

# POSITIVE<sup>+</sup> CONNECTIONS

Summer 2024

Inside:  
Pride Month  
Spotlight on Testing  
Esther Patterson  
New Harm Reduction Grants  
Staff Milestones  
& more!

*Your Connection to the  
Alliance for Positive Health*



STAND  
TOGETHER.  
RISE ABOVE.



alliance  
for positive health

Featured SPOT



Nikki Gonzalez pg 7



## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

***B. Kim Atkins***

Dear Friends,

Happy summer to all! The past couple of months have been busy – as usual, and I am proud of the work our team is accomplishing.

Our 21<sup>st</sup> annual Dining Out for Life® event was held this April. A sincere thank you to everyone who supported and volunteered. From our generous sponsors, restaurants, ambassadors, donors and community members – thank you for showing up time and time again and supporting our work.

In May our community suffered a great loss with the passing of our beloved colleague and friend, Esther Patterson. Esther's loss is felt in the hearts of many, and we will treasure our memories with her as well as remember her legacy of love, equity and hope to continue to inspire us.

We celebrated PRIDE in June with a list of events that was one of the largest we've seen, and we were excited to be in attendance. There were also three events in July, but even as the events end, we will love, support, and advocate for the LGBTQIA community.

Our agency was awarded 2 grants from the New York State Department of Health to expand our harm reduction services. Both began July 1 and will be used to serve priority populations that use drugs. The first grant will serve the pregnant/parenting population in Warren and Washington counties. The second will focus on serving the houseless/homeless priority population in Clinton County.

For people and organizations looking for naloxone/Narcan and naloxone training, we now have a direct line you can call or text, 518-478-2168. You can also email [overdoseprevention@alliancefph.org](mailto:overdoseprevention@alliancefph.org) for the same services. There is a surge in harm reduction needs and we're meeting the call.

Garden Party preparations are underway, and we're excited to host the event at a beautiful venue in Catskill – Foreland. We've also moved the date to the weekend after Labor Day to make it easier for guests to attend. The event will include live music, gourmet food, a silent auction, and a wine pull. [We hope you will join us.](#)

There's no doubt this summer will be busy, but we are ready to take on all challenges and help forge healthier lives for the individuals we serve. It's only through our collective power that we can do so, and for that I sincerely thank all our donors, board of directors, team members, community members, and volunteers.

Warm regards,

B. Kim Atkins, Executive Director  
Alliance for Positive Health

# New Harm Reduction Grants

The Alliance for Positive Health has been awarded two new grants from the New York State Department of Health totaling \$469,270 to expand harm reduction services for priority populations who use drugs, both effective July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2026.

The first grant, in the amount of \$300,000 will serve the pregnant/parenting priority population in two Eastern New York Counties.

*“The data shows that Warren and Washington counties consistently have higher rates of neonatal abstinence syndrome when compared to the rest of the state. We know that meaningful connections to community and the healthcare system are key when striving for better health outcomes.”*  
- Heather Mattison, Harm Reduction Program Manager

The second, in the amount of \$169,270 focuses on serving the houseless/homeless priority population in Clinton county. In 2019, there were an estimated 164 homeless individuals in Clinton County, a 17% increase from 2018. The average length of homelessness in the county was 151 days in 2019.

*“Having a designated program to work closely with people who use drugs who are experiencing homelessness will allow us to connect them with services that they would normally struggle to find.”*  
- Carrie Coryer, Harm Reduction Program Manager

Both grants will be used to provide individualized harm reduction and support services, as well as linkage to services necessary to improve health outcomes for people who use drugs.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## TESTING SPOTLIGHT

*Kamrin Johnson, Interim Program Manager*

With National HIV Testing Day being last month, what better time to spotlight our Testing program!

Each week we provide walk-in testing on Tuesdays and Thursdays in our Albany office, and on Wednesdays in Schenectady. In addition to traditional in-office testing, we also have a mobile health unit that we take out into the community to serve people right where they are.

Last month we took our mobile health van to Pride events, 200 Green St., and the Albany Public Library to provide testing and education.

Although data reports that HIV rates are at historic lows in New York State, we are seeing an increase in HIV and STIs in certain communities. Testing is still a critical and important part of maintaining health and ending the epidemic.

Not only do we test for HIV, but for STIs like syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia, and Hep C.



The testing process here at the Alliance is easy and quick. A member of our testing team will walk you through the entire process, from the day you test to following up with results.

