

AIDS Project of Southern Vermont **NEWS**

aidsprojectsouthernvermont.org

volume 29, issue 1 | Spring 2022

“The right time for me to move on.”

Executive Director Karen Peterson writes about her decision to leave AIDS Project at the end of the year.

My eyes were opened to the world of HIV and AIDS when I took the AIDS Project’s volunteer training in the fall of 1992. A few months later in January 1993, I received a call from then Executive Director Susan Bell asking if I would be interested in working for the Project for four weeks to organize the office. The company I had worked for had closed its doors a few months earlier, so I thought this would be a great opportunity to give back and learn more about this small but mighty nonprofit. That four weeks turned into six months, then a year, then 30. Yes, 30!

In that time, I have worked alongside a passionate and driven team as temporary office organizer, administrative assistant, office manager, operations manager and, for the last nine years, executive director. The faces on our team have changed over time, though not as often as one might think, as we have a stellar record of retaining staff. The services and programs to deliver HIV care and prevention also have changed as the epidemic shifted and morphed and clients’ experiences

of living with HIV followed suit.

I’ve been proud to be a member of this team as we have adapted time and again to new discoveries in the field of HIV care and prevention and to changes in funding, national HIV/AIDS strategies and federal program requirements. My pride in and respect for our team grew over the last two unprecedented years of a global pandemic that brought increased risk to our clients.

At 30 years, this is the right time for me to move on, both for myself and for the agency. Staff longevity is a blessing in many ways, but there always come times when organizations need new people and new ideas. As the board has brought on new members and updated our strategic plan, we’ve talked about how the world of HIV is never static and change continues to unfold. Our current team is well-positioned to move us into the future of high-quality service to our community and clients and will be able to bring a new executive director into a warm and welcoming workplace.

I am grateful to have had this



Top: Karen (left) and Mary Z. catch up at our 25th Anniversary Celebration in 2012. Above: Karen (center) is joined by her family at The 26th Walk for Life in 2013.

opportunity to work in a field where difficulties, fears and struggles are repeatedly and amazingly overcome with courage, dedication, love and compassion. It has been an honor that I will carry with me always. I’ll be here through the end of 2022 to finish out “my four-week job” and hope to see many of you at AIDS Project events and celebrations.

Thank you,

Karen Peterson

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

May 21: 35th Annual Walk for Life

Please join us to honor Karen Peterson for 30 years at APSV and to support for work we are doing in southern Vermont.



AIDS Project of Southern Vermont

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15 Grove Street
 PO Box 1486
 Brattleboro VT 05302
 802 254-8263

324 Main Street
 PO Box 4264
 Bennington VT 05201
 802 447-8007

aidsprojectsouthernvermont.org

The mission of the AIDS Project of Southern Vermont is to provide direct services to those whose lives are affected by HIV/AIDS, to offer education to help prevent its spread, and to promote understanding within the communities served.

Vision Statement: Our community will become a place where new HIV infections are rare and when they do occur, every person, regardless of age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or socio-economic circumstance, will have unfettered access to high quality, life-extending care, free from stigma and discrimination.

newsletter design: Mary Lynch Designs

Welcome to Our New Board Members

The AIDS Project is pleased to announce three new Board members.



Cheryl A. Duby, MSN, RN: I have lived in East Dummerston for the past 30 years and I'm honored to be a member of the board at APSV. I started my nursing career at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital (BMH) in 2009 working in the acute care setting and it has been rewarding and fulfilling to be able to serve my community. I currently work at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital as a per diem nurse and work full time at Vermont Technical College as an educator for nursing students. It is gratifying to be able to educate new nurses that will also be serving individuals health care needs in our community. I teach in the classroom, and I also bring the students to clinical at BMH, so I get to see nurses working with patients that were once my student. I believe that in my role as an educator for nursing students I can bring about awareness about programs such as this and bring students in to serve on a volunteer basis with fund raising and other needs. I look forward to utilizing my skills as a nurse and educator to assist in prevention, advocacy, and access to care for those living with human immunodeficiency virus.

Kyle Hamilton: The recent events around the world have been a stark reminder to me of how much I have to be grateful for; and how often I forget and get caught up in things that don't truly matter. It has reinforced the importance of our shared moral obligations to each other. As a newcomer to southern Vermont, I look forward to connecting with and contributing to my local community. I was delighted when Charles asked me to consider a position on the AIDS Project board.

