

BIRMINGHAM AIDS OUTREACH

N E W S L E T T E R

spring '87

vol.2 #1

* * * BE SURE TO SEE SECTION ON TESTING, P. 4

GREETINGS!

This is our third official newsletter. We realize it's overdue, but we wanted to wait so we could report on some very positive and important developments. For those of you who are not familiar with us, we are an AIDS education and service organization, community-based as a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation in Birmingham, Alabama. We have been working since May of 1985 and have operated Alabama's only AIDS information and referral helpline since October of '85.

B.A.O. RECEIVES TAX-EXEMPT STATUS; AWARDED GRANT FROM CHICAGO RESOURCE CENTER

In February we received official confirmation from IRS of our tax-exempt status under the 501 (c) 3 code. We had been awarded a \$10,000.00 grant from the Chicago Resource Center in June of '86, but were waiting for the confirmation of our 501 (c) 3 status to receive the grant, which is a general support grant that will allow us to expand hours of operation, secure more adequate office facilities, and begin at least one part-time staff position.

B.A.O. AND AIDS TASK FORCE COMBINE RESOURCES FOR STATEWIDE TOLL-FREE HELPLINE

B.A.O. and the AIDS Task Force of Alabama (A.T.F.A.) are currently combining resources to establish a toll-free, statewide AIDS Helpline. B.A.O. will continue to provide the local helpline, office space, utilities, some equipment, and half of the salary for a part-time administrative assistant; the Task Force will provide the state toll-free line, half of the staff salary, and travel and materials for AIDS education networking in the Birmingham metro area and the state. A.T.F.A. started in May of 1985 along with B.A.O. as a joint networking effort targeting a broad range of Alabama health-care, academic, social service, civic and religious groups and people concerned about AIDS and AIDS issues. A.T.F.A. is incorporated as a non-profit organization and has been funded to date by a grant from the State of Alabama Department of Public Health, private contributions, and registration fees from its AIDS Update programs.

AIDS HELPLINE 1 - 800 - 445 - 3741 1:00 - 9:00 p.m. Mon. - Fri.

IN BIRMINGHAM AREA CALL 930 - 0440

A.T.F.A. P.O. BOX 55703 BIRMINGHAM, AL 35255

APRIL DECLARED AIDS AWARENESS MONTH IN ALABAMA

Governor Guy Hunt proclaimed April AIDS Awareness month in Alabama. Representatives from B.A.O. and A.T.F.A. met with other community and agency officials in Montgomery and were photographed with the Governor as he signed the proclamation.

On April 5 and 6 B.A.O. representatives met with volunteers in Montgomery who have established Montgomery AIDS Outreach. Representatives of both groups assisted with a panel presentation for a Human Sexuality class at a local university and met Monday night, April 6, at the Montgomery County Health Department to discuss AIDS issues and concerns and plans for further networking. Montgomery AIDS Outreach has made a strong start and has been very helpful to B.A.O. Please support their effort! For further information about Montgomery AIDS Outreach, write M.A.O. at P.O. Box 5213, Montgomery, AL, 36104.

On April 7, owners and performers from bars in Birmingham, Montgomery, and Gadsden gathered along with an energetic crowd of friends and supporters at Mabel's Beauty Shop and Chainsaw Repair for an AIDS benefit. The show was full of fun and surprises and in only a few hours over \$3000.00 was raised. At the end of the evening the entire assembly "repaired" to Mabel's stage for a full-house rendition of "Amazing Grace." Many thanks to Mabel's, Bill's Club, Club 21, the Quest, The Alabama Forum, Covenant M.C.C., Cheer's and Rumors from Montgomery, Headquarters and Fats' from Gadsden, M. Bush, Birmingham Beverage Company, Birmingham Video, Supreme Beverage Company, Skillmaster, Vulcan Amusement, everybody in the show, everybody who came, and especially to Mabel and Don.

On April 14, the talented and outspoken troubadours Romanovsky and Phillips performed at Mabel's, with proceeds from ticket sales going to B.A.O. The concert was terrific, the audience lively and appreciative, and once again, the awareness very high. This community party, like the previous week's fundraiser, helped to remind us what we're working for and how important we are to each other.

B.A.O. HELPLINE REPORT

Since July of 1986, we have received over 600 (613 as of 4/21) calls through the line during the 5 - 9 p.m., Monday - Friday hours. We have received over 500 (520 as of 4/21) calls at other times through the answering machine or when we happened to be in the office. From data gathered during the 5 - 9 p.m. period, we know that approximately 1/2 of our callers are female, and that the top four areas of concern remain signs and symptoms, modes of transmission, personal risk assessment, and the Test (HIV antibody test).

