

POSITIVE+ CONNECTIONS

Summer 2026

Your Connection to the Alliance for Positive Health

Inside:

Pride Wrap-up

Spotlight on LGBTQ Life Services

Spirit of Client Service Award

National Social Security Day

Milestones & more!



Bottom Row: Logan Cooley, Harm Reduction Spec **Middle Row:** Vanessa Cappon, Asst Dir; Jim Schadt, Corrections Health Operations Coord; Annalise Lalonde, Corrections Health Spec; Nikita Marshall, Corrections Health Spec; Bridgid Murnane, Regional Program Mgr; Gray Diaz; Rayne Murnane; Angela Ippolito, Harm Reduction Spec; Courtney Allen, Hepatitis C Navigator; Avery Grande, Overdose Prevention Coord; We Yager; Niurka Diaz Gonzalez, Regional Program Mgr; Greyson Allen, Community Health Spec **Top Row:** Karissa Leggett, Corrections Linkage and Education Coord; Zaylynn Schadt

Featured SPOT

Bridgid Murnane pg. 7



FROM OUR **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

B. Kim Atkins

Dear Friends,

Spring at the Alliance is always full, and this one was no exception. Our teams showed up across the Capital Region and North Country for Pride Month, met community members at festivals and picnics, and reminded everyone we serve that affirming care is here for them every day of the year, not just in June.

We also celebrated one of our own. Heather Mattison received this year's Spirit of Client Service Award at the Columbia-Greene Garden Party. Heather leads with exactly the kind of compassion and integrity we hope defines everything we do here.

Our new initiative is an agency-wide push toward 95% viral load suppression. For the first time, every program at the Alliance — from Health Homes to Grant Services to Corrections Health — is working from the same goal, using the same data standards, at the same time. That might sound like an administrative detail, but it represents a real shift in how we operate. When our data is timely and consistent, it stops being just a number on a spreadsheet. It becomes a clear picture of how each client is actually doing, and where the barriers are that stand between them and better health.

That's the part I want to make sure everyone understands: hitting the percentage is just part of the goal. When a client isn't virally suppressed, the numbers often point to something else entirely — unstable housing, unreliable transportation, food insecurity. Once our staff can see that clearly and consistently, they can direct support to exactly where it's needed, instead of guessing.

We're already seeing what's possible. Grant Services has moved from 83% to 89% viral suppression — steady, sustainable progress built on the simple discipline of documenting care the same way, every time. We have real ground left to cover before we reach 95%, but every team across the Alliance is rowing in the same direction, with the same map. I'm deeply proud of the work it's taken to get here, and grateful to everyone involved for the time and care they're putting into it.

As always, thank you for being part of this community — as employees, clients, donors, and volunteers, you are the reason we can do any of this at all.

With gratitude and pride,

B. Kim Atkins, Executive Director
Alliance for Positive Health

Spirit of Client Service Award: Heather Mattison

At this year's Columbia-Greene Garden Party, we were proud to present the Spirit of Client Service Award to Heather Mattison, Regional Program Manager for Harm Reduction.

Created in 2025 to honor Randy Viele's 30-year legacy, this award recognizes a staff member whose dedication to clients reflects the very heart of the Alliance's mission — and this year, no one exemplified that spirit more than Heather.

Heather joined the Alliance in November 2021 as a Harm Reduction Specialist. In the years since, her leadership has grown steady, compassionate, and rooted in connection. She leads by showing up, by listening, by being honest about her own ongoing learning, and by creating space for others to grow safely — reminding everyone around her that they matter. She finds real joy in watching people reclaim pieces of themselves, build confidence, and move through the world with a little more freedom.

That spirit shows up most powerfully in her



approach to peer supervision — work that looks, and feels, more like mentorship. At the Alliance, we hire people with lived and living experience, and we don't ask them to leave their personal lives at the door; in fact, we hire them because of those experiences. Heather has become a model for what it means to support people with lived and living experience, whether or not they receive a paycheck from us. She meets every person exactly where they are, leading with compassion, dignity, and respect, and she continues to remind us that harm reduction isn't just about the services we provide — it's about the human connection we create along the way.