We often hear the following questions, so keep reading to see the answers:

**Who should get tested?** We all have an HIV status, but not all of us know what it is. HIV does not discriminate, and anyone can contract the virus if they are in contact. If you or your partner have been at risk for HIV, we encourage you to come get tested.

**How much does testing cost?** Testing is FREE! Anyone who is worried, experiencing symptoms, or has been in contact with someone who has symptoms or a diagnosis should get tested.

**How long does it take to get results?** HIV, Syphilis, and Hep C rapid test results are given the same day. STI test results take approximately a week.

**Above:** AFPH staff members Nikki Gonzalez and Kamrin Johnson demonstrate the testing process. **Left:** Robert Brooks, Test Counselor, Trish Acheampong, Public Health Specialist, Aysha Mahmood, Public Health Specialist, Kamrin Johnson

## Esther Patterson, in memoriam



In June, the Alliance for Positive Health suffered a deep loss with the passing of our beloved colleague, Esther Patterson.

Esther was many things to many people. A wife, mother, daughter, grandmother, birth doula, sister, leader, colleague, friend, mentor, advocate, giver, and so much more. She was a force of nature with a radiant smile and boundless energy. She believed anything was possible and wouldn't hear the word no.

Her passion was in finding healthcare equity for those who need it most. A long-time birth doula, she worked tirelessly to eliminate the inequities in birth outcomes for all birthing people. As Co-Chair of the Board of Directors for BirthNet, she was a staunch advocate for women and a fierce protector of children.

Here at the Alliance, Esther led a women's group for black women with histories of trauma, she fought to find service providers for those at risk of or diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. She was in the communities we serve, going anywhere and everywhere to advocate for their care. She had a profound impact on our agency, our clients, and each of us.

Esther was a cherished member of this community. Her passing leaves a dark hole in our hearts, as it also does for so many around us. Her legacy of love, equity, and hope will continue to inspire us, and we will eternally treasure our memories with her.

**Upper Left:** Esther Patterson  
**Bottom Left:** Abigail Viertel, Monica Barrera, Traevon Ludd, Esther  
**Middle Left:** Esther with Randy Viele, Assistant Director of Program Services  
**Left:** Esther with Denise Dupigny, Assistant Director of Program Services

## In the News

This spring, the Alliance for Positive Health team has had many opportunities to talk about our work in the news!

Check out these great stories and congratulate the team members who appear in them!

### [WTEN, Albany - Historic low HIV infection rates in New York](#)



### [WTEN, Albany - New technology helps fight overdoses in Capital Region](#)



### [Strictly Business, Plattsburgh - Vanessa Cappon: Motivated. Authentic. Mindful.](#)



Stay up-to-date on the news by following us on social media or signing up for our newsletter!



**SIGN UP FOR ALL OUR LATEST NEWS!**

*“Lauren, Cole, Cherise, Colin, and the friends I have made in our group for people over 55 living with AIDS have been very supportive.*

*In June, I had a left total knee replacement and refused the narcotics due to my past addiction history. Doing the surgery and physical therapy has definitely been a very painful experience.*

*The Alliance has been so good to me and readily available to me and I am grateful for them.”  
– Albany client*

# Featured SPOT - NIURKA "NIKKI" DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ

## How long have you worked at the Alliance?

I've been working with the Agency for almost 9 years. I learned about the agency through the Peer program, that was also a part of before I became an employee. I started as a part-time Peer Navigator.

## What about the work appeals to you?

I love being able to help people and learn about sexual health. I like seeing the staff I've trained go on and apply what they have learned and be successful.

## What does a typical day at work entail?

It depends on the day! Currently, checking emails to make sure results have come in, distributing results if they came in, meetings, and discussing any events on the docket for the week or the month.

## What do you find most challenging?

Sometimes the lack of funding when it comes to the stuff we can get – it's limited in the number of condoms (internal condoms specifically). State regulations make it difficult to provide services and to get latex free condoms – because of the expense. Turnover is also challenging and training new testers.

## What is your proudest moment at the Alliance?

Being able to see the new testers succeed and move up in the agency. Retaining the knowledge and using it on a daily basis. That's success to me.

## What advice would you give on working here?

You must always have empathy for the people you are serving. Always take care of yourself and your mental health. Do your best not to take the load of work home. Unload it as soon as you leave the building.

## What three words would you use to describe yourself?

Diligent, resourceful and fun

## What are your hobbies?

I read a lot, and I am very much into k-dramas (Korean dramas). I LOVE listening to music – all kinds, and in different languages.

## What is your favorite thing to do?

Blast my music on my way to work and home! It's a form of stress relief.

