

CONNECTIONS

Your Connection to the Alliance for Positive Health

Inside:

Columbia-Greene Garden Party

Pride Preview

Spotlight on Hep C

Milestones & more!



Bottom Row: Heather Mattison, Regional Program Manager; Lylo Trotta, Harm Reduction Specialist; Meghan O'Connor, Overdose Response Coordinator **Top Row:** Angela Ippolito, Overdose Prevention Specialist; Ashley Overstrom, Harm Reduction Specialist

Featured SPOT

Heather Mattison

pg. 5



FROM OUR **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

B. Kim Atkins

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year to all! We finished 2025 strong and are starting 2026 with the same energy and determination. As I reflect on the past year, what stands out most is our resilience and the way we came together to support our community. This year is particularly special as we celebrate the Alliance’s 40th anniversary—40 years of advancing health, hope, and support for people affected by HIV. While HIV remains at the heart of our work, we’ve expanded our reach, serving even more people in need across our community. In this edition of our winter newsletter, you’ll read about highlights from October through December. During these months, we continued to make a meaningful impact—thanks to the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and community partners.

In December, we observed World AIDS Day, a powerful reminder of the ongoing fight against HIV and the importance of awareness, education, and support. Our team also participated in the World AIDS Day Summit, connecting with leaders and advocates from across the region to share strategies and strengthen our collective impact.

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce that Dining Out for Life will take place on Thursday, April 30, 2026. This is our largest annual fundraising event, and every meal served at participating restaurants directly supports vital services for people affected by HIV/AIDS in our community. We hope you’ll join us in making this year’s event the most successful yet.

Inside this issue, you’ll also find an employee spotlight and a client feature, highlighting the people who make our work possible and the individuals whose lives are touched by our programs. We also want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our volunteers and community partners, including the GE Pride Alliance, who generously volunteered at our food pantry this season. Their time, energy, and commitment are truly the backbone of everything we do.

As we enter the new year, I am filled with gratitude for the strength, resilience, and generosity of this community. Together, we continue to make a meaningful difference—one life, one connection, and one act of support at a time.

With gratitude and pride,

B. Kim Atkins, Executive Director
Alliance for Positive Health

PRIDE MONTH 2026

Pride Season Is Almost Here: Pride Over Prejudice

With June just around the corner, Alliance for Positive Health is preparing to celebrate another meaningful Pride season across our region. In the weeks ahead, we’ll be joining Pride events throughout the Capital Region, Hudson Valley, and North Country—showing up in community, sharing resources, and standing in solidarity with LGBTQ+ individuals and families.

This year’s theme, Pride Over Prejudice, reflects both celebration and purpose. Pride is a time to honor identity, visibility, and community, but it is also a reminder that stigma, discrimination, and inequity still impact many LGBTQ+ people every day. Our theme calls on all of us to choose compassion, inclusion, and respect over prejudice in all its forms.

We remain committed to supporting LGBTQ+ community members through affirming, accessible care and services that meet people where they are. This includes prevention education, testing, care coordination, housing support, harm reduction services, and ongoing advocacy for health equity across the communities we serve.

Through our LGBTQ Life Services, we provide



**STAND STRONG. LIVE PROUD.
END STIGMA.**

dedicated, confidential, and affirming support for individuals across the North Country and beyond. These services are designed to help people navigate both physical and mental health needs, connect to affirming providers, access sexual health resources including PrEP and PEP, explore hormone replacement therapy options, and receive one-on-one support to overcome barriers to care. We also connect individuals with culturally competent

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Finding the Path to Cure

Hepatitis C — or HCV — is one of the most common bloodborne infections in the United States, and most people who have it don't know it. HCV often causes no symptoms for years, quietly damaging the liver while going undetected. The good news: today, HCV is curable. With the right treatment, most people can clear the virus from their body in as little as eight to twelve weeks.

At the Alliance for Positive Health, our Hepatitis C program exists to make sure that cure is within reach for everyone who needs it.