Congratulations, Heather. Thank you for everything you bring to this work, and to all of us.



Top: Heather with her husband, Rodney and son, Dylan Gifford.

Above: Naesha Kelley, Program Manager; Heather Mattison; Gabrielle Quintana HR Specialist, Tarissa Healey, Program Manager; Meagan Strack, Program Manager.

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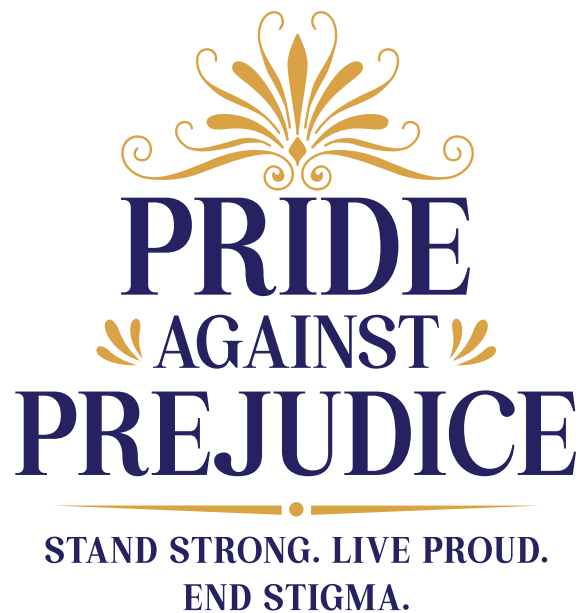
PRIDE RECAP: COMMUNITY, CONNECTION, AND CARE

Pride Recap: Community, Connection, and Care

This June, the Alliance for Positive Health showed up across the Capital Region and North Country to celebrate Pride Month alongside our LGBTQIA+ community—and what a season it was. From Albany to Plattsburgh, our team tabled at festivals and picnics, offered free HIV/STI testing, and connected with community members eager to celebrate, ask questions, and get resources.

This year's message, "Pride Against Prejudice," clearly struck a chord. Attendees connected with the theme immediately, and it sparked meaningful conversations at nearly every event we attended.

We also saw record-level engagement. Crowds were bigger, energy was higher, and community members showed up ready to connect—not just with us, but with each other. One trend stood out in particular: more individuals than ever stopped by to get tested. That's a win worth celebrating, and a reminder that meeting people where they are—literally, at a festival with a folding table—makes a real difference in getting care into people's hands.



None of this happens without our staff and volunteers, who spent their weekends in the summer heat making sure every person who walked up felt seen, informed, and supported.

Pride doesn't end when June does, and neither does our work. The Alliance is here year-round, providing affirming care and standing with our LGBTQIA+ community every step of the way.

Check out our Pride gallery on the next page

In the News

Narcan training arms SUNY Plattsburgh community with life-saving tools

The Student Health and Counseling Center and the Alliance for Positive Health have teamed up to provide training for SUNY Plattsburgh students, faculty and staff in the use of Narcan to help stem the rising tide of overdoses by fentanyl.

[Read more](#)

Rising Leaders: Bridgid Murnane

There is a certain kind of leadership that rarely asks for attention, but consistently changes the way work gets done. It is steady, direct, accountable, and deeply focused on outcomes over appearances. That approach comes through quickly in a conversation with Bridgid Murnane.

[Read more](#)



SPOTLIGHT ON LGBTQ LIFE SERVICES

Growing Community, Growing Connection

For LGBTQ+ Life Services, this year has been about one thing above all: showing up—and being seen—across the North Country.

“I finally feel like I belong somewhere.”

More Visibility, More Reach

Over the past year, the team has built new partnerships throughout the region, with a special focus on the Plattsburgh area. That work is paying off: enrollment in Plattsburgh has doubled, a sign that more LGBTQIA+ community members know the program exists and trust it enough to reach out. New collaborations with local organizations, schools, and providers have put LGBTQ+ Life Services in front of people who may never have found affirming care otherwise—and each new connection creates another doorway in.

