

VOICES

Alexian Brothers AIDS Ministry Newsletter

F R O M H O M E



ALEXIAN
BROTHERS
AIDS MINISTRY

Winter 2012, Volume 7, Number 1

New leader takes reins at ABAM

Alexian Brothers Health System

Vision Statement

Alexian Brothers Health System will engage all our associates and partners in a prophetic, holistic approach to health-care, rooted in Gospel values and the 800-year legacy of the Alexian Brothers. We seek to bring healing to a broken world through collaboration with others.

Mission Statement

Alexian Brothers Health System carries out the healing mission of the Catholic Church through the Alexian Brothers ministries by identifying and developing effective responses to the health and housing needs of those we are called to serve.

Cheryl Potts, a veteran manager with several housing and AIDS-related agencies in metropolitan Chicago, has been named Executive Director of the Alexian Brothers AIDS Ministry (ABAM). In the newly created position, Potts has assumed the leadership duties of Michelle Wetzel, who had served as ABAM Chief Executive Officer since 2009. As part of an organizational restructuring, Potts will report to Clay Ciha, President and Chief Executive Officer of Alexian Brothers Behavioral Health Hospital in Hoffman Estates, Ill., and President of the Alexian Brothers Center for Mental Health in Arlington Heights, Ill.

“We believe this will offer Cheryl and her team access to the types of expertise, support and intellectual capital that will help grow and further the AIDS Ministry,” says Mark Frey, President and Chief

Executive Officer of Alexian Brothers Health System (ABHS). “Cheryl will have full access to all of the vice presidents who oversee centralized functions for ABHS, such as public relations, marketing, philanthropy and finance.”

Potts joined the AIDS Ministry last September as Operations Leader after serving as Employment

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Cheryl Potts

ABAM participates in World AIDS Day

Events honoring World AIDS Day are held across the country and around the world, and they offer an opportunity for communities to come together and support those who have been affected by HIV/AIDS. The Alexian Brothers AIDS Ministry (ABAM) participated in three World AIDS Day events this year, joining with local churches and community organizations for two events in Chicago and one in Waukegan.

A prayer service at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Chicago was led by Rev. Pat Lee, the pastor of St. Joseph and Immaculate Conception parishes. Rev. Pat is the moderator for gay and lesbian outreach for the

Chicago Archdiocese. The focus of the St. Joseph prayer service was on finding a cure and keeping the virus at the forefront of people's minds.

A second prayer service was held at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Chicago. The service included a performance of “Aus Tiefer Not/From Darkest Night.” The performance followed a three-part theme in which Bonaventure House residents told their stories with musical selections played in between.

The Waukegan World AIDS Day event was called Stand Against Stigma: World AIDS Day 2011. Stand Against Stigma had more than 200 attendees. A

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From the CEO



“Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”

The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I am thrilled to be writing you as the new Executive Director of the Alexian Brothers AIDS Ministry (ABAM). As I begin my new role in the organization, I reflect upon the value of service to individuals, families and community... values that have personally driven me in my 13 years working in the HIV/AIDS community. There are so many ways that we, as individual citizens, can serve our communities, specifically those living with HIV/AIDS.

Many of us literally roll up our sleeves and accomplish the tasks that need to get done. Over the past few months, I have met many volunteers who graciously give their time to do everything from staffing the reception desk at Bonaventure House and The Harbor to scrubbing toilets and vacuuming floors at Bettendorf Place. Regardless of the task, each person was motivated by goodness in their heart to help in getting the work of ABAM done. Individuals and groups can contact us at any time at 773-327-9921 to learn more about volunteering.

Others serve the residents and clients of ABAM by donating resources to help staff provide food, transportation, personal hygiene items and most important, a supportive and safe home. Already this calendar year, we are seeing reductions in our government grants by up to 10%. In an effort to bridge this gap in funding, we rely on individuals to give in all capacities. Staff is busy preparing to launch

Team ABAM for the 2012 AIDS Run & Walk, which provided ABAM with over \$10,000 in unrestricted funds in 2011. Please watch for more details or donate to us today by using the enclosed envelope.

Last, but certainly not least, you can serve ABAM and the community at large by helping to break down the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS. ABAM was established more than 20 years ago to serve people living with HIV who were turned away from their friends and family due to ignorance and discrimination. Sadly, maltreatment of people living with HIV continues. You can change this by volunteering your voice to affirm that discrimination is unacceptable. When you are a witness to the injustice and hardship that people living with HIV/AIDS face, challenge those who spew hatred, and support those who are hurt by those words and actions. In 2012, we are all living with HIV, and we all have a responsibility to break down the stigma.

