

Wellness Notes

July, August, September 2010

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FOR CLIENTS AND FRIENDS OF THE WRIGHT HOUSE WELLNESS CENTER

The United Court of Austin Coronation

By Leah Graham, Executive Director

The United Court of Austin is a 501(c)3 non-profit fundraising organization serving HIV/AIDS, Breast Cancer and other non-profit agencies in the Austin area. Since incorporating in 1994, The United Court of Austin has raised over \$750,000 that has been reinvested back into the community through the programs and services of the beneficiary agencies.

The United Court of Austin is one of approximately 75 chapters throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico. While each chapter is independent of the other, they are all part of an International Council. In 1965, a "Court System" originated in San Francisco for "camp" fun. From that beginning, camp titles were derived, such as Emperor and Empress. Those positions served as co-presidents of the organization. Each chapter's coronation celebrates the stepping up of the new emperor and empress for that year's reign. It is attended by many chapters from the area and across the nation, as well as the charities and supporters of The United Court system.

The "Court System" was designed to be a social and community service organization. Elected officers and representatives of the communities were tasked to achieve the following goals:

- Further relationships with businesses and organizations within their communities
- Hold functions for the enjoyment of the gay and lesbian community
- Raise money for charitable organization
- Help those in their communities who were in need of assistance

Throughout the years, the "Court System" has raised millions of dollars collectively to channel back into charitable causes. Today, many of their members, using their own time and money travel from city to city to show support to the other courts. Without the continued support from the other court members, the Court System would not be near as successful as they are.

The United Court of Austin has provided support to The Wright House Wellness Center for over 16 years. Their continued support allows The Wright Wellness Center the ability to continue providing such services as: food pantry, disease prevention and education, emotional support services, and case management. An additional benefit of receiving these dollars is the unrestricted designation that comes along with them, allowing WHWC to put the money where it is needed the most. Even more wonderful is the fact that The United Court of Austin relies 100% on donations to support themselves and the many organizations they support, illustrating the strong community support the Court holds.

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Coronation XVII

Saturday, August 28th

Omni Southpark

A Sweet 16 Ball

Legends of the Jukebox

Let's Rock 'n' Roll

Opening Ceremonies at 6 pm

For tickets and information, visit unitedcourtofaustin.org

Massage and acupuncture appointments are available at the Cameron Road location. Call 236-8901 to make your appointment.

FREE weekly Yoga is available to ALL volunteers and clients! Call 236-8901 for more information.

Upcoming Events....

Volunteer Orientation	July 21st
Summer Soiree	July 22nd
Volunteer Orientation	Aug. 18th
United Court of Austin Voting	Aug. 21st
United Court of Austin Coronation	Aug. 28th
Volunteer Orientation	Sept. 15th
AIDS Walk	Oct. 10th
Jingle Bell Jubilee	Dec. 17th

Genderqueer or Transgender?

By Mark Johansen, Volunteer Coordinator

Most of us have been around for some time and have grown up using terminology like gay, lesbian, bisexual and even transvestite to explain ourselves, others and gender identity in general. These labels, however, are beginning to be used less and less by today's society, or at least we are beginning to recognize the feelings of others who don't fit into the previously mentioned categories, who instead fall under an umbrella called "genderqueer." It is this umbrella that embraces and holds dear our true emotional gender.

About.com defines genderqueer as a person who transgresses boundaries of gender identity. This term is growing in popularity because it is seen as more inclusive than transgender and transsexual. It can include a biological male who embraces femininity by wearing women's clothes, yet doesn't try to "pass" as a woman. He may wear a long wig, but keeps masculine traits like facial hair. Genderqueer people may identify themselves as neither man nor woman, or even as a third sex.

A transgender person, on the other hand, is defined as someone whose personal idea of gender does not correlate with his or her assigned sex. Some transgender people choose to undergo a sex change operation, while others may forgo surgery and instead change their body with hormones. Other transgender people may simply live their life as the opposite sex without any medical intervention. Some say that a transgender person would fall under the genderqueer umbrella.