Who Should Get Tested

Current guidelines recommend that every adult get tested for HCV at least once in their lifetime. Certain groups are especially encouraged to be tested regularly, including people who use intravenous drugs, those who are not practicing safe sex, and pregnant people.

If you've never been tested — or if you're at higher risk — there's no reason to wait.

How and Where Testing Happens

Testing is available at our Plattsburgh office and through our mobile testing van. Thanks to our new testing machines, **results are ready in just one hour!** Clients can stay for their results or come back at a time that works better for them — whatever feels most comfortable.

Currently, the program serves Clinton, Franklin, and Essex counties, with expansion coming soon to Warren, Washington, and Hamilton counties.

What Happens After a Positive Result

A positive test result can bring up a lot of questions. Our team is here to make sure no one has to navigate them alone.



Clients who test positive are connected directly with a physician who specializes in HCV treatment. That doctor works one-on-one with each client to arrange any additional testing needed and to discuss medications and next steps — in plain language, without the runaround. It's a direct, personal connection to care that makes the path forward clear and manageable.

Our team also provides HCV treatment education, so clients understand what treatment involves and what to expect, and medication adherence counseling to help them stay on track from start to finish.

A Curable Disease Should Be Cured

Hepatitis C doesn't have to be a life sentence. For most people, treatment is short, effective, and life-changing. The Alliance for Positive Health is committed to making sure everyone in our region has access to the testing, information, and care they need to get there.

Testing is available in our Plattsburgh office and in the surrounding community. To learn more or schedule a test, contact any of our offices.

Above: New Cepheid testing machine that now provides results in just one hour.

How long have you been part of the Alliance team, and what brought you here?

Since the fall of 2021. I had been working with people who use drugs and their families, and doing overdose prevention work. But my first role here as a Harm Reduction Specialist gave me an opportunity to engage with the community I hold so dearly in a more genuine, human way.



Harm reduction acknowledges that people are the experts in themselves and that they have inherent value. That approach creates space for real, meaningful, empowering relationships with a community that is so often overlooked, dismissed, judged, and stigmatized.

I'm living proof of what can happen when we choose to see people for who they are and support them in standing in their truth. There's truly no better role in the world for me.

What inspires you most about the work you do?

Seeing people feel truly connected. Seeing them know they belong. Seeing them experience being part of a community in a real way. That's where the magic happens and what inspires me most.

Walk us through a typical day in your role—what does it look like?

There's no such thing! It is a bit of a whirlwind. My main role is supporting the Harm Reduction team from the Capital Region through the Southern Adirondacks. On any given day, you can find me in the Albany or Glens Falls office—or out in the community somewhere in between.

My favorite parts? 1:1 syringe service encounters

and low-barrier street outreach. That's where my heart is. In my role as Regional Manager, it's important that I step back from those spaces so my team has room to step into them and really thrive—but I absolutely love any chance I get to shadow them and stay connected to that work.

A lot of my focus is on training—new staff, ongoing professional development for the team, and community trainings to help reduce stigma and respond to overdoses.

We also spend a lot of time collaborating with other organizations—tabling events, Pride events, joint outreach—you name it. There's always something happening, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your work, and how do you tackle it?

Stigma. It shows up everywhere. We see participants disregarded in community and healthcare settings—even denied access to care—simply due to stigma. We see people fear them, assume they're dangerous, or decide they're not trustworthy before even giving them a chance.

We're also seeing it on a larger scale. Federal funding is being impacted due to the belief that harm reduction enables drug use—while decades of research are ignored. That mindset doesn't just stay at the top—it trickles down into our own communities, even into organizations we should be partnering with, creating barriers to collaboration.

Can you share a moment at the Alliance that made you especially proud?

I'm really proud to be part of a growing team that is reflective of—and recognizable to—the community we serve. That matters. People should be able to see themselves in the folks supporting them.

Staff Milestones: January – March 2026

Welcome New Staff Members!