Our Helpline volunteers are specially trained and qualified and are happy to answer questions, make referrals and counsel with callers. Our volunteer

crew includes a nurse, a nurse educator, a social work student, a cancer and virus research biologist, and trained community "lay-persons." We are also using the line to help build support networks for people with AIDS, people with ARC, and people who are antibody positive. Through the line we are also able to make appointments for peer counseling and more extensive information-sharing. Please call us if we can be of assistance.

HOUSING FOR PEOPLE WITH AIDS

Housing for some people with AIDS in our area continues to be a problem. Some people need low-cost living quarters convenient to a local hospital or treatment facility, some need accommodations that include or allow for home nursing, and some simply need low-cost but decent housing as a result of having to give up apartments or sell homes to help pay costs of hospitalization and treatment or as a result of being forced to leave a previous home. We would like to maintain a listing of any appropriate types of low-cost, decent housing or housing alternatives that could be rented or leased easily, on short notice. B.A.O. does maintain an assistance fund for emergency or interim assistance to people with AIDS, but funds are limited and we have no housing facility of our own.

B.A.O. SEEKING OFFICE SPACE

B.A.O. itself is looking for cost-efficient office space, preferably on the Southside. We currently rent office space in a community home, and though we've grown comfortable with our present situation, we need more room and would prefer a setting especially suitable for office activity, with convenient access for daytime staff and evening volunteers. If you have a facility you think would fit our needs and would be willing to rent to us, please give us a call.

BIRMINGHAM -- DOTHAN CONNECTION

On March 14, St. Andrews Alley, a community bar in Dothan, Alabama, sponsored an AIDS benefit for B.A.O. that drew a very responsive crowd of a few hundred people from Dothan and the surrounding area and raised over \$1400.00. After an educational presentation by Dr. Melanie Crumpton of the Houston County Health Department, B.A.O. representatives also spoke about AIDS issues and AIDS work in Alabama. We want to thank the Dothan Community for its enthusiastic support.

STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO DEVISE AIDS PREVENTION PLAN FOR ALABAMA

In keeping with the recommendations from the national Public Health Service's aggressive and intensive AIDS education and prevention plan for 1988, the State of Alabama Department of Public Health is launching its AIDS Prevention Plan. AIDS briefings will be held in each of the state's six "health department" districts in the next two months; the briefings will bring together officials and representatives from a wide range of groups and populations. The briefing for the Birmingham area will be held on May 21 beginning at 8:30 a.m. at Jefferson County Health Department. A statewide

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symposium to draft the official AIDS Prevention Plan is scheduled for September 30, October 1 and 2, at the Civic Center in Montgomery. B.A.O. has been invited to participate in the planning for the state symposium.

IMPORTANT REMINDER CONCERNING HIV ANTIBODY TESTING

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Please remember that antibody testing is not something to be undertaken lightly and carelessly! If you are considering antibody testing or know someone who is, please be advised that only anonymous testing should even be considered. B.A.O. does not categorically recommend antibody testing, but we are happy to help callers and clients seeking information about testing and desiring education and counselling. We only make referrals for testing to those test sites which continue to guarantee anonymity; so far our only referral has been the Jefferson County Health Department. As far as "confidentiality", different agencies and institutions have different notions about what "confidentiality" means and how far it goes; again, only anonymous testing should be considered. NOTE: WE DO NOT SUPPORT CONTACT TRACING!; VOLUNTARY CONTACT TRACING IS NOT VOLUNTARY FOR ANY WHOSE NAMES ARE REPORTED! One of the purposes of the AIDS HELPLINE is to offer information about the test and to help make sure those considering testing know how and where they can be tested with protection.

THANK YOU!

In closing, we'd like to give some thanks to the very special people and organizations that have helped us through the long haul of our start-up phase and have contributed so richly of their time, energy, resources, and good humor. First of all, thanks to B.A.O. volunteers and "hard core" crew: Ray, Denise, Lonnie, Jackie, and Robin. Thanks also to Jerry, Jim, and David; Allan and June and The Alabama Forum, Sally and Stephen of Lodestar Books; Lissa and Josie, Bootsie and Kay; Jack and Tom; and Mabel's.

We also want to thank Dr. Jim Alexander of the Jefferson County Department of Health, Betty Ward of the State Department of Health, Dr. Joan Turner and Charles Collins and the board of A.T.F.A., AID Atlanta, AIDS Action Council, and the National AIDS Network.

Finally, we would like to say a special "thank you" to those who have so generously supported us with private contributions and donations.

From the Foreward to the Surgeon General's Report:

"At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic many Americans had little sympathy for people with AIDS. The feeling was that somehow people from certain groups 'deserved' their illness. Let us put those feelings behind us. We are fighting a disease, not people..."