Recently I spoke with a female to male transgender individual whose name is Matt. Matt is a 40 year old African American man who lived as a lesbian for 20 years. About 7 years ago he started taking testosterone off and on and developed some startling changes to his body, which were exciting and surprising. Some of the changes Matt experienced include: deepening of the voice, increased body and facial hair, and tissue development. Last year Matt completed "top surgery," which is reconstruction of the chest.

These changes were exciting to Matt because his body was finally reflecting what his emotional gender had been telling him all along. It was also surprising, because even though he was told what might happen to him, each person's experience is different.

I asked Matt, who is very happy about the changes in his life, if he wished he had done it sooner. Matt responded that he did not wish he had done it sooner, as his earlier life held the experiences he needed to be fulfilled, happy and ready for this stage. The timing has been perfect for him and he is ready to begin this new chapter with open and clear eyes.

How does Matt's family deal with the changes in his life? "Well, they are not really excited about the changes, but then again they were not excited about me being a lesbian either," he says. It seems that everyone close to Matt is transitioning also. He tells me he is fortunate to fall in the category of one whose family loves him no matter what.



Wright Down to It

WHWC's advice columnist answers your most pressing questions

Q: "I'm nineteen, and I've always considered myself a straight girl, but for a few years now I've fantasized about women. I never thought much of it until recently, when I went to a party and met a girl I liked, and we kissed. Does this mean I'm gay or bisexual?"

A: Sexuality isn't always as simple those three words: gay, straight, bisexual. Sure, some people grow up only feeling attracted to the opposite sex and never question their sexuality. Others feel a strong pull to the same sex early on and eventually come to the realization that they're gay. But for other people, there is a gray area. For example, there are plenty of women who consider themselves straight because they only date men, but still find themselves aroused by women. You may be surprised by the number of women who fall into this category, because it's not a subject that's talked about openly. But it is perfectly normal to have these feelings, just as it is perfectly normal to question your sexuality.

There is no one act, like fantasizing about a girl, or kissing a girl that will determine if you are gay. The only real test is time, but here are some questions to ask yourself:

-How did it feel when you kissed a girl? Did it feel the same, better or worse than when you kissed guys?

-Can you imagine yourself in a relationship with a girl?

-Who do you normally have crushes on: girls or guys?

The answers to these questions may help you understand your sexuality, but keep in mind that there is no one way to be gay, straight or bisexual. Everyone's experiences are different, and you shouldn't feel any pressure to label yourself. After all, your sexuality is not your defining characteristic; it's just one of the many things that make you the person you are.

Need some answers?

Email your questions to wrightdowntoit@gmail.com.

DISCLAIMER: The Wright Down to It advice columnist is NOT a mental health professional. This column is for entertainment purposes only.



Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

By Jonnetta Wheaton, Volunteer

Well, volunteers, The Wright House Wellness Center's staff put together an awesome experience for us again this year. For those who couldn't make it out, here's what you missed.

We had a very tasty lasagna dinner catered by Magnolia Café. Also, we got to know each other by playing a game in which we had to find out who amongst us had certain talents, abilities and experiences. These ranged from being bilingual to who has been skydiving to who has won a spelling bee (yours truly being one of those spelling bee winners). It really helped break the ice between those of us who help with specific programs, those who help with events, and those who come out to the Monday Night Volunteer Club meetings. The staff also gave out awards to those volunteers who have given exceptional service to The Wright House. It was awesome to see how much our services are appreciated by the staff. Remember, WHWC has this event for volunteers every April. Just to recap, here is a list of the award winners recognized at the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner:

Direct Service Volunteer –David Passmore

Practitioner Volunteer – Valerie Brinkman

Outreach Volunteer – Charlotte Simms

Events Volunteer – Gregory Golston

Administrative Volunteer – Chris Peterson

Congratulations to everyone! See you next year!