Courtney Allen (she/her), HCV Care Coordinator, *Plattsburgh*



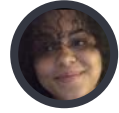
Khadene Bent (she/her), Care Coordinator, *Albany*



Angela Ippolito (she/her), Overdose Prevention Specialist, *Albany*



Dawn Moynihan (she/her), Program Assistant HHSHSP, *Schenectady*



Armani Reinhardt (she/her), MRT Housing Retention Specialist, *Schenectady*



Lylo Trotta (he/him), Harm Reduction Specialist, *Albany*

Congratulate Promotions & Transfers!



Alys Baer (she/her), Care Coordinator, *Plattsburgh*



Naesha-Lashay Kelley (she/her), Harm Reduction Program Manager, *Albany*



Meghan O'Connor (she/her), Overdose Response Coordinator, *Glens Falls*

Celebrate Anniversaries!



26 YEARS
Diana Aguglia (she/her), Deputy Executive Director, *Plattsburgh*



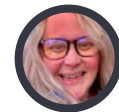
13 YEARS
Denise Dupigny (she/her), Assistant Director of Program Services, *Albany*



12 YEARS
Don Ray (he/him), Linkage Specialist, *Plattsburgh*



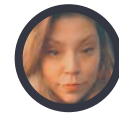
8 YEARS
Vanessa Cappon (she/her), Assistant Director of Program Services, *Plattsburgh*



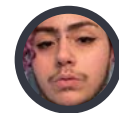
7 YEARS
Bridgid Murnane (she/her), Regional Program Manager, *Plattsburgh*



Meagan Strack (she/her), Harm Reduction Program Manager, *Plattsburgh*



4 YEARS
Alyssa Lewoc (she/her), Program Manager, *Hudson*



3 YEARS
Cole Feliciano Colón (it/itself), Public Health Specialist, *Albany*



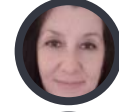
Shambria Hanson (she/her), Assistant Program Manager, *Albany*



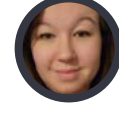
Jim Schadt (he/him), Corrections Health Operations Coordinator, *Albany*



Victoria Tanner (she/her), Care Coordinator, *Glens Falls*



Christie Tomala (she/her), Assistant Program Manager, *Glens Falls*



Tonya Van Allen (she/her), HIAP Enrollment Specialist, *Albany*



2 YEARS
Damon Goldman (he/him), Testing Counselor, *Schenectady*



Avery Grande (they/them), Overdose Prevention Coordinator, *Glens Falls*

Dining Out For Life®



On Thursday, April 30, Dining Out for Life® brings together restaurants, volunteers, and community members across the region in support of Alliance for Positive Health.

Participating restaurants generously donate a percentage of their sales—helping fund HIV prevention and care, housing, food and nutrition assistance, insurance navigation, care coordination, harm reduction, and LGBTQ+ supportive services for individuals living with and at risk for HIV throughout Northeastern New York.

What makes this event so meaningful is its simplicity—by dining out at participating restaurants, community members directly

contribute to life-changing services. Whether it's breakfast, lunch, or dinner, every visit makes a difference.

We are especially grateful to this year's sponsors for their generous support: CDPHP, CBRE, Marshall & Sterling, Mel Carr, and Chris and Shirley Gegan. Their partnership helps make Dining Out for Life® possible and strengthens our ability to continue delivering essential services throughout the region.

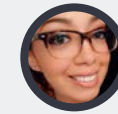
We extend our sincere thanks to the participating restaurants, ambassadors, sponsors, and community members who continue to show up year after year. Together, you help turn a meal into meaningful impact.

To view participating restaurants, learn more, or make a donation, visit: diningoutforlife.com/city/albany

Staff Milestones (cont.)