How will you honor the Rev. Martin Luther King’s memory this year? By serving your community? I challenge you to continue with me and the ABAM staff as we respond to the health and housing needs of those we have been called to serve. I challenge you to fill your hearts with grace and to energize your souls with love.

With great appreciation,
Cheryl Potts

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryl Potts', written in a cursive style.

New leader takes reins at ABAM

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Program Manager at the Chicago House and Social Service Agency. Potts’ experience also includes more than 10 years with the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, where she served as Director of Care Programs and Quality Improvement.

“We have been impressed with Cheryl’s knowledge of grant funding, philanthropy and operations,” Frey says. “In her new role, Cheryl will be in charge of all aspects of the AIDS Ministry.”

As Executive Director, Potts’ priorities will include exploring models of transitional housing

programs for chronic diseases beyond HIV; evaluating the effectiveness of Bettendorf Place, Chicagoland’s first harm-reduction housing model for people with HIV; and strengthening the infrastructure of the AIDS Ministry by using the expertise of the medical model offered through ABHS.

“I believe that housing is not only a basic human right, but it is also the foundation for establishing physical and emotional health,” Potts says. “Healthy individuals contribute to a healthy, productive community that has the potential to result in the end of HIV transmission.”

Volunteer Profile

Retired sister still helps others by working at Bonaventure House

With four years of volunteer service at Bonaventure House, Mary Catherine Connolly, S.L.W., is by far the longest-serving volunteer at the front desk. A familiar face to residents, staff and many visitors, Mary Catherine is appreciated not only for her dedication, but also for her patience, warmth and sense of humor.

What keeps her coming back? “I enjoy the atmosphere here,” she says, “as well as meeting and interacting with the residents and staff. Plus, it doesn’t hurt that it’s close to home.”

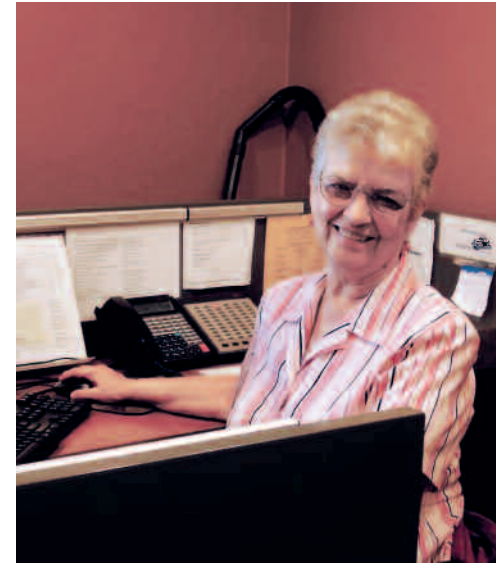
For Mary Catherine, service is a way of life; she has made a career out of helping others. As a member of a religious order, the Sisters of the Living Word, she worked in education for many years as teacher, counselor and principal in Catholic schools in several states. She also worked for a domestic violence shelter, assisting women with housing resources, employment and daily needs. Although

she is now retired, she has continued to make a positive difference by volunteering. In addition to her work at Bonaventure House, she also has been volunteering for organizations that provide assistance to immigrants and for the Hunger Coalition.

Volunteers staff the front desk at Bonaventure House during business hours Monday through Friday, and we depend on their help to manage the steady stream of activity in our lobby. Mary Catherine has volunteered more than 200 hours of her time in the past year and provides us with much-needed support.

“Mary Catherine is a real asset to Bonaventure House,” says Alan Druga, Volunteer Coordinator. “When she volunteers, it is like having another staff member. It is such a gift.”

Thank you, Mary Catherine, from everyone at Bonaventure House!



Mary Catherine Connolly staffs the desk at Bonaventure House.

The Harbor Resident Profile

Finding the support to start a new life

Before moving to The Harbor, Reggie D. spent all his waking hours taking care of his mother and grandmother, a task he found rewarding but overwhelming. When his own health began to deteriorate, Reggie knew he needed to make a change. “I needed to be able to take care of myself before I could take care of others,” Reggie says.

What Reggie found in The Harbor was a clean slate. He came with a positive outlook and a determination to start moving forward with the opportunity and encouragement provided by the staff and residents.

“I wanted to do the best I could do. I wanted the opportunity to utilize The Harbor,” says Reggie, who especially values the case management the program provides. Reggie attends meetings that help him maintain his sobriety. He says that the support he receives from The Harbor has given him the incentive and encouragement to do the things he wants to do.

