

# POSITIVE + CONNECTIONS

Fall 2024

*Your Connection to the Alliance for Positive Health*



Inside:  
PrEP Access Online  
Spotlight on HIV & Aging  
Harm Reduction Grants  
Staff Milestones  
& more!

**Featured SPOT**

**Danielle Patterson** pg 7

 **alliance**  
for positive health



## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### ***B. Kim Atkins***

Dear Friends,

The cliché of there is never a dull moment serves to be true each day at the Alliance. Our work is ever changing, but never complete. As we near our 40th year anniversary, we've only just scratched the surface.

Our mission is and will always be to support and assist those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS and to end the epidemic, but we are preparing for changes that will allow us to serve even more people. Throughout our community we see need in many areas in addition to HIV/AIDS. Our food pantry continues to experience record high visitors, and individuals are facing increased rates of homelessness, addiction, and mental health crises. We aim to be a beacon of support to our entire community, and upcoming changes, additions and expansions of grants and funding will allow us to do so. We'll keep you posted as things evolve.

Over the past few months we have been busy as usual. We were out in the community for Naloxone Distribution Day and International Overdose Awareness Day, hosted our annual Columbia-Greene Garden Party, and introduced new and changed programs and services to better meet the needs of our clients.

I am excited to share our new partnership with QCare Plus and Avita Pharmacy, which allows our clients to access PrEP through telemedicine! This is a significant development! The statistics prove that PrEP is being severely underused by those who would benefit most. Our hope is that access to PrEP through this service will encourage people to take advantage now that barriers have been broken for physically going to a clinic or doctors office, or picking up prescriptions at a local pharmacy where privacy is a concern.

We encourage the community to visit us for free and confidential HIV, STI, and HepC testing when necessary. We are a safe space for everyone who walks through our doors. Our testing team does more than simply provide a test and a result, we can provide information, resources, and tailored suggestions that fit the unique needs of each individual. We truly care for each person we serve.

We're also happy to share that testing is now available in our Plattsburgh office one day each month. There has been no walk-in testing at all in the North Country, and we know the need is there. Each month, as we finalize the date, we will make it known to the community.

I sincerely thank our Board of Directors, staff, donors, community members, and everyone who supports us, trusts us to do this important work, and makes it possible. Here's to more progress in the future.

Warm regards,

B. Kim Atkins, Executive Director  
Alliance for Positive Health

# PrEP Access is now online!

As of October 1st, it became easier than ever to protect yourself against HIV. Through a partnership with QCare Plus and Avita Pharmacy, we are proud to announce that our clients now have access to PrEP through an expedited telemedicine service.

PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) means routinely taking prescription medicine before you're exposed to HIV to help reduce your chances of getting it.

PrEP is highly effective for preventing HIV and reduces the risk of getting HIV from sex by about 99% when taken as prescribed.

We know many individuals who could benefit from PrEP are not using it. Stigma, distrust in the medical system, and lack of access are just a few obstacles. Our telemedicine service breaks down these barriers and provides convenient, comfortable options.

For some, attending a clinic or visiting a doctor

in their local neighborhood can be a privacy concern. Now, you can attend a quick virtual provider visit. If going to the pharmacy and picking up a prescription was a worry, you can have prescriptions delivered discreetly to your doorstep.

If you or someone you know could benefit from PrEP, chat with us. Our testing team will provide you with the information and support to make your best decision to stay healthy.



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## HIV & AGING SPOTLIGHT

Each year on September 18, we recognize National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day. The day was created to put focus on the growing number of individuals who today are living long full lives with HIV.

HIV is no longer the death sentence it used to be. Due to advancements in treatment and support, HIV is a manageable and treatable condition – but it does not come without challenges and obstacles.

As individuals live longer lives, chronic conditions like cardiovascular disease, lung disease, and obesity often occur, and HIV can bring additional complexities and earlier onset. The added layer of stigma surrounding HIV may lead to isolation, and sometimes delay or even entirely prevent engagement in HIV care.

In 2022 we began our HIV & Aging program with the purpose of meeting these unique needs. Those in the program have access to care coordination, technology coaching, health education, support



**Above:** Devin Averill, Care Manager and Heather Keane, Client Support Specialist **Left:** Mary Morelock, Assistant Director of Program Services and Kristin Stelling, Program Manager

groups, peer support services, and referrals to other necessary services.