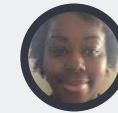
Shandell Jones (she/her), Care Coordinator Assistant, *Albany*



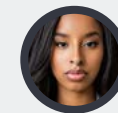
Heather Keane (she/her), Benefits Counselor, *Plattsburgh*



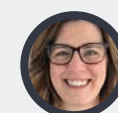
Aysha Mahmood (she/her), Public Health Specialist, *Albany*



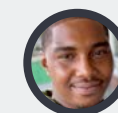
Carlette Okumko (she/her), Testing Program Manager, *Albany*



1 YEAR
Nathachari Abad Guzman (she/her), Public Health Specialist, *Albany*



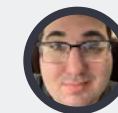
Terrie Maria Grant (she/her), Care Coordinator, *Glens Falls*



Abdul Jackson (he/him), Public Health Specialist, *Albany*



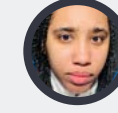
Jenna Levine (she/her), Public Health Specialist, *Albany*



Jeremy Lundberg (he/him), Senior Benefits Counselor, *Remote*



Meghan O'Connor (she/her), Overdose Response Coordinator, *Glens Falls*



Diamond Payne (she/her), Staff Accountant, *Albany*



Jen Powers (she/her), Care Coordinator, *Plattsburgh*

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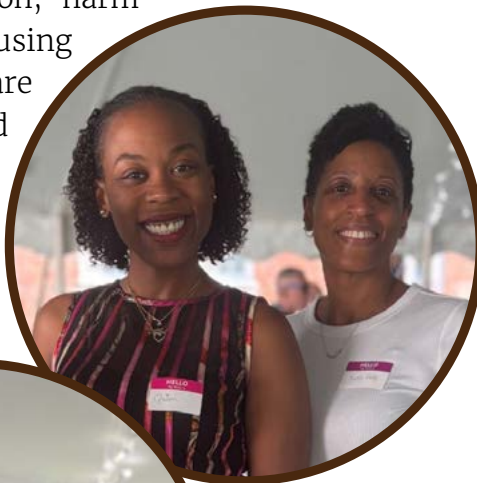
Columbia-Greene Garden Party: June 14th

Join us on Sunday, June 14, at the Columbia County Historical Society's historic James Vanderpoel House in Kinderhook for the return of our beloved Columbia-Greene Garden Party.

This year, we're moving to June to kick off the season on the spectacular grounds of this cherished venue—a partnership we're thrilled to continue with the Columbia County Historical Society.

The Garden Party is more than a fundraiser; it's a celebration of the community that has stood beside the Alliance for Positive Health for 40 years.

As we mark this milestone, we honor our past while embracing the next chapter of our work fighting HIV. For the past 40 years, the Alliance has fought HIV with compassion and expertise. Today, as the epidemic continues and new challenges emerge, we are using that same compassion and expertise to support individuals living with chronic medical and social conditions. Through testing, prevention, education, nutrition, harm reduction, housing support, care coordination, and LGBTQ+ services, we help people live healthier, more stable lives.



This year, we will also present our annual Client Service Award, recognizing an outstanding staff member whose dedication reflects the heart of our mission.

Honorary Committee tickets and sponsorship opportunities are now available. We're also seeking silent auction donations—gift certificates, specialty items, and themed baskets are all welcome.

We are deeply grateful for the continued support of our Columbia-Greene community and look forward to celebrating this milestone year together on June 14.

For more information on how you can get involved or become a sponsor, contact Karla Famulare at kfamulare@allianefph.org

Purchase Columbia-Greene Garden Party Tickets

Donate to the Silent Auction

Top Left: Quinn Lee, Program Director; Yvette Kelly, Secretary of the Board of Directors. **Bottom Left:** Maureen Buckley, Board Member and guest

Pride Month (cont.)

resources and ongoing support that affirms identity and promotes long-term wellbeing.

We are especially proud to serve as sponsors of BIPOC Pride and Lower Adirondack Pride this year, helping uplift events that celebrate identity, culture, and community while centering voices that deserve to be heard and supported.

As Pride Month approaches, we look forward to connecting with community members throughout the region at upcoming events. We invite you to stop by, say hello, and celebrate with us.