In a conversation with Beth, the former Occupa-

tional Therapist for The Harbor, “I told her I wanted to be a teacher,” Reggie says. He and Beth made it happen. He was able to use his bachelor’s degree in communications to receive his teaching certificate. Reggie says he wants to help his students realize “there’s more things they can do and take on.” He remembers an inspirational teacher he had as a child and wants to be a role model for his students. Reggie says, “I want to allow the kids to know that there’s more out there.”

In addition to working as a substitute teacher, Reggie works at a local barber shop; he has had his barber’s license for more than six years.

Reggie has goals for when he moves on from The Harbor. He hopes one day to open his own barber shop and to continue substitute teaching. Reggie’s “zero tolerance for nonsense” and drive to succeed will help him on this path. Reggie plans to stay in the Waukegan area. “I don’t want to uproot everything I’ve set in motion,” Reggie says. “The Harbor is a great place to restart your life.”



Reggie D. has found the help to work toward his goals.

Bonaventure House Resident Profile

AIDS diagnosis prompts effort to 'turn my misery into my ministry'

In 1996, John B. came to a moment he knew would either make him or break him — the moment he received a diagnosis of AIDS. Although he had been HIV positive for several years, he knew it was time to take control; John says he had to “find his voice and lift it.” It was then that John began his life as a mentor and advocate.

John began participating in the Illinois HIV/AIDS Lobby Day at the state capitol in

Springfield. He travels to the capitol every year to advocate for the HIV-positive community. Several legislators know John by name from the many long conversations he's had with them over bills pertaining to the community. And John has had quite an impact: One state representative he spoke with decided to sign on to a bill to support ongoing funding for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). John says that it's not always easy, but it is important to put his face on these issues so that legislators know that men, women and children are impacted by the decisions they make.

In addition to his advocacy in the realm of social policy, John advocates on a more personal level. For years he worked at the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center as a health educator. His job as a health educator involved visiting Chicago-area colleges, churches and senior centers to conduct presentations on HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases and to provide testing for HIV.

John moved into Bonaventure House nine months ago and started volunteering right away. John volunteered for Vital Bridges, a food pantry program he participated in as a client before moving to Bonaventure House. At Vital Bridges, John did tasks ranging from stocking shelves to helping fill orders for clients. John often serves people he once knew from visiting the pantry; after John started

receiving services himself, he realized that one day he wanted to help provide those services. “It meant a lot to go from being on one side of the desk to being on the other side,” he says, adding that his presence at the pantry as a person giving services instead of receiving them can be an inspiration.

John currently attends The Odyssey Project, a college-level humanities program of the University of Chicago and the Illinois Humanities Council. He



John B. has become an advocate for those with HIV/AIDS.

says his studies there will “give him a better understanding of people.” One day he wants to work with African-American LGBT youth, who have some of the highest HIV infection rates. For John, it's about giving back to his community.

John says that Bonaventure House has given him a foundation because he needed to be in a safe, clean and sober environment with structure in order to work toward his goals. John has been sober for nearly 14 months. In the coming months, he plans to chair his first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting and to become a sponsor.

John leads by example. He feels that this was the plan for his life. “God has allowed me to turn my misery into my ministry,” he says. He shares his story to encourage and to motivate his peers, saying, “The purpose of having experienced these things is so I can share my experience, strength and hope. In turn, it gives me purpose.”

Upcoming Events

Associate Board Open House

825 W. Wellington Ave.,
Chicago, IL 60657
www.bonaventurehouse.org/openhouse
Jan. 26, 2012

Taste for Life Event at Quay

465 E. Illinois St., Chicago, IL
www.bonaventurehouse.org/TFLQuay
Feb. 2, 2012

Ride for AIDS

Begins in Evanston, IL,
ends in Elkhorn, WI
July 14-15, 2012

Garden Party at The Harbor

826 North Ave.,
Waukegan, IL 60085
www.bonaventurehouse.org/GardenParty2012
Aug. 18, 2012

AIDS Run and Walk

Soldier Field, Chicago, IL
Details to come
Sept. 29, 2012

Please see our Web site (www.abam.org) for complete details.