Combating Isolation, One Event at a Time

For LGBTQIA+ individuals living in rural parts of the North Country, isolation is often one of the biggest barriers to wellbeing. There may be no local support group, no nearby affirming space, no one close by who truly understands. LGBTQ+ Life Services has made it a priority to change that—hosting more community events, game nights, and gatherings designed to help people find each other and build lasting connection. The goal isn't just visibility; it's belonging. Every event is another chance for someone to walk into a room and feel, for the first time in a while, like they don't have to explain themselves.

Heading to Camp

That commitment to community is about to take on a new form: an upcoming camping retreat



for LGBTQIA+ community members. Response has been overwhelming, with more than 20 participants expected to attend. For many, it will be a rare chance to spend time outdoors, unplugged, surrounded by peers—in a space built entirely around safety, affirmation, and connection.

Looking Ahead

As enrollment grows and new partnerships take root, the team's focus remains the same: making sure that no matter where someone lives in the North Country, they have a safe place to turn, a community to belong to, and support that meets them exactly where they are.

Want to learn more about LGBTQ+ Life Services or get involved with the camping retreat? Contact our Plattsburgh office at 518.563.2437.

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

Seven years! I actually found the Alliance by chance when I came across an opening working with the incarcerated population. The opportunity to provide education and support really stood out to me, and I knew I wanted to be part of it. Since then, I've had the opportunity to work in several programs, and recently I've added Quality Improvement to my day-to-day work. It's been really rewarding to grow alongside the organization.

What inspires you most about the work you do?

The people. Whether it's a client reaching a goal they never thought was possible or seeing staff come together to solve a problem, those moments remind me why this work matters. I love knowing that what we do has a real impact on our communities.

Walk us through a typical day in your role.

There's really no such thing as a "typical" day. I might spend the morning reviewing data or meeting with program teams, then spend the afternoon brainstorming new ideas, working on grants, visiting staff, or helping improve how we deliver services. Every day is different, and that's one of my favorite parts of the job.

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

Healthcare and human services are always changing, so staying adaptable is probably the biggest challenge. I've learned that listening, collaborating, and being willing to try new approaches usually leads to the best solutions.

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

I'm proud to have watched so many of our programs grow over the past seven years. Seeing new ideas turn into meaningful services, watching teams come together, and celebrating

client successes reminds me that every role at the Alliance contributes to something bigger.

What advice would you give to a new team member?

Don't be afraid to ask questions! Everyone here wants you to succeed, and there's always someone willing to help. Also, get to know people outside of your department. The Alliance is full of amazing people doing incredible work.

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

Driven. Approachable. Practical.

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

If there's a mountain nearby, you'll find me there – in the winter skiing, in the summer mountain biking. If I'm not doing one of those, I'm usually exploring somewhere outdoors or spending time with my daughter.

What's one thing you absolutely love to do?

Chasing sunrises from the top of a ski mountain. There's nothing better than first chair on a powder day.

Tell us something about yourself that might surprise people!

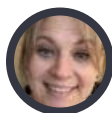
My personal calendar tends to revolve around ski season and Phish tour. I've been to over 90 Phish shows, and if there's fresh snow or a concert within driving distance, there's a good chance I'll find a way to be there.



Top: Bridgid with her daughter, Rayne

Staff Milestones: April – June 2026

Welcome New Staff Members!



Carissa Baiano (she/her), Hepatitis C Coordinator, Harm Reduction, *Plattsburgh*



Vinny Cartiglia (he/him), Client Support Specialist, PAWH, *Albany*



Carlo Contessa (he/him), Care Manager, PAWH, *Albany*



Peter Dupigny (he/him), HRSN Screener, *Schenectady*



Shaynice Reid (she/her), PAWH Supervisor, *Albany*



Madalyn Richardson (she/her), Public Health Specialist, COC Women's, *Albany*



Oranda Samuel (she/her), Care Coordinator, Health Homes, *Albany*



Anthony Scuoppo (he/him), Nutrition Health Educator, Ryan White Supportive Services, *Albany*

Congratulate Promotions & Transfers!