AIDS in Our Communities

By Jonnetta Wheaton, Volunteer

This story is the first in a series for The Wright House Wellness Center Newsletter. The purpose of this series is to show how AIDS/HIV affects different types of people in the communities in which they live and with which they associate in order to make this newsletter more informative and relevant to those involved. Just to break the ice, I figured I'd start with my own experience in the hopes that others will be willing to share their stories with us. I'll let you know how to do that at the end.

In order to start my story, I would have to start with my interest in public health and how it came to be. As an African American, I am well aware of the health statistics of our community on a national level. I thought my contribution to this problem would be to become a physician and treat people and give "to us from us" education. Although I studied hard in college to achieve that end goal, something didn't feel right about this decision I was making at the time.

One day, I took a class in which the professor told us about pursuing careers in public health. A big part of public health is to try and prevent diseases rather than to educate on how to treat or cure it. Honestly, it was an act of God Himself that kept me from

jumping out of the desk and yelling "THAT'S IT!" (Think Charlie Brown when he figured out he was afraid of everything). From then on, my purpose in life changed.

Fast forward a year or so when I learned of a terribly alarming statistic. I learned that African Americans were making up at least half (if not more than half) of all new HIV cases in the US and in African American women, and the numbers were rising (Currently, the CDC states that 51% of new cases in 2007 were in African Americans. We made up 12% of the US population then). I couldn't just sit on this information and not do anything about it, so I looked online for any type of organization whose focus was on HIV/AIDS. I finally learned about The Wright House and went to the next volunteer orientation meeting. The rest, as they say, is history.

So, there's my story. Now, we at The Wright House like to know how you're affected by HIV/AIDS. Are you positive, undetectable, a caretaker, family member, partner, or friend of someone who has the disease? The Wright House would like to hear from you. For the rest of this series, all stories will remain anonymous.

Please e-mail info@thewrighthouse.org so that a member of the newsletter staff can get in touch with you.



Looking for something FREE to do over the summer?

By Kristin McDuffie, Volunteer

Blues on the Green: Austin's largest free concert series is held in Zilker Park, hosted by 107.1 KGSR from June through August, every other week. Bring out blankets and lawn chairs and enjoy free music on summer nights!

Unplugged at the Grove: A free, all ages outdoor music series that runs each Thursday night from April to September at Shady Grove restaurant on Barton Springs Road adjacent to Zilker Park is sponsored by KGSR Radio. Tables fill up fast, but it is allowed to bring folding chairs and blankets to sit on the lawn. Parking is available in the Shady Grove parking lot, but not in the nearby neighborhoods. It's always a good idea to get there early for a good parking spot and a good seat.

Republic Square Park: The Austin Parks Foundation often holds free movie nights in the middle of downtown Austin. The movies are projected on a huge outdoor screen, and attendees sit out on the grass lawn to watch. Dogs, lawn chairs, and picnic tables are allowed, though alcohol is not. The movies start at dusk.

Zilker Hillside Theater: Located in Zilker Park across the parking lot from Barton Springs swimming pool (2206 William Barton Drive), the stage is located in a natural amphitheater under a stand of 100 year old pecan trees and features numerous locally produced musical and dance oriented events including the Austin Symphony, Shakespeare in the Park and the annual Zilker Summer Musical. Most events start at 8 PM and blankets can be placed on the hillside after 6 PM. Theatre goers may bring a picnic or other refreshments, but alcohol is not permitted in the park.

Zilker Botanical Garden: This 21-acre park in the Barton Springs area is open year-round and is free to visit. There are multiple themed gardens, such as a romantic rose garden, butterfly garden, and Japanese garden complete with a koi pond. There is also a prehistoric garden; dinosaurs actually once roamed this area, so there is a life-sized dinosaur statue and plants from the crustaceous period.

Mt. Bonnell: This historic peak has been a major attraction in Austin since the 1850s. The scenic overlook is the highest point in the Austin City Limits. It requires a climb up many steps, but once you get to the top, the view over Lake Austin is stunning. You can also see downtown and the 360 bridge from up here. It is a very romantic spot, perfect for a date night

or picnic.

