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This report updates  
those who support us  
about our work and  
mission.

Thank you for your  
ongoing support.

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[www.vtcars.org](http://www.vtcars.org)

### What has changed, and what remains the same, 23 years on...

As the needs of our neighbors affected by HIV/AIDS continued to evolve in the last year, Vermont CARES has continued to stay ahead of vital trends in health policy and service delivery. As we have reported in past correspondence, the need for an organization such as ours remains crucial, and the broad community support we solicit and nurture enable a broad spectrum of results we are proud to report in this annual publication.

HIV/AIDS has been slipping in public perception as the public health crisis it still remains for hundreds of families in our state. The public perception, researched by local and national colleagues, remains that HIV is easily treatable, perhaps curable, and still a problem beyond our state's borders. Further, many U.S. citizens believe that living with HIV, beyond stable medical care, is growing easier and less urgent.

Together, we voice consistently and thoroughly that HIV remains a transmittable infection, that it is still 100% preventable, that the treatments grow more effective but are nowhere near a cure, and that poverty and other social pressures are still directly related to misperceptions and myths about this virus.

Recent data from the Kaiser Health Foundation, a national organization collating data from around the U.S. to inform health policy, indicates worrying indicators for HIV information and education. One in four Americans (incorrectly) believes there is a viable vaccine for HIV, and a similar proportion (also incorrectly) believes there is a cure. Still under half of Americans would feel comfortable around a coworker living with HIV. More than half of Americans have not taken steps to reduce their personal HIV risk the last time they put themselves at risk.

Even with Vermont CARES' and national efforts, these remain dismaying attitudes of fear, mistrust, misunderstanding, and unnecessary health risk. Undoing these myths, and keeping individuals and communities healthy, is at the core of our daily work. Vermont CARES works to dismantle HIV stigma every day; be it at the Statehouse, at schools, amongst families, for those at risk, and for those who don't *know* they are at risk.

By providing critical health and wellness programs to more than 160 households affected by HIV/AIDS each year, we are keeping housed, fed, and healthy those at the greatest risk of falling prey to those attitudes outlined above.

This year, to reach more Vermonters at risk, we have opened a new partially staffed office in Montpelier. We have also expanded HIV testing opportunities, access to syringe exchange, and housing opportunities.

We cannot spread this impact so broadly without your support. Please know that your donations stay local, genuinely and directly affect health and wellbeing, and promote safer sex and prevention messages across a service area of more than 6,000 square miles in our home state.

Thank you sincerely for your continued support.

With gratitude,

Peter Jacobsen  
Executive Director



# PROGRAM UPDATES: CARE AND CASE MANAGEMENT

This past year has led to the realization that our case management has definitively also become poverty case management. With the majority of our clients living under the poverty line and having very few additional resources, we work diligently to keep HIV/AIDS in the ongoing dialogue along with keeping our clients adequately housed, fed, and living as well as possible. Our client households are also those that are already often accessing public assistance and state programs (which are already being stretched), and are at a greater risk of not having enough health care coverage, food, or funds to pay for housing. We also have seen more clients with more complex mental health issues such as substance use, depression, and anxiety disorders, which further impact their ability to be successful on a new medication regimen or in a new job placement. In addition, this past year, we have seen more women (20% increase) than in past years, who are HIV+ accessing services. We provided care for more individuals that have families and children to support, complicating their already potentially stressful load.

Especially in this economic climate, our case management services and programs serve as critical and vital resource throughout the year for the clients we serve in Vermont.

We provided case management services to 131 people living with HIV during the course of the year. This is just a glimpse of what it looked like.

## Ongoing.....

Direct financial assistance to get clients to medical appointments, therapist visits, or to help access medication. This assisted clients in maintaining their overall health and well being and also kept many cli-

ents on their HIV medications when they may not otherwise been able to have access to them due to the cost of transportation or co-pays.

Bi monthly home visits to the majority of our clients, including those in the most rural areas of our state, providing opportunities for psycho social support, medical adherence, budgeting funds, coordinating care, and accessing additional resources.