Tiffany Bishunath (she/her), HIAP Enrollment Coordinator, *Albany*



Tita Borrero (she/her), Housing Facilitator, Ryan White Supportive Services, *Albany*



Karissa Leggett (she/her), Corrections Linkage and Education Coordinator, *Albany*



Francesca Locorini (she/her), Program Manager, Health Homes, *Plattsburgh*



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

Celebrate Anniversaries!



17 YEARS

Lois Warner (she/her), Care Coordinator, *Schenectady*



12 YEARS

Mary Morelock (she/her), Assistant Director of Program Services, *Albany*



9 YEARS

Christiana Booker (she/her), Data Entry Specialist, *Albany*



8 YEARS

Tracey Lynn Fish (she/her), Care Coordinator, *Glens Falls*



5 YEARS

Quinn Lee (she/her), Program Director, *Albany*



4 YEARS

Ashley Rock (she/her), CHI Linkage Supervisor, *Plattsburgh*



Tamara Sooknanan (she/her), Health Homes Program Assistant, *Albany*



3 YEARS

Devin Averill (he/him), Case Manager, *Plattsburgh*



Cherise James (she/her), Transportation Specialist, *Albany*



Nikita Marshall (she/her), Corrections Health Specialist, *Plattsburgh*



Kimberlyn Taylor (she/her), Care Coordinator, *Albany*



2 YEARS

Rene Barnes (she/her), Care Coordinator, *Plattsburgh*

cont. on page 7

National Social Security Day

Demystifying Social Security: Understanding Benefits, Appeals, and Working While Receiving Benefits

On August 14th, the Alliance will be holding a special event in support of our Benefits Counseling program. “Demystifying Social Security: Understanding Benefits, Appeals, and Working While Receiving Benefits,” will be held in a hybrid format, with an in-person gathering at the Albany Public Library – Washington Branch and a live broadcast through Zoom, Facebook Live, and LinkedIn Live.

Our goal is to provide clear, accessible information about Social Security disability benefits, including the application process, appeals, and returning to work while receiving benefits. While the event is open to the public, we will also highlight the unique experiences and support needs of people living with HIV throughout the discussion.

The event will feature:

- A representative from the Social Security Administration’s Office of Outreach and Community Education

★ NATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY DAY COMMUNITY EVENT ★

DEMYSTIFYING SOCIAL SECURITY

Understanding Benefits, Appeals, and Working While Receiving Benefits.

Get clear answers to your questions from experts who can help you navigate the Social Security process with confidence.



- An attorney from The Family Center discussing appeals and legal considerations
- A Benefits Counselor discussing work incentives, maintaining benefits, and returning to employment

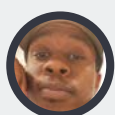
We encourage attendance from individuals seeking information about disability benefits, employment, healthcare, mental health services, aging-related supports, public assistance programs, housing resources, and other community services.

[Read more](#)

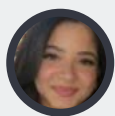
Staff Milestones (cont.)



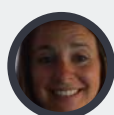
Kaitlyn Kiernan (she/her), Case Manager, *Albany*



1 YEAR
DeAndre Arrington (he/him), Public Health Specialist, *Albany*



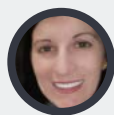
Liza Bueno (she/her), Human Resources Assistant, *Albany*



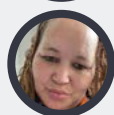
Sarah Burgess (she/her), Accounting Manager, *Plattsburgh*



Gloria Cornejo (she/her), Bilingual Care Coordinator, *Albany*



Melanie Dutra (she/her), Care Coordinator, *Albany*



Shirl Hall-Lloyd (she/her), Regional Manager of MRT Housing, *Schenectady*

Columbia-Greene Garden Party

On Sunday, June 14, we gathered at the Columbia County Historical Society's historic James Vanderpoel House in Kinderhook for our beloved Columbia-Greene Garden Party.