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Bonaventure House Resident Profile

Volunteering helps resident demonstrate life 'on the other side'

Faith H., who has been a resident at Bonaventure House for about a year, volunteers at the St. Vincent de Paul Center. On Saturdays, she helps put together more than 800 sandwiches to feed the homeless and the hungry. On Thursday and Friday mornings, she returns to volunteer at the center's free breakfast program. Many of the homeless men and women she serves are no strangers to her; it was just a few years ago that Faith herself used to come to the St. Vincent de Paul Center for the free breakfasts. "I used to be on the other side," she explains. "These were the people that I hung out with."

For more than a decade, Faith struggled with alcoholism and drug abuse. "My life was unbearable," she says. "My heart was broken. I was drinking and drugging, and not taking care of my business." Homeless for two years and living in the projects for eight, Faith was most concerned that she was not able to provide the sort of life that she wanted for her family. "I always made sure that my kids went to school," she explains, "but I couldn't give them the affection that they desired. I was only focused on the drugs and alcohol, and I kept pushing them away."

Concerns about her family ultimately drove Faith to get clean. One hot late summer day in 2010, she was out with her grandchildren. They wanted to get some Freeze Pops, but Faith realized that she was broke. "It was the beginning of the month, and my disability check was already all gone. I went home, and I cried and I cried," she says. That was the day she made up her mind to get help. She took a few days to clean out her apartment and then had her daughter drive her to get substance abuse treatment at Haymarket Center. After completing her treatment at Haymarket, she was referred to Bonaventure House.

Faith credits Bonaventure House with support-



Faith H. gives back by volunteering with a free breakfast program at the St. Vincent de Paul Center.

ing her in her recovery and helping put her on a different path. "Bonaventure House puts structure in my life," she explains, "and helps me see the positive." She has maintained over a year of continuous sobriety and is planning to return to school to study child development to become a special education teacher.

When her case manager encouraged her to find a place to volunteer, she immediately thought of the St. Vincent de Paul Center, where she had often gone for meals. She wanted not only to be of service, but also to share her experiences in recovery with her old companions. "I want to show them that there is life on the opposite side of the fence, and that if I can change, you can too," she says. Above all, she wants to provide others with reassurance that it can get better. "It will be OK," she says with a smile.

Our Donors

The Alexian Brothers AIDS Ministry recognizes and thanks the following donors for their generous support:

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eta Creative Arts Foundation Inc.

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Julie Drover and friends

Sister Frances Ryan

St. Joseph Church

St. Peter's Episcopal Church

Starbucks

The Harris Theater

Trader Joe's

Walgreens

Zion-Benton Health YOUth Program

Want to support the Alexian Brothers AIDS Ministry? Please contact Erika Espinosa at 773-327-9921, ext. 138, or email eepinosa@abam.org.



Our Vision

The vision of Alexian Brothers Bonaventure House, The Harbor and Bettendorf Place is to transform the lives of people with HIV/AIDS within a compassionate, supportive community by providing a home, comprehensive services, and spiritual care.

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Resident Profile

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Waukegan, IL 60085
847.782.8015

Alexian Brothers Bettendorf Place
8425 S. Saginaw Avenue
Chicago, IL 60617
773-359-4902

ABAM participates in World AIDS Day

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community dinner held beforehand presented a forum for friends and acquaintances to connect and created a real sense of togetherness. Community members took part in the event as speakers, singers, dancers and candle lighters. In the Wish Ceremony at the end of the program, members of the audience stated their wishes for the coming year and lit and placed candles on an AIDS ribbon at the front of the auditorium.

Karen Kowal, Director of The Harbor in Waukegan, told the *Lake County News-Sun*, "The most powerful thing about World AIDS Day in Lake County is that people can be around not only other people who are HIV positive, but also people who are supportive of the HIV-positive community. It's important to see there's a network of support. People really can gain strength from that."

We would like to thank the following

organizations we worked with for our World AIDS Day events this year – St. Joseph and Immaculate Conception Catholic Churches, AGLO Chicago, St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Lake County Health Department and Community Clinics, Catholic Charities of Lake County, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.- Waukegan Alumni Chapter, YWCA of Lake County, First Congregational United Church of Christ in Waukegan and Waukegan High School JROTC – and the many individuals who dedicated their time to make these events a success.

We are especially grateful to St. Joseph Church, St. Peter's Episcopal Church and Waukegan High School Brookside Campus



Volunteers serve dinner at the Lake County World AIDS Day event.

for donating spaces for the events. We also want to thank our World AIDS Day donors: Jewel-Osco, Joplin's Java, Baker's Square, First Congregational United Church of Christ, Balmes Flower Shop & Greenhouses and the Zion-Benton Healthy YOUth Program.