Barton Creek Greenbelt: If you love being outdoors, you will love exploring the Barton Creek Greenbelt, which consists of 809 acres of land. It is near downtown but offers a secluded escape from the city. The Greenbelt has dozens of hiking and biking trails at a variety of levels, and there are several natural swimming holes. Some people also use the limestone cliffs for rock climbing. Dogs are welcome.

The Harry Ransom Center: Visit the home of the original Gutenberg Bible which was created in 1456 along with musical compositions and manuscripts of Beethoven, Galileo and Hemingway.

Blanton Museum of Art: The largest arm museum in Austin features a substantial permanent collection of important works of art as well as traveling collections from around the world and is FREE on Thursdays. 200 East Martin Luther King Boulevard.

Information taken from:
Austintex.com
About.com
Thingstodoinaustin.com

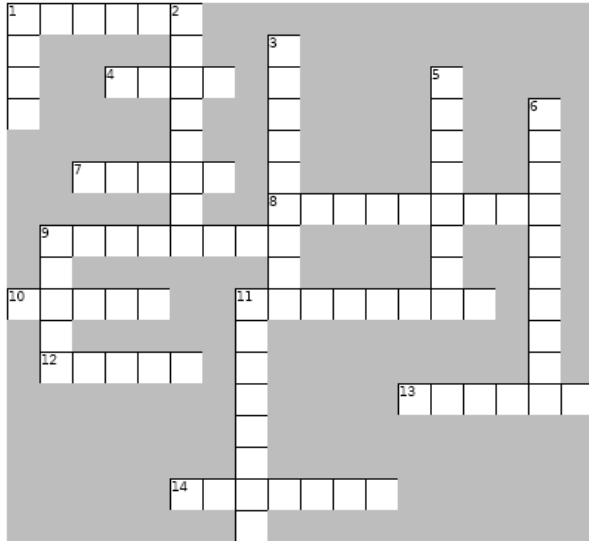


Summer Soiree is Thursday July 22nd, 2010!

Attention one and all!! The Summer Soiree is right around the corner and we can't wait for the fun to begin! For those who've never attended, the annual Soiree marks our favorite time of summer when The Wright House clients, staff, volunteers, and board members get together to break bread and share in some summertime fun.

Delicious food, an ice cream sundae bar, games, and prizes are what make the Soiree a hit year after year. The Soiree will take place on Thursday, July 22nd at Kleberg Hall from 6:30-9pm. Can't wait to see you there!

Summer Time



- | Across | Down |
|--|---|
| 1 A meal at the park | 1 A good place to go for a picnic |
| 4 The 4th of _____ | 2 It's needed to keep pools clean |
| 7 If you don't want to go out, stay in and watch a _____ | 3 Your skin's best friend |
| 8 _____ Pack the car, we're going on a _____ | 5 The summer is a popular time to go on a _____ |
| 9 This is often in the backyard | 6 Summer time footwear |
| 10 Stay hydrated with this | 9 A sandy vacation destination |
| 11 An icy treat | 11 A favorite summer time activity |
| 12 Hot and _____ | |
| 13 The eighth month | |
| 14 Protect your skin to avoid _____ | |

Hill Country Ride 2010

By Gregory W Golston, Volunteer

Saturday, April 24th I had another wonderful day volunteering my massage services for The Hill Country Ride 2010. Since 1999, when the Ride was established, I have volunteered almost every year for this great cause and have enjoyed it. The ride starts and ends at Krause Springs, which is located in Spicewood, Texas. This is a spectacular place to have as the base of operations for the ride. It is very pretty and enchanting. To learn more about this great facility, go to their website: krausesprings.net.

The riders have several distances they can choose to ride: 10, 45, 65 or 100 miles along the scenic mountain bike trails which all have volunteers at different stops along the way. Each stop has a different theme so the riders never know what will be around the bend. In addition to the stops, there are volunteer crews that drive the bike trails to ensure the riders' safety. Whether it's a flat tire, accident or just tuckered out, the support crews are there to assist.

