

# THE *a*LINE

YOUR CONNECTION TO THE ALLIANCE FOR POSITIVE HEALTH

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**SPOT**

## Florine Hart

Shares her success story and  
helps others find theirs.

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## LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BILL FARAGON



Dear Friends,

I am pleased to present to you our 2019 newsletter. Our staff has done a remarkable job expanding our outreach and strengthening our program services. I am pleased to share highlights and what is to come in 2019.

- The Alliance for Positive Health is committed to Ending the Epidemic by 2020. Our staff identifies people who are HIV+ and links them to care. For people identified as high-risk, the staff helps to get them on PrEP so they remain HIV negative.
- The Peer Navigator program continues to grow. The Peers assist in connecting individuals throughout the community with services they need to live healthy lives. Having experienced similar life struggles themselves, the Peers serve as knowledgeable mentors, providing judgment-free outreach to these clients.
- To accommodate our growing staff and expanding program services in Hudson, we moved into a larger space at 160 Fairview Ave. As we continue to grow, we are in the process of finding a new larger space for our Hudson Falls location some time this year.

2019 marks the Alliance for Positive Health's 35th Anniversary. Dating back to 1984, Alliance for Positive Health (formerly the AIDS Council of Northeastern New York) began as the Capital Region's first grassroots HIV prevention and service organization. Expanding to 5 offices encompassing 17 counties, the agency has evolved into Northeastern New York's oldest and most comprehensive provider of HIV prevention and support services to affected individuals. Through the years, Alliance for Positive Health has expanded these services to support individuals experiencing other chronic illnesses as well.

Throughout 2019, we are honoring our 35th anniversary through continued e-blasts and social media posts reflecting our agency's history and what we've accomplished through our efforts. Stay tuned for additional anniversary updates and event announcements throughout the year.

We attribute the progress we have made to a team effort that has grown over the years. It is because of our supporters, board members, generous donors, hard-working volunteers and dedicated staff that we have achieved so much. It is important to have the resources we need to overcome the challenges we face in regards to restricted funding.

Your support as a volunteer, donor and advocate will help us move forward to inspire a healthy community. Thank you for your continued support, which is needed now more than ever.

Thank you again.

Bill Faragon  
Executive Director

## MEET OUR ASSISTANT DIRECTORS



**TJ Smith** | Assistant Director of Program Services

TJ started in March 2001 as the agency's Training Coordinator, providing professional trainings to staff at a variety of health and human services organizations. She moved into the Program Manager position and helped to develop the agency's Real Talk youth initiative. TJ was promoted to Assistant Director of Program Services in January 2017. Previously, TJ worked as a manager for residential and day habilitation programs for adults with developmental disabilities, provided case management for low-income individuals, and was a middle and high school English teacher.



**Renee Stephenson** | Assistant Director of Program Services

Renee has spent much of her career working in Medicaid-funded Case Management, with targeted experience serving individuals living with HIV and chronically ill populations. She joined the Alliance for Positive Health in 2004 as part of the Intensive Case Management Program and the NYS transition to Health Homes in 2012. Renee is also involved with the Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment Program (DSRIP) and has previous experience in Supportive Housing programs. She was promoted to Assistant Director of Program Services in January 2019.



**Alicia Tanks** | Assistant Director of Program Services

Alicia has worked in the field of health and human services for over sixteen years and has had the opportunity to serve a diversity of vulnerable and underserved populations including those living with HIV, mental illness, substance use and other chronic illnesses. Prior to her current position, Alicia has given multiple in-services to agencies across the region on topics including HIV/STI prevention, care coordination, and other services provided by the Alliance for Positive Health. She was promoted to Assistant Director of Program Services in January 2019.



**Randy Viele** | Assistant Director of Program Services

Randy has been with the agency since 1995 in various positions throughout his tenure; starting as an Outreach Coordinator to supervisory roles and the development and implementation of the agency's in-house and community-based testing program. In his current role as Assistant Director, Randy provides oversight to the housing, transportation, testing, financial assistance and peer workforce programs. He was promoted to Assistant Director of Program Services in October 2004.



## ENDING THE EPIDEMIC

The Alliance for Positive Health is committed to Ending the Epidemic of HIV/AIDS by 2020, as Governor Andrew Cuomo outlined in his New York State initiative. Our agency is working diligently to meet the three goals of the plan:

- Identifying people with HIV who remain undiagnosed and getting them linked to care.
- Linking and retaining those diagnosed with HIV in healthcare to maximize viral suppression.
- Increasing access to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV negative individuals.

The Ending the Epidemic plan involves a goal of achieving the first-ever decrease in HIV prevalence. 2017 saw a record-low number of new HIV diagnoses at 2,769. This reflected a 4 percent decrease from the 2,881 new HIV diagnoses in 2016. New York State surveillance data showed increasing rates of viral suppression, PrEP and PEP usage in 2016, as well as a decrease in new infections. Having passed the halfway point since the initiative began, all evidence suggests we are on track to achieve this goal.

After years of demonstrating the effectiveness of HIV treatment, evidence is now clear that people currently living with HIV with an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV sexually. The Prevention Access Campaign, an initiative which educates people with and vulnerable to HIV, launched a Consensus Statement in 2016 labeled “Undetectable=Untransmittable” or “U=U “. Individuals

living with HIV that take antiretroviral therapy (ART) daily as prescribed have effectively no risk of sexually transmitting the virus to an HIV negative partner, provided they maintain an undetectable viral load for six months. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has backed the research behind this campaign and proved that U=U is the most important message in the effort to end HIV.