## For the unexpected....

We also provided direct emergency assistance in the form of food vouchers, fuel assistance, rent offset, and utility bill aid. The majority of our clients received this type of assistance and were therefore able to remain in their homes and budget more successfully for rent and utility bills.

In addition, we developed a Resource Bank to help fill the gaps when necessary. Clients can now apply for a needed resource that Ryan White and HOPWA funds may not cover, such as one time car repair or massage. We, in turn, will determine whether or not that item has been donated already or if we need to solicit a donation from a community business.

## Shelter.....

Our housing program assisted 24 client families through our innovative housing program for HIV+ clients and their families, Vermont's only housing program for people living with HIV and AIDS. Through assistance from Meals on Wheels, we also provided over 500 prepared meals to residents of our Dalton Drive apartments.

In addition, case managers assisted with coordinating housing services for 10 families that were homeless or temporarily housed. We also

advocated for keeping an additional 5 families in their homes who were potentially at risk of being evicted.

## Building relationships and collaboratives with the communities in Vermont...

We provided transportation to medical, social work, dentists, and other necessary appointments. Case managers also participated in many meetings with clients and other care providers in order to assist in coordination of care.

We also offered the support of trained volunteers who visited with clients on a regular basis and worked with them on reading and life skills, job preparedness, and service coordination.

Healthy Cities provided weekly organic fresh produce during the harvest months for 10-20 families. Clients had their vegetables dropped off at home or pick it up at the Burlington office.

The Flynn provided a number of reduced tickets to upcoming shows for our clients and their families giving them the rare opportunity to enjoy a show at the well known theater venue.

ECHO provided vouchers for entry into their exhibits, which was especially helpful for those client families with children.

The Services Program Director met monthly with medical care providers in order to more cohesively address medical adherence and support collaborative work with shared clients.

Stretching the mind and the body....

Yoga classes, massage, gym mem-

berships, and holistic care opportunities were provided to many clients and will continue to be offered (as available) through our Resource Bank.

One of our case managers and our Services director taught ongoing relaxation yoga and mediation classes that are free to our clients and their partners.

## Anti-Stigma and being social....

Educational socials were held in Burlington, Montpelier, St. Johnsbury, and Rutland.

These monthly events served as opportunities to connect with others who are HIV+ and also share knowledge about resources, upcoming advocacy opportunities, and build relationships within their community.

Socials also offered an ongoing opportunity to inform us about stigma issues that are impacting clients. Our Anti-Stigma Specialist attended them regularly and on a rotating basis in order to hear our clients' personal experiences with stigma. Our clients' narratives and experiences with stigma are indelible and used to better guide our work in ending HIV/AIDS stigma in Vermont.



# PROGRAM UPDATES: EDUCATION AND PREVENTION

Vermont CARES' Prevention Department had another great year in 2008. Our work spans a wide array of programs aimed at reducing risk and stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. We continue to be Vermont's #1 provider of free, rapid HIV testing. We performed over 1300 tests in 2008 for Vermonters all throughout the state. We have regular walk-in testing hours weekly or biweekly at our Burlington, Rutland, St. Johnsbury, and Montpelier offices. In addition, we conduct monthly mobile testing clinics at area colleges, community centers, and substance abuse recovery centers. This year we added a new expanded section to our website about HIV testing and it receives many hits daily. Our outstanding team of 10 staff and 9 volunteer testers provide clients with a level of care and understanding that is essential to the sensitive experience of taking an HIV test.

As 2008 drew to a close so did our contracted work with the Vermont Department of Corrections. Over the course of our 2.5 year program, we conducted a total of 96 monthly site visits to six facilities around the state. We educated over 1000 inmates about HIV, Hepatitis, and STI transmission risks and prevention methods and conducted 450 anonymous, rapid HIV tests with inmates. Due to budget cuts the Department of Corrections was unable to continue the program, but expressed their deep thanks and appreciation for our professionalism, expertise, and commitment to HIV prevention work with this very high risk population.