We've seen great success with the program thus far, and on a large scale we are making progress that will change the future landscape of what aging with HIV will look like.

Through New York State, our agency is part of a national project working to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions on HIV & Aging. Our data is contributing to improved outcomes for those across the nation.

We will continue to adapt to the changing needs of those we serve, improving access and addressing the pertinent issues our community faces. The battle against HIV remains, but we are in it together. Whether a client has been recently diagnosed or is living long term with HIV – we're here.

**aging with HIV is complex.**  
**Let us help.**

Case Management · Technology Coaching  
Insurance Navigation · Health Education  
Support Groups

518.434.4686 or  
[allianceforpositivehealth.org](http://allianceforpositivehealth.org)

## Overdose Awareness Day

Each August we honor International Overdose Awareness Day by reflecting on the lives lost and remembering each - without stigma or judgment. We also re-commit to being part of the solution that ends the epidemic.

Throughout the month, we participated in many community tabling and outreach events. We were also involved in Naloxone Distribution Day on August 29th. Along with Hope and Healing, Hudson Headwaters, Hep C Navigation and Warren County Public Health we were in several locations testing, demonstrating Narcan administration, and offering overdose responder training.

On August 30th, we were in Glens Falls and Hudson Falls along with Hope & Healing Recovery Community Center and Friends of Recovery Warren and Washington for an Overdose Memorial Tree of Hope, where we held Narcan trainings and connection to harm reduction services. We also held

walk-in Naloxone training in our Albany and Plattsburgh offices for community members and staff. Attendees received free training and a kit.

These efforts are not unique to August. Our Harm Reduction team works hard to provide assistance in our community all year long.

**Whether it be through the installation of Narcan vending machines, community sweeps of syringe litter, or hands-on training, we want all community members to have the resources necessary.**

As we see an increase in incidence and need, we respond accordingly. This past year we have expanded our programs and services and received new grants to help more people using drugs.

**No one should die of an overdose.**

## SARATOGA PRIDE

Pride month may be June, but celebrations happen every month. Due to weather, Saratoga Pride was celebrated Sunday, September 15 with a parade through downtown, a celebration at Saratoga Spa State Park, and numerous other events.

We were proud to not only be a sponsor, but to be on site offering testing, education, and resources. Of course, we enjoyed the festivities too!



## *In the News*

The Alliance for Positive Health Harm Reduction 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!

[Warren County Distributing Free Naloxone Kits - Sun Community News, Queensbury](#)

[Opioid Overdose Prevention, every day - Sun Community News, Queensbury](#)

[Opioid Overdose Awareness Day aids in the battle of addiction - Press Republican, Plattsburgh](#)

[Opioids in the North Country: What it Really Looks Like - Talking Health with the Clinton County Health Department](#)

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!**

## *Overdose Awareness Grant Updates*

Our new Harm Reduction Grant for Pregnant and Parenting individuals who use drugs officially began in July. The work is going to be amazing! Our Harm Reduction Specialist for the grant is just starting her third week and is amid onboarding.

Heather, our Harm Reduction Program Manager, presented at the Healthy Families for Healthy Babies Committee (formally Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome Committee) to review the grant, harm reduction services available to enrolled participants, and encourage partnership with other organizations serving the population. We also began promoting the program with outreach and tabling events.

Next week is our kickoff meeting for the overdose response grant covering Rensselaer, Warren and Washington counties, which officially began in October. We hope to have the Overdose Prevention Specialist hired this month.

Our new Harm Reduction Vending Machine at the Cambridge library is part of this initiative. In its first month, it dispensed 62 naloxone doses, 48 safer sex kits, 60 fentanyl test strips, 35 xylazine test strips and 8 menstrual product kits to the community - free of charge!

Heather and a valued community partner from our Syringe Exchange program have been attending monthly sub-committee meetings to address overdose response in Warren and Washington county. We've also created an overdose spike alert plan and are working on completing a rapid response plan.

As more work is done and progress is made, we will remain transparent and open to the community with updates.

### How long have you worked at the Alliance?

3 years. The first year I was the Receptionist and then I moved to Housing Retention Specialist.