The premise of U=U corresponds with the second goal of the Ending the Epidemic plan by maximizing a person’s viral load suppression, so they remain healthy and prevent further transmission. The framework of U=U offers opportunities for improving care and quality of life for New Yorkers living with HIV. The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) recognizes that it is more important than ever to make the public aware of the changing scientific evidence related to HIV. NYSDOH is the first state health department to endorse the Prevention Access Campaign Consensus Statement. As part of this initiative, the Department will be taking the following steps:

- Stop the transmission of HIV through evidence-based interventions.
- Continue to emphasize HIV testing, engagement and retention in care; promoting access to care and insurance coverage will remain as essential as ever.
- Care for the individual in addition to sustained viral load suppression as we work to promote U=U, address stigma, and end the epidemic in New York State by the end of 2020.

## PEER NAVIGATORS

Alliance for Positive Health has been building on its history of providing Peer support as an incredibly powerful way to achieve positive impacts for care. The agency recognized early on the important role that a Peer can play in improving health outcomes by engaging clients in support and successful linkage to services.

A Peer is an individual from the community who shares key characteristics with the clients they interact with, serving as a trusted educator, mentor, role model, and source of social and emotional support. The responsibility of a Peer Navigator is to provide one-on-one support to people in the local community living with a chronic illness such as substance use disorder, mental illness or HIV. They also assist and support individuals who are homeless.

Peer Navigators work as part of a team to support client engagement and ensure successful linkage to services. They have successfully negotiated some of the challenges currently facing our clients. Through the

mentorship, hope, and encouragement they provide, the Peers have helped clients understand and recover from as many challenges as possible. The program has been very successful in connecting clients with services, be it through accompaniment to appointments, advocacy, interpretation, or service navigation.

The Peer Navigator program is helping connect otherwise unengaged individuals throughout the community to needed services. We have seen more people accessing other program services (ie. care management, transportation or nutrition services) who otherwise would not have due to a lack of awareness. Being open and providing judgment-free space encourages our clients to lead more fulfilled lives because they see the Peer Navigators living healthy lives.

Since the rollout of the program, Alliance for Positive Health has employed a total of 23 Peers, 8 of whom have been promoted in the past two years.

# Featured SPOT

## Florine "Flo" Hart

### How long at you been working at the Alliance for Positive Health?

I started with the agency as part of the Given The Chance Program. I have been a paid employee for 2 years.

### What is your role at the Alliance for Positive Health?

I am a Community Health Specialist with the Women's Grant assisting with link2care for clients living with HIV as well as high-risk individuals.

### What does a typical day look like for you?

A typical day would include making connections with clients through phone calls, texting or email. I advocate for clients when working with providers in the community.

### What do you like most about your job, and what aspect of your role do you enjoy the most?

The most rewarding part of my job is seeing the women get the "hope back in the eyes", watching them become independent and confident.

### What is your proudest moment at the agency?

There are many but I remember back in October when I was working with the Substance Use Outreach and Referral Services team. I was able to get a client into treatment for substance use.

### What advice would you give to someone considering a role as a Community Health Specialist?

Remember that at anytime this could be YOU. Bring your humanity.

### Three words to describe you?

Determined, Compassionate, and Humble

### What is your favorite thing to do?

I love to cook, dance and sing!

### What is your hidden talent?

My listening heart and ears.

### Where is your hometown?

I was born in Oyster Bay, NY in Nassau County and was raised in Suffolk County.

### What would people be surprised to know about you?

Being in the Human Services field was not where I initially wanted to be. I wanted to be a medical biller and coder because I thought I wanted to avoid working with people.

## DEVELOPMENT UPDATES



### Dining Out For Life® 2018

2018 was the 15th Anniversary of our Dining Out For Life® event. Over \$63,000 was raised.



Photo Credit: JD Urban

### Columbia-Greene Garden Party 2018

Last year's Garden Party was hosted at the home of Stephen Henderson and James LaForce.



Photo Credit: Jay Zhang

### BOO-jolais Monster Ball 2018

The agency's 2018 BOO-jolais Monster Ball at the Albany Capital Center was a huge success!



### Holiday Book Wrap 2018

Volunteers spent time wrapping gifts at the Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza and Crossgates Mall throughout December.

## DONOR BENEFITS

Some of the tax laws have changed, but the need for charitable giving is as great as ever. Here are a few things that continue to benefit donors:

### Qualified Charitable Distributions:

At 70 1/2 IRA owners are required to make annual IRA distributions known as RMD's. Up to 100,000 annually of an IRA owner's Required Minimum Distribution may be given directly to a qualified charity, and won't be included in taxable income. If you are paying taxes on income that you don't need but are required to take, this may be a good solution.

### Naming Qualified Charities as IRA Beneficiaries:

Your IRA may be the most taxable asset in your estate. Non-spouse beneficiaries are required to take taxable distributions from their Inherited IRA in the year following the death of the IRA owner. A qualified charity, when named as an IRA beneficiary, will not pay taxes on the required death distribution. Alternatively, when friends and family inherit appreciated securities held outside of the IRA, they may receive

a stepped-up cost basis. Naming a qualified charity as an IRA beneficiary may be a smart way to plan your legacy.

### Gifts with Appreciated Stocks Held Outside of your IRA During Your Lifetime:

Stocks with capital gains may be gifted to a qualified charity with no capital gains taxes incurred to either the donor or the qualified charity. This may be a thoughtful strategy to reduce risk or diversify an investment portfolio.



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## THE AGENCY IS GROWING



Seasonal Celebration, November 30th, 2018

### Join our Team!

Employment at the Alliance for Positive Health provides the opportunity to make a life-changing impact by joining an organization that has modeled client-centered care for 35 years. For more information on available career opportunities, visit [allianceforpositivehealth.org](http://allianceforpositivehealth.org)



alliance for positive health

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[allianceforpositivehealth.org](http://allianceforpositivehealth.org)

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