## What is something about yourself that people would be surprised to learn?

I write poetry and stories, in both English and Spanish – and Spanglish. One day I would like to publish my work.



**Top:** Nikki Gonzalez  
**Middle:** Nikki with her son Deshawn and daughter Katelyn  
**Bottom:** Nikki's daughter Sarai

## PRIDE MONTH 2024

Each year as we celebrate Pride, we work to spread the word about the wide variety of services we offer. We want to engage individuals and reach everyone we can with information about our programs and services.

We always have fun but most importantly, we are showing up and providing support for those we serve. With everything we do, we meet people exactly where they are – Pride events are no exception!



This year's theme was Stand Together. Rise Above. And our goal (in addition to having fun with balloons and bubbles!) was to stand with the LGBTQIA+ community because we know that together we are stronger – together, we can help each other rise above challenges large and small.



Throughout June and into July, we were at celebrations in Malone, Schenectady, Cambridge, Glens Falls, Albany, Plattsburgh, Hudson, Saranac Lake, Lake Luzerne, and Troy. The list of events was one of the largest we've ever seen, and we were honored to

take part in so many of the celebrations!

We provided HIV/STI and Hep C testing at all events and had our mobile testing van present. The van improves access for those who normally don't have access or do not feel comfortable testing in traditional settings.

We introduced surveys for our LGBTQ+ community this year; one for youth and one for adults. The valuable insights we gained will help us determine how to improve our services and best meet the needs of the community. Thank you to everyone who participated!

Partnership is a catalyst for the most meaningful change and our goal every year is to find new partners and strengthen relationships with existing partners. We're thankful to have spent quality time with both and look forward to working with them throughout the year.

Pride Month lasts all year at the Alliance, but during June, we join others in celebrating, advocating, and supporting the LGBTQIA+ community.

To stay in the know about the latest happenings, culturally competent providers, events, resources, and more, sign up for our monthly LGBTQ+ newsletter! Email [jnolie@allianceph.org](mailto:jnolie@allianceph.org) to be added to the list.

Check out more photos from this year's Pride celebrations on the next page.



# PRIDE MONTH 2024





The Columbia-Greene Garden Party is around the corner and we've moved the date and location to make it easier for everyone to attend.

Now the weekend *AFTER* Labor Day, at Catskill's beautiful Foreland – on the banks of the Hudson!

Join us for food, live music, a silent auction, a wine pull and more all at a beautiful waterfront view.

We hope to see you there!

**TICKETS AND DETAILS**

**Saturday, Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>**

**3:00-6:00pm**

**Foreland in Catskill, NY**

**NEW DATE!  
NEW  
LOCATION!**



Drum roll please! Let's hear it for the top 3 restaurants for our annual Dining Out for Life fundraising event: Copper Crow, Nicole's and Hattie's.

Congratulations and a heartfelt thank you to JC Colletti & Dan Lester representing Copper Crow! For the second year, they came in as our top fundraising ambassadors, raising an astounding \$3,000. Along with promoting the event, they coordinated a silent auction featuring baskets from local businesses around the capital region!

Coming in next was Jeremy Bond at \$1679, Nicole's ambassador. Great job ambassadors for all your efforts and hard work!

Mark your calendars – ***Dining Out for Life 2025 is set for Thursday, April 24.***

Once again, a special thanks to our gracious 2024 sponsors!



# Staff Milestones January – June 2024

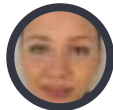
## Welcome New Staff Members!



**Nicole Azubuike** (She/Her), Care Coordinator, *Albany*



**Rene Barnes** (She/Her), Care Coordinator, *Plattsburgh*



**Daniela Cruz** (She/Her), Care Coordinator, *Albany*



**Hannah Freese** (She/Her), Care Coordinator Assistant, *Hudson*



**Lillie Gazeryan** (She/Her), Client Services Assistant, *Albany*



**Kelci Margiasso** (She/Her), Harm Reduction Specialist, *Albany*



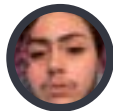
**Kaitlyn Kiernan** (She/Her), Case Manager/Health Educator, *Albany*

## Red Ribbon Winner, January



**Ely Delgado Reyes** (She/Her), Care Coordinator, *Albany*

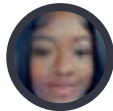
## Congratulate Promotions & Transfers!