The last few years, I have set up my massage table at the lunch pit stop. The weather was great and cooperated this year for the riders. The lunch pit stop was not as full like last year when the drought was on and it was hitting 100+ degrees. This year there were several new riders who ended up with leg cramps and didn't want to be driven back to Krause Springs because they were set on going the distance. This determination to complete the ride was prevalent by all who I massaged. This type of determination is the reason the riders have raised over \$627,000 to help those in need. The ride has ten local agencies that are beneficiaries. They are: AIDS Services of Austin; ALLGO; C.A.R.E. Program; The Care Communities; Community Action, Inc.; Friends of David Powell Health Center; Out Youth Austin; Project Transitions; Waterloo Counseling Center; and our very own The Wright House Wellness Center.

To get a jump start on volunteering or being a rider for the 2011 ride, head to the Hill Country Ride website (hillcountryride.org) and sign up!



Salmon Patties

Ingredients

1 beaten egg
1/4 cup skim milk
1/4 cup chopped green onions (2)
1 Tbsp snipped fresh dill or 1 tsp dried dill
1/4 tsp black pepper
1 - 14 3/4-ounce can salmon, drained
1/4 cup fine dry bread crumbs
1 Tbsp cooking oil

Directions

In a medium bowl combine the egg, milk, green onions, dill, and pepper. Add salmon and bread crumbs; mix well. Form mixture into eight 1/2-inch thick patties. In a large skillet cook patties in hot oil over medium-low heat about 6 minutes or until golden brown, turning once. If desired, serve with low-fat tartar sauce and your favorite vegetable as a side.

Nutritional Info

Servings Per Recipe: 4

Amount Per Serving

Calories: 157.8
Total Fat: 6.9 g
Cholesterol: 62.4 mg
Sodium: 85.1 mg
Total Carbs: 0.0 g
Dietary Fiber: 0.0 g
Protein: 22.5 g



Recipe from *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine.

Pride 2010

By Kathleen McCann, Volunteer

Hours of making condom packets and florets finally paid off on Saturday, June 5th, when staff members and volunteers of The Wright House Wellness Center marched alongside their float in the Austin Gay Pride Parade, winning an award for "Best Social Commentary." The theme of the float was "Proud to Know Our Status, with each participant wearing a t-shirt with a plus sign, a minus sign or a question mark across the chest, in order to promote HIV testing. Like last year, The Wright House marched with members from AIDS Services of Austin, Care, Care Communities, Q Boyz and Project Transitions, and for the first time, the Lonestar Rollergirls also joined in, skating behind the float and passing out condom packets to an enthusiastic crowd.

On Saturday morning, participants met at the Q Boyz clubhouse and assembled the float over a bounty of eggs, pancakes, sausage and croissants. This year's float featured a large AIDS ribbon made out of red sequins with wooden men holding hands around it. The men were painted the colors of the pride flag, with signs around their necks reading, "Proud to Know Our Status," the float's theme. Members of The Wright House put the final touches on the float in the blistering, ninety degree weather, while others finished the last of the condom packets.

At 7:30 in the evening, everyone walking in the parade met at Auditorium Shores, while judges evaluated the floats, reporters took pictures, and passersby admired the floats. At 8:30, the parade began, marching up the South First Bridge, taking a right down Cesar Chavez, a left up Congress, and ending at Guadalupe. Participants passed out thousands of condom packets, waved glow sticks, yelled and hollered, "Proud to Know Our Status!" and "Get Tested!" Those observing the parade included people of all ages, clad in rainbow boas and beads, holding up signs that read, "Proud to be Gay" and "More Equality Leads to More Peace."

Other organizations in the parade included the Austin Public Library, who won "Best Overall." The librarians dressed in white and gray, with plastic headpieces and wings that resembled feathers from a distance. They danced enthusiastically, flapping their wings around their mascot, a large owl. Many churches participated this year, including St. David's Episcopal Church, St. John's United Methodist Church and Holy Cross Lutheran Church. The gay bars were represented as usual, such as Oil Can Harry's, Rain on 4th and Charlie's. Other memorable floats included The United Court of Austin, Equality Texas and Drag Queen Pug, who won "Most Outrageous."