Paulee Mekdeci: It's hard to believe that almost 17 years have gone by since I first moved to Brattleboro. It was love that brought me to this beautiful area from a small town in Berkshire County, MA. It didn't take long before the vibrant surroundings and active community made me call it home. I first became aware of The AIDS Project of Southern Vermont through working at my spouse's business, Brown Computer Solutions. It instantly became an organization near and dear to both our hearts. Myself and my husband, Patrick Brown have been active supporters of the organization for over a decade and a half. We've participated in many Walks for Life throughout the years, had in-store fundraisers, and volunteered. Patrick also previously served on the board. I'm a local drag queen and actor and am gender fluid. I've had the great joy of performing with the drag troupe 'The Ladies of The Rainbow' as my drag alter ego Miss Ginger Soulless for several years. We've performed dozens of benefit shows for many local nonprofits over the years including the annual holiday drag show for the APSV. I enjoy meeting, talking, and working with many members of my community and am very excited and honored to continue doing so as a board member.



Thank you, Wayne Gelineau and Wendy Levy for your service on the APSV Board.

Staff Member Changes at APSV



Welcome, Heather

Heather joined the staff in March as Case Manager in Brattleboro. She has a degree in Therapeutic Recreation with a minor in Gerontology from Green Mountain College in Poultney, VT. With more than 20 years' experience in healthcare, she's worked with people of all ages from newborns to older adults. Heather was born and raised in the Brattleboro area and takes great pride in her roots. She loves reading mystery and crime novels (particularly Archer Mayor), kayaking, and spending time at home with her family. She looks forward to serving her community.

Good-bye, Sam

It has been such a privilege working for the Project, learning to navigate the changing world of COVID and figuring out who our clients are as people. I will be moving into another position in Bennington, closer to home, but I do hope to remain connected and look forward to what the future brings us! Thank you for allowing me to be involved with APSV, this place holds such a special place in my heart now, and I'll miss everyone so much!

MORE STAFF NEWS

■ Congratulations, **Samba Diallo** on receiving the Rising Star award from *Vermont Business Magazine* and for being selected as a 2021 Emerging Leader of Southern Vermont. Samba joined APSV in 2019 and has held numerous job titles as he has continued to take on more responsibilities. In his current role as Harm Reduction Coordinator, Samba is responsible for providing prevention and harm reduction services to Bennington County and the Deerfield Valley of Windham County.



■ We are thrilled to announce that **Loni Myran** has re-joined the APSV team as Overdose Outreach Worker for the Bennington area.

■ We are grateful to **Maeve Burke** for all she accomplished in her year at APSV and wish her well in her future endeavors.

The Prevention Program Offers:

- Syringe services and harm reduction supplies
- HIV and Hepatitis C testing and information
- Health and addiction treatment referrals
- Educational presentations to groups and agencies



All services of the AIDS Project are free. We are dedicated to improving the quality of life for people living with HIV and reducing the number of new infections in southern Vermont

For more information: Sue: 802 246-7147 prevent@sover.net
or Samba: 802 440-6776 apsvssp@sover.net

“Dearest friends at APSV:

I write to express my special joy in knowing I have such good people as you all are helping me in my life; in my struggle to stay sober and sane and smiling. I thank you not only for the help with food but for all that you have given me by way of your caring and understanding. You have my prayers every day and my gratitude always.”

— G., client of APSV



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aidsprojectsouthernvermont.org / 802.254.4444

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2021 ANNUAL REPORT enclosed!

“ You are all so under recognized and under appreciated by the general public, but not by people like me. Thank you for everything you do every day. ”

— N., client of APSV

UPCOMING EVENT

35th Annual AIDS Walk for Life

Honoring Karen Peterson for 30 years at APSV

May 21 / Brattleboro, VT

10 am to noon, at the Centre Congregational Church

Join us as we honor Karen Peterson and the more than three decades of effort by community members to support individuals living with HIV in southern Vermont.

Support us by raising funds so we can continue our important work in southern Vermont. For more information, contact us at 802 254-4444.



Sue Conley, Samba Diallo, and Shirley Squires lead our 34th Annual Walk for Life.

“ I give you praise for what you do for us and the community. Thank you. ”

— APSV program participant



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