

HIV CONFERENCE TACKLES AN ARRAY OF ISSUES

Better coordination of services, and bringing people of color, women and rural dwellers into the center of HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment are among the issues to be addressed at the Oregon Health Division's annual statewide HIV Prevention and Client Services Conference, slated for Dec. 2 to 5 in Portland.

The event, which is free, boasts more than 60 workshops, specialized caucus groups and featured speakers. About 400 people are expected to attend—100 more than last year.

Presentations are planned on the specific needs of rural communities; cultural awareness; strategies in caring for patients with substance abuse problems; HIV names reporting; mental health issues; educating teens and serving the at-risk survivors of childhood sexual abuse; as well as information on the newest medical treatments and the re-evaluation of the pandemic's impact on the gay community.

The event is the 11th such statewide conference sponsored by OHD, but organizers say this year is special because, for the first time, the program is largely built around issues of patient care. Previously it was all about prevention.

"If you look at what's changed in the epidemic over the last two years—so much has changed—and that's why these topics have emerged," says Tom Eversol, OHD's community prevention HIV and STD education manager.

OHD is relying heavily on the rich vein of Oregon community expertise at the event. The opening night keynote address will be given by Portland physician Jim Leggett, an infectious disease technician, who will address issues around antiretroviral therapy, such as when to start therapy and newly-recognized adverse reactions.

Our House of Portland's Judith Rizzio will serve as the event's master of ceremonies.

A conference highlight will be Eric Rofes, author of *Dry Bones Breathe: Gay Men Creating Post-AIDS Identities and Cultures*.

In his book, Rofes argues that a variety of changes within the gay community, the pandemic and available AIDS treatments, have created powerful shifts in lifestyle and culture.

Also featured is nationally-known grassroots activist Rebecca Dennison, who works with women with HIV and AIDS in San Francisco as part of an organization called The World. Terry TaFoya, a Native American activist from Seattle, is also scheduled to speak.

Several plenary and breakout sessions focusing on heterosexual women with HIV—a growing population—are scheduled.

"It follows the increase in HIV among injection drug users," Eversol says. "It is a growing portion of the epidemic and, needless to say, young children follow, having gotten AIDS from their mothers and fathers."

Methods of providing prevention and care services to all people—especially women, drug users, people of color, and the mentally ill—will be an important component of the conference.

Many sessions will center on cultural sensitivity and awareness, known as "cultural competency" in social services circles.

Four people of color caucuses are to be held the first day, with others sprinkled throughout the conference.

Earlier this year OHD sent out a survey asking people to suggest topics they'd like to see at the conference; one of the primary requests was more information on prevention and care systems in rural communities.

Jim Hopper, a conference coordinator and rural educator for OHD, says: "I would like to make sure that we touch base with as many marginalized people as possible. Historically we have not done a good job on that."

■ Reported by L.S. LOVING

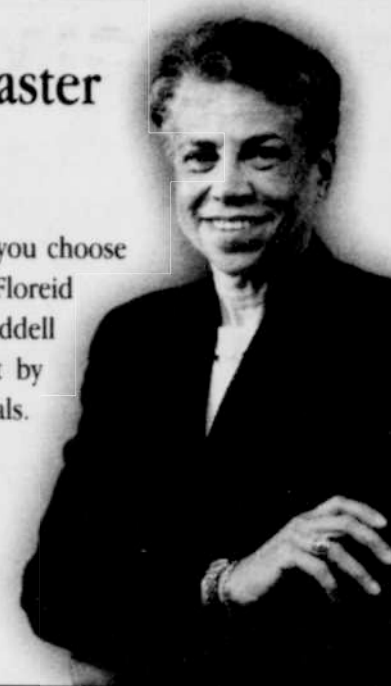
The HIV PREVENTION AND CLIENT SERVICES CONFERENCE runs Dec. 2 to 5. It is free, and will be held at the Doubletree Hotel Janzen Beach, 909 N. Hayden Island Drive in Portland. To preregister, call 731-4029.

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DEC. 1 MARKS WORLD AIDS DAY

On Dec. 1, people across the globe will acknowledge World AIDS Day and those lost to the disease.

An observance will be held in the Rose City, presented by the Metropolitan Community Church of Portland. The event is free, and scheduled performers include the Portland Gay Men's Chorus, MCC Portland's choir, and the Gorilla Theater street performers from Outside In.

The Portland chapter of the NAMES Project will present quilt panels to be added to the worldwide memorial quilt. The panels offer a visual representation of the lives lost to AIDS complications during the past year.

The featured speakers are Thomas Bruner, executive director of Cascade AIDS Project, and MCC pastor the Rev. Roy Cole.

The Coalition of AIDS Educators will



A Gorilla Theater performance for World AIDS Day 1997

present Red Ribbon awards to outstanding AIDS educators and volunteers in the Portland metropolitan area.

The ceremony will be held Dec. 1 at the Scottish Rite Center, 1521 S.W. Morrison St. in Portland, beginning at 7 p.m.

For more information, call MCC Portland at 281-8868.

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