopal Church in Shadyside on November 30th at 8:30 p.m. in conjunction with World AIDS Day. The display is being sponsored by the Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force (PATF) and will include the quilt sewn in honor of Kerry Stoner, founder of the Task Force. In addition, four new panels created by Stadlander's Pharmacy will be dedicated at this ceremony.

Following the event, the AIDS Quilt will be shown at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts in Shadyside, which will donate ten percent of its proceeds to the Task Force on World AIDS Day, December 1. On Saturday, December 2, PATF will hold an open house at its Wilkinsburg offices in appreciation of artwork.
created and donated by local artists, clients, and friends of the agency through the Arts Alive program.

Call 412-242-2500 for more details. PATF is the largest nonprofit AIDS service organization, dedicated to HIV prevention, education, and client support services, in southwestern Pennsylvania.

BCASO POTLUCK DINNER AND CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

The Beaver County AIDS Service Organization (BCASO) is sponsoring a potluck dinner and candlelight service on December 1, 2000, which will be held at the Penn State Campus in Beaver. For more information call 724-378-3030.

PA/MID ATLANTIC AIDS ETC SPONSORED WORKSHOP AND TELECONFERENCE

The PA/Mid-Atlantic AIDS Education and Training Center (formerly PA AIDS ETC) is sponsoring on November 29th, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., at Allegheny General Hospital, the third annual Update in the Care of HIV Infection. The conference has been developed with the input of physicians and other health professionals, as well as input from consumers and last year's evaluations. It is intended for physicians, psychologists, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, social workers, health educators, and others working with the person living with HIV/AIDS. For more information, contact the Continuing medical Education office by calling (412) 359-4952, by email, dmcclesk@wpahs.org.

The World AIDS Day Teleconference set for November 30th, from 1:00-3:00 p.m., is titled HIV Prevention Update: Men Who Have Sex with Men. This broadcast presents a public health update on activities and resources for HIV prevention for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men. Viewers will hear from government and non-government spokespersons throughout the country. Programs in action will also be featured through interviews and tours. If you plan to attend please RSVP by November 24th, by calling 412-624-1895.

THE SEVEN PROJECT COMMUNITY SWEEP

The Seven Project, Inc., offers HIV/AIDS services, as well as mental health counseling, self-support groups, workshops, and Minority Community HIV Prevention Project. On World AIDS Day, December 1st, the Seven Project will be doing community sweeps alerting the African American community of HIV/AIDS impact on the community. They will be handing out information and making referrals throughout the downtown area.

"We are interested in letting the African American community know that we exist, and that we are here to help those infected and affected by this disease. We can't help if you don't let us know you are out there," said Seven Project Executive Director, Michael Johnson. To receive more information about all the different services please call 412-325-1350.

For an Appointment
PMS Clinic
412-624-2008