This June, and always, we stand for Pride Over Prejudice.

Join us at a Pride event this summer!

Saturday, June 6*

Schenectady Pride Festival
2:00 – 7:00pm
Gateway Plaza

Sunday, June 7

Lower Adirondack Pride Festival
11:00am – 4:00pm
Glens Falls City Park

Saturday, June 13*

BIPOC Pride
12:00 – 5:00pm
Washington Park, Albany

Sunday, June 14*

Capital Pride
11:30am – 5:00pm
Washington Park

Saturday, June 20*

Hudson Pride
1:00 – 4:00pm
Promenade Hill Park

Sunday, June 21

Big Gay Pride Picnic
11:00am – 4:00pm
Hadley Park, Lake Luzerne

Friday, June 26

Plattsburgh Pride Festival
4:00 – 8:00pm
23 Brinkerhoff St

Sunday, June 28

Saratoga Pride*
1:00 – 5:00pm
High Rock Park

Saturday, July 18

Small Town Pride
10:30am – 3:00pm
Arsenal Green, Malone

*walk-in testing will be available

“Alliance for positive health isn't just good they're amazing; no matter if you need them for helping you learn about sexually transmitted diseases/infection's, testing for STD'S or STI'S, help with coordinating care, or even needle exchanges they go above and beyond every time.” -Alexander

Heather Mattison (cont.)

I'm also proud that our programming is driven by community input. We're not guessing what people need—we're listening, and building alongside them.

What advice would you give to someone new joining the team?

Show up as your authentic self—but also be ready to learn. This work is not a one-person rodeo. Lean into your team and find the space where you can add to it and make it stronger.

Our participants are the experts in themselves. There is so much for us to learn from them if we're willing to listen.

If you had to describe yourself in three words, what would they be?

Mom. Willing. Loved.

When you're not at work, what are your favorite ways to unwind?

One of my favorite things is when my adult kids come home, hang out in the kitchen while I cook a from-scratch meal, and we all sit down and eat together.

The best thing for my soul? Dancing—live music, jam bands, punk reggae... for hours. And when I need to ground myself, you can find me in the woods. Chasing waterfalls, toes in the mud catching frogs, or setting my sights on summiting peaks in the Adirondacks.



What's one thing you absolutely love to do?

Laugh! There's nothing better than connecting with people over a good, deep belly laugh.



Tell us something about yourself that might surprise people!

I'm really into cool trucks and street motorsports. Sometimes I have to remind myself... I don't actually drive a race car. Ha!

Give Today.

Support Health. Celebrate Community. Make an Impact.

Your support fuels a wide range of essential services across 17 counties in Upstate New York, including free HIV/STI testing, harm reduction, LGBTQ+ affirming care, housing assistance, Ryan White support services, benefits counseling, mental health support, nutrition programs, community outreach, and educational initiatives.

From providing gender-affirming supplies and

helping someone access treatment, to offering safe spaces and life-changing resources—your gift makes it possible.

This winter, help us continue to serve more people in need and strengthen our community every day.

Together, we can build a healthier, more equitable future—for every neighbor, every identity, every story.

[Make a donation today](#)

Upcoming Dates



- Black History Month**
- American Heart Month**
- 7th**
National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- 14th**
Valentine's Day
- National Condom Day**
- 20th**
National Caregivers Day
- 28th**
HIV Is Not A Crime Awareness Day



- Pride Month**
- 8th**
International Women's Day
- 10th**
National Women & Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- 18th**
National LGBTQ+ Health Awareness Week
- 31st**
Transgender Day of Visibility

Let's Connect!

Have you visited our social media pages lately? It's the best way to catch the latest news and event details!

Like and follow us to make sure you don't miss a thing!



ALBANY
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GLENS FALLS
13 Chester St, Glens Falls, NY 12801
518.743.0703

HUDSON
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518.828.3624

PLATTSBURGH
202 Cornelia St, Plattsburgh, NY 12901
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SCHENECTADY
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518.346.9272



allianceforpositivehealth.org



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