One of our huge successes of 2008 has been the expansion of our St. Johnsbury Syringe Exchange Program (SEP). Over 10,000 new, clean syringes were distributed to members in 2008. And, because we are a one-for-one exchange and members must return used syringes in order to receive new ones, we also helped to safely dispose of over 10,000 used syringes. At each and every exchange encounter, all members receive information about HIV/Hepatitis testing, treatment program options, and safer injection techniques. Although still controversial for many, SEP programs have been proven to decrease HIV and Hepatitis transmission rates in areas that have them. And, with the Obama administration's recent directive to lift the restrictions on federal funding for these programs, the St. Johnsbury Syringe Exchange Program is poised perfectly for continued success in years to come.

Another great success of 2008 was the launch of our revamped Anti-Stigma Program. With a goal of raising awareness about stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS, this program includes a marketing campaign, HIV+ Speakers' Bureau presentations, client centered focus groups, a Declaration of Support, and case management services. Our marketing campaign, "Get to Know" was launched on December 1, World AIDS Day, and involves initiatives to urge people to learn the facts and truth about HIV/AIDS, learn their status by taking an HIV test, and learn more about people living with HIV/AIDS through personal stories. Check out the new "Get to Know" section of our website at: [www.vtcares.org/gtk](http://www.vtcares.org/gtk)



Photos from left: Example of our free HIV counseling; test kit and counseling guides, and "The Condom Wall," with free prevention supplies.



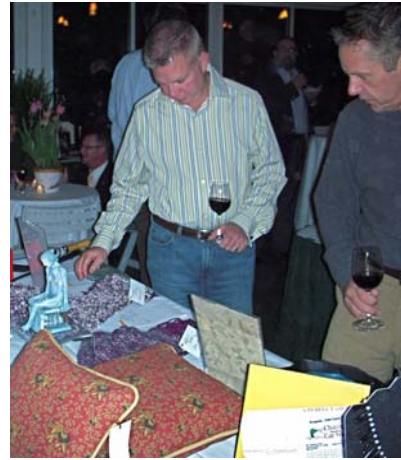
# Volunteerism and Fundraising

## Volunteering for Vermont CARES

Upcoming in May is our annual Phonathon (PAT). With four evenings of calling current and past supporters, we have set a goal of raising \$4,000. Although the word “Phonathon” may cause some readers to flinch or yawn, we assure you that it’s a lot more fun and rewarding than you might expect! We invite you to join us for one of the four evenings, May 13, 14, 19, 21, from 5:30-8:30pm. You’ll enjoy meeting others who share your dedication, and we’ll feed you!

A room full of callers communicating the same urgent message is powerful and empowering. Try it—call us to learn more or to sign up. 802-863-2437.

Visit our website [www.vtcares.org](http://www.vtcares.org) for more information on volunteer opportunities, or call to ask about specifics. We are grateful to every volunteer.



## Events Raise More than Money

Throughout the year, we put on events to raise critical funds that enable us to continue providing our services. These events serve another *very* important purpose: to raise awareness among the public of the need for Vermont CARES’ services to HIV-affected Vermonters, and to build support for expanding our prevention and education efforts.

Each event challenges our staff, Board of Directors, and supporters to demonstrate their personal commitment by working hard to creatively plan, promote, recruit—and donate—to make the event succeed. Events also brings people together to share a good time and enjoy the results of a strong group effort. Cheering Champ Ride biker-fundraisers as they cross the finish line, applauding a high bid in our live auction, happily calling out a large Phonathon donation—these moments of celebrating our successes together keep us motivated.

We typically organize about six events, some geared more towards needed fundraising; others to provide opportunities for solidarity and recognition. Last fiscal year’s events included: AIDS Walk, Border Stories, Gift-wrapping, the Auction, Phonathon, and Champ Ride. CARES staff and the Board Fundraising Committee analyze events to decide when to add something new or refresh an event with a new twist. You could be the person with the intriguing new idea or the muscle to make an event soar, and we would love to hear from you.