### What about the work appeals to you?

The flexibility to work from home is a big benefit. Having great co-workers that have experienced the ups and downs of working in client facing roles is a huge perk because they are able to relate in a special way.

### What does a typical day at work entail?

Every day is different. One day I'm driving around the Capital Region and beyond doing home visits and pantry bag deliveries. Then the next day, I'm sitting for hours at my desk scanning and uploading paperwork, working on progress notes and double checking that everything is up to date for that month.

### What do you find most challenging?

The limited funding is difficult. Basic items such as toilet paper and cleaning products are getting more expensive, and clients are struggling with what they can and cannot afford.

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

Recently, an HRFA client that is nearing their discharge date was granted an Albany Housing Voucher which is very exciting. It was a lot of documentation to gather and paperwork to fill out to prove that she qualified. The client would have struggled to pay their rent once they were discharged so this was a big relief.

### What advice would you give on working here?

Get to know your co-workers because they are knowledgeable about local resources.

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

Funny, outgoing and positive

### What are your hobbies?

Going for walks with my dog, traveling and gardening.

### What is your favorite thing to do?

Go for walks and listen to podcasts.

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

I did a solo road trip when I was 24 years old. I went 30 states and 10 national parks.



Photos: Danielle Patterson with her family



On September 7th the Columbia-Greene Garden Party was held in Catskill. Although the weather didn't go as planned, we didn't let a little rain stop us. Our venue, Foreland, was prepared and was very accommodating for our guests who came out during the storm.

We had an excellent intimate afternoon shared by like-minded individuals, with the opportunity to connect, and get to know one another better to foster stronger and new relationships.

The mission of ending HIV/AIDS and building healthier communities overall is one that entails collaboration, partnership, and your support. We thank everyone who attended, donated, sponsored, and supported us.



**Top:** Cindy Swadba and Joyce Elliott **Middle:** Denise Dupigny, Assistant Director of Program Services and Joe Peterson, Director of Finance **Bottom:** Board President John Coppola and Gabrielle de la Gueronniere speak with an attendee

## Thank you!

In June, we were thrilled to be chosen as the beneficiary of the monthly Farmers Market at Rivers Casino & Resort in Schenectady.

Their team raised a total of \$2,404 to help us provide the essential programs and services we offer to our clients.

We are thankful for partnerships and collaborations like these, as they are the catalyst to true positive change.

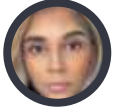
Thank you to Rivers Casino & Resort for your dedication to giving back to the community.





# Staff Milestones July – September 2024

## Welcome New Staff Members!



**Tiffany Bishunath** (She/Her), HIAP Enrollment Specialist, *Albany*



**Sophie Gilbert** (She/They) Overdose Prevention Coordinator, *Albany*



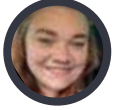
**Raven Kaiser** (She/They), Executive Assistant, *Albany*



**Latisha Mabullu** (She/Her) Care Coordinator, *Albany*



**Sayda Niass** (She/Her), Public Health Specialist, *Albany*



**Moriah Ross** (She/Her), Harm Reduction Specialist, *Glens Falls*



**Savannah Torebka** (She/Her), Client Services Assistant, *Albany*

## Red Ribbon Winner, January



**Danielle Patterson** (She/Her), Intake Supervisor, *Albany*

## Congratulate Promotions & Transfers!



**Tarissa Healy** (She/Her), Overdose Coordinator, *Albany*



**Avery Grande** (They/Them) Overdose Prevention Coordinator, *Albany*



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



**Susan Jones** (She/Her) Client Support Specialist, *Albany*



**Andrea LaSalle** (She/Her) Program Manager Health Homes, *Plattsburgh*



**Francesca Locorini** (She/Her) Care Coordinator, *Plattsburgh*

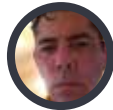


**Nikita Marshall** (She/Her) Harm Reduction Linkage Coordinator, *Albany*



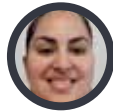
**Sheri Turton-Cassidy** (She/Her) Linkage Specialist, *Albany*