**Cole Feliciano Colón** (It/Itself), Care Manager Assistant, *Albany*



**Francis Grandis** (They/Them) Testing Counselor, *Albany*



**Shambria Hanson** (She/Her) Assistant Program Manager, *Schenectady*



**Kamrin Johnson** (He/Him) Interim Program Manager, *Albany*

## Celebrate Anniversaries! (April - June)

### 15 YEARS



**Lois Warner** (She/Her), Program Manager, *Schenectady*

### 10 YEARS



**Mary Morelock** (She/Her), Assistant Director of Program Services, *Albany*

### 7 YEARS

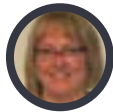


**Christiana Booker** (She/Her), Data Entry Specialist, *Albany*



**Kristin Stelling** (She/Her), Program Manager, *Albany*

### 6 YEARS



**Tracey Fish** (She/Her), Care Coordinator, *Glens Falls*

### 5 YEARS

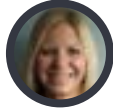


**Carrie Coryer** (She/Her), Program Manager, *Plattsburgh*



**Joe Peterson** (He/Him), Director of Finance, *Albany*

### 3 YEARS



**Sue Friedman** (She/Her), Director of HR, *Albany*



**Courtney Garry** (She/Her), Nutrition Health Educator, *Albany*



**Quinn Lee** (She/Her), Director of Program Services, *Albany*

### 2 YEARS



**Melanie Dutra** (She/Her), Care Coordinator, *Schenectady*

## Staff Milestones (cont.)



**Dayana Longo Reyes (She/Her)**, Care Coordinator, *Glens Falls*



**Tamara McLean (She/Her)**, Program Assistant, *Albany*



**Ashley Rock (She/Her)**, Linkage Coordinator, *Plattsburgh*



**1 YEAR**  
**Devin Averill (He/Him)**, Care Manager, *Albany*



**Kiernan Fischer (He/Him)**, Community Health Specialist, *Plattsburgh*



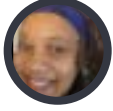
**Cherise James (She/Her)**, Transportation Specialist, *Albany*



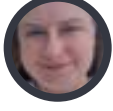
**Nikita Marshall (She/Her)**, Linkage Specialist, *Plattsburgh*



**Ryan Molfetta (He/Him)**, Nutrition Health Educator, *Albany*



**Kimberlyn Taylor (She/Her)**, Care Coordinator, *Albany*



**Camryn Verdi (She/They)**, Client Support Specialist, *Albany*

## Join the Team

We're constantly growing and looking for new additions to the team here at the Alliance for Positive Health!

We currently have positions open for:

- care coordinators,
- client support specialists,
- linkage specialists,
- harm reduction specialists, and
- testing counselors.

Think you would be a good fit? Apply today or reach out for more information!

For a full list of openings and job descriptions, visit [Careers - Alliance for Positive Health](#)



## Board of Directors

Are you a team player?  
Do you have a passion for our Mission?  
Do you have some time available?  
Do you understand the community we serve?

The Alliance for Positive Health is seeking candidates interested in a not-for-profit organization's board of directors.

Candidates would enhance our professional expertise, cultural backgrounds, spectrum of life experiences, and geographic reach as we respond to our community's current and future needs.

**LEARN MORE**

## Upcoming Dates



### *Disability Pride Month*

**4<sup>th</sup>**  
Independence Day

**14<sup>th</sup>**  
International Nonbinary  
People's Day

**16<sup>th</sup>**  
International Drag Day

**21<sup>st</sup>**  
HIV Zero Stigma Day

**28<sup>th</sup>**  
World Hepatitis Day

### *Transgender History Month*

**19<sup>th</sup>**  
Transgender Flag Day

**26<sup>th</sup>**  
Women's Equality Day

**21<sup>st</sup>**  
International Overdose  
Awareness Day

### *National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month*

**7<sup>th</sup>**  
Columbia-Greene Garden Party

**8<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>**  
National Suicide Prevention Week

**18<sup>th</sup>**  
National HIV/AIDS and Aging  
Awareness Day

**19<sup>th</sup>**  
NYS Overdose Awareness Day

**23<sup>rd</sup>**  
Bisexual Visibility Day

**27<sup>th</sup>**  
National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS  
Awareness Day

***“I always encourage people to reach out and receive much needed support without shame, questions or labels. The Alliance has been my lifeline and support. We have to reach persons like myself to let them know about the Alliance.”***

***– Albany client***



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



If we made an error, you would like to be added or removed from our email list, or have ideas for future articles, please contact our Development Department at 518.434.4686 or [development@allianceph.org](mailto:development@allianceph.org).

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