It was a hot one, but the sun-soaked grounds made for a truly beautiful afternoon. Guests spent the day enjoying good food and even better company, soaking in the history of the Vanderpoel House while celebrating the community that has stood beside the Alliance for four decades.

The highlight of the day was presenting the Client Service Award to Heather Mattison, Regional Program Manager, whose dedication to the community she serves reflects the very

heart of our mission. Congratulations, Heather!

June 14 was also Capital Pride, and many of our staff and volunteers were out celebrating Pride. To everyone who chose to spend part of their Sunday with us in Kinderhook instead—thank you. Your presence made the afternoon feel like exactly what it was: a gathering of the people who make this work possible.

Thank you to the Columbia County Historical Society for continuing to open their doors to us, and to everyone who joined in the food and fellowship.



Top: Heather Mattison, Regional Program Manager; Mary Morelock, Assistant Program Director. **Bottom:** Karla Famulare, Development Associate; Mary Morelock

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.

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, identity, and story.

Make a donation today

What the Data Tells Us: Our Agency-Wide Push for Viral Suppression

Across every program at the Alliance for Positive Health, a single number is guiding our work: 95%. That's our goal for viral load suppression agency-wide — the percentage of clients living with HIV whose treatment has brought the virus down to an undetectable, untransmittable level.

We're not there yet, but we're moving in the right direction, and the progress is real. This new initiative brings every program — from Health Homes to Grant Services — together around the same goal, using the same standards, for the first time.

Why Timely Data Matters

To track suppression accurately, we only count clients who have updated lab work within the last six months. That might sound like a technical detail, but it's actually central to the whole initiative. Timely, consistent documentation doesn't just help us measure progress — it helps us see each client more clearly.

"Data tells us exactly how the client is doing," one team member explained. "When we look at the numbers, they show us where someone is in their health journey, and what we can do to help them move forward."

That's the real power behind this work. When a client isn't virally suppressed, the data doesn't just flag a problem — it points toward the reason

behind it. Often, what's standing in the way isn't a client's willingness to engage in care, but a social determinant of health: unstable housing, transportation, food insecurity, or another barrier that makes consistent treatment harder to maintain. Once staff can see that clearly, they can focus support exactly where it's needed most.

Building Momentum, Program by Program

Getting to 95% starts with making sure data is entered the same way, every time, across every program. That consistency is what allows staff and leadership to see the full picture of client health — and to spot where extra support can make the biggest difference.

The early results are encouraging. Grant Services has already climbed from 83% to 89% viral suppression. It's steady, sustainable growth — exactly the kind of progress that lasts.

There's still a long way to go to reach 95%, but the direction is clear, and every team across the Alliance is playing a part. As this initiative continues, we'll keep sharing updates — because behind every percentage point is a client whose health, and whose story, is moving forward.

For more information, contact Bridgid Murnane at bmurnane@alliancefph.org



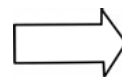
Data Entered

Consistent data, updated labs



Gaps Identified

Housing, Transportation, Food



Support Targeted

Right Help, Right Time

Upcoming Dates



Overdose Awareness Month

10th

Gay Uncles Day

14th

National Social Security Day

31st

International Overdose Awareness Day



National Recovery Month

8th

Labor Day

10th

World Suicide Prevention Day

18th

National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day

27th

National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

“They are great; welcoming and very helpful to people in need. Sayda deserves a raise! She has amazing energy and helped curb my anxiety so much.”

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
845 Central Ave, Suite 202, Albany, NY 12206
518.434.4686

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

HUDSON
160 Fairview Ave, Hudson, NY 12534
518.828.3624

PLATTSBURGH
202 Cornelia St, Plattsburgh, NY 12901
518.563.2437

SCHENECTADY
155 Erie Blvd, Schenectady, NY 12305
518.346.9272



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