## Celebrate Anniversaries! (July - September)



**29 YEARS**

**Randy Viele** (He/Him), Assistant Director, *Albany*



**9 YEARS**

**Nikki Diaz Gonzalez** (She/Her), Program Manager, *Albany*



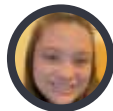
**7 YEARS**

**Michelle Moore** (She/Her), Care Coordinator, *Hudson*



**6 YEARS**

**Rachel Field** (She/Her), Program Manager, *Glens Falls*



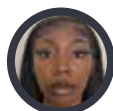
**4 YEARS**

**Victoria Hotaling** (She/Her), Hiring Manager/Payroll Specialist, *Albany*



**3 YEARS**

**Kim Atkins** (He/Him), Executive Director, *Albany*



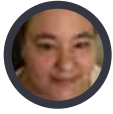
**2 YEARS**

**Kevina Burgess** (She/Her), Care Coordinator, *Albany*

## Staff Milestones (cont.)



**Andrew Demchenko** (He/Him), Quality Improvement Analyst, *Albany*



**Andrea LaSalle** (She/Her), Program Manager, *Plattsburgh*



**Francesca Locorini** (She/Her), Care Coordinator, *Plattsburgh*



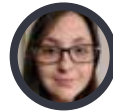
**1 YEAR**  
**Katie Cusack** (She/Her), Food and Emergency Services Specialist, *Albany*



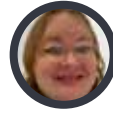
**Lisa Harrington** (She/Her), Care Coordinator Assistant, *Glens Falls*



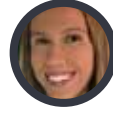
**Kamrin Johnson** (He/Him), Program Manager, *Albany*



**Karissa Leggett** (She/Her), Corrections Health Specialist, *Albany*



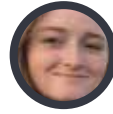
**Elizabeth Liberty** (She/Her), Community Health Specialist, *Glens Falls*



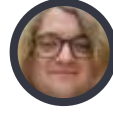
**Jessica Nolie** (She/Her), Marketing and Development Specialist, *Albany*



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



**Annalise Spinney** (She/Her), Corrections Health Specialist, *Plattsburgh*



**Zackary Ward** (He/Him), Care Coordinator, *Glens Falls*

## FROM OUR CLIENTS

*This place is sent to me from the spirits guiding me on my life's journey. They are already proving to be 1,000,000+ times more helpful than most other places I have tried. Hope is alive within me. I am on my way to healing. Recovery is a lifelong process, in my eyes, however, I'm strong and I will do this for myself and everyone I care about who genuinely cares for me back.*

*Today I have some food, that Medicaid application I've been chasing after, and a path to many resources I am in need of. A big thank you to this agency for being here for those in need. I find I am more in need than I have ever been and it feels great to not be entirely alone."*

*– Anonymous*

## Upcoming Dates



*AIDS Awareness Month  
LGBTQ+ History Month*

**14<sup>th</sup>**  
Indigenous Peoples' Day

**15<sup>th</sup>**  
National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day

**17<sup>th</sup>**  
Spirit Day

**21<sup>st</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup>**  
PrEP Awareness Week

*Addiction Awareness Month  
Trans Awareness Month*

**2<sup>nd</sup>**  
Trans Parent Day

**8<sup>th</sup>**  
Intersex Day of Remembrance

**13<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>**  
Transgender Awareness Week

**20<sup>th</sup>**  
Transgender Day of Remembrance

*World AIDS Month  
International AIDS Awareness Month*

**1<sup>st</sup>**  
World AIDS Day

**8<sup>th</sup>**  
Pansexual Pride Day

## FOOD PANTRY IN NEED OF HELP

At the Alliance we have food pantries at each of our locations and they are a life line for many. Imagine not knowing where, or if your next meal would come. This is a reality for many people .

In Albany, we were recently accepted as members of the Capitol Food Pantries. This means that food will be delivered to us for the pantries and we don't have to pick it up anymore.

We're currently looking for volunteers to help us unload food when it is delivered. It takes no more than two hours, and makes a difference in the lives of those within the community.

We are proud to be able to provide this service, and are working hard to ensure we continue to stay stocked up with nutritious food for the men, women, and children in our community!



[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@alliancefph.org](mailto:development@alliancefph.org).

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