Photos from top: Silent Auction bidding; the event’s band; food donated by NECI; our emcee Shawn Lipenski guides the night.



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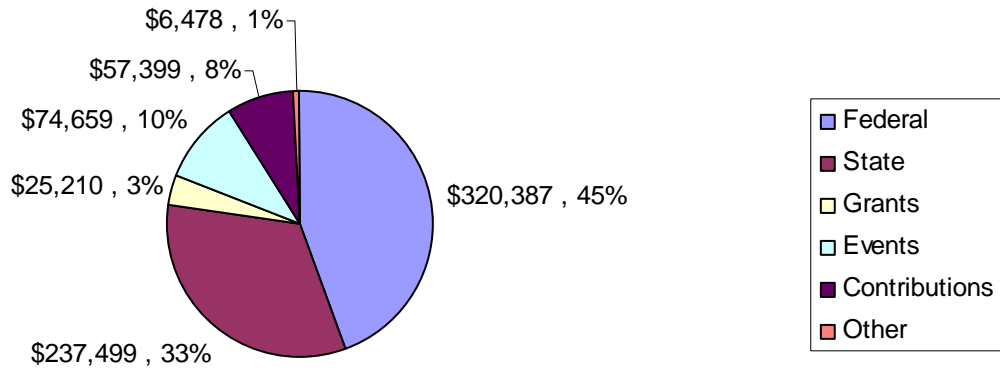
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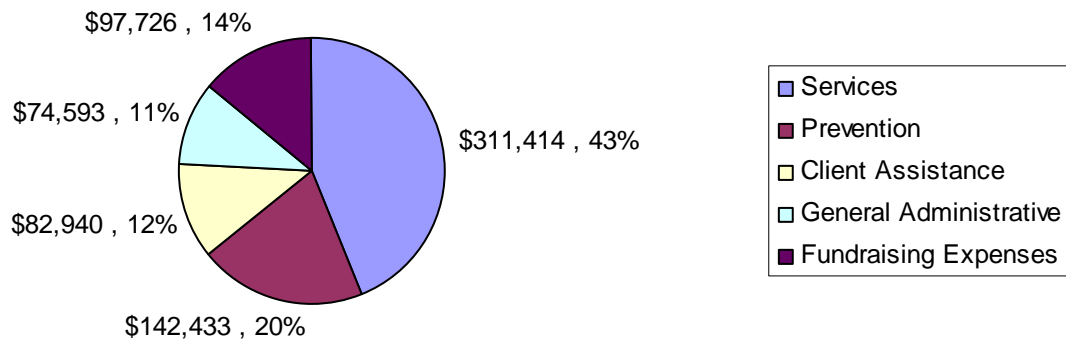


# FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2008 FISCAL YEAR

### Vermont CARES Income Fiscal Year 2008



### Vermont CARES Expenses Fiscal Year 2008



## Grant Sources - Vermont CARES

### State and Federal Contracts and Sources

Burlington Housing Authority (HUD)  
Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity  
Vermont Housing Conservation Board (HUD)  
Department of Health (HRSA/State General Funds)  
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### Private Grants

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We are so grateful for our ongoing grants which help Vermont CARES serve thousands in need each year!



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- These members have since left the Board.

New Board members at the time of this report include Deb Choma, Nate Longtin, Dok Wright, and Chris Fletcher.



Photos from top: Vermont CARES clients, staff, and volunteers (and other colleagues from around the state) at AIDS Awareness Day, meeting with Governor Douglas; Staff meeting in progress

## Vermont CARES' Mission and Vision

*Vermont CARES envisions a world of compassionate neighborhoods where people live free of the stigma, poverty, and oppression associated with the HIV/AIDS epidemic; and where the people of Vermont make informed decisions about HIV prevention, services, and treatment; and where there isn't a need for Vermont CARES*