

# Wellness Notes

July, August, September 2009

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

## Food Bank Finds New Home

*Leah Graham, Executive Director*

The Wright House Wellness Center and AIDS Services of Austin have partnered to provide HIV Food Bank services from one location in the Austin Transitional Grant Area (TGA). Services are provided out of ASA's Helping Hands Food Bank two times per month to eligible clients. Each agency still performs their own separate eligibility screening, intake, follow-up, and reporting activities. WHWC employs one Food Bank Coordinator and one Food Bank Volunteer who work with ASA staff to provide services. WHWC Case Managers are onsite at ASA on Food Bank days to meet with clients as well.

The collaboration comes as a result of AIDS Service Organizations within the area working more closely together to enhance services for clients and education of the community. WHWC and ASA both receive food pantry funding, but from two different sources, the City of Austin HIV Services Division and Ryan White Part A respectively.

This collaboration means that all clients receiving food bank services have the same food and nutritional choices, as well as access to a medical nutrition program, if needed. It also means that the funding received by each agency is able to be stretched a bit farther to meet the needs of the many clients who request these services.

WHWC would like to thank ASA for this new partnership and the openness you have shown to WHWC clients, staff, and volunteers.

If you are interested in Food Bank Services, please contact your Case Manager at 467-0088. You will be asked a few simple questions to determine eligibility. If you are eligible for services, you will be placed on the waiting list.

## In this issue...

Food Bank Finds New Home.....	pg 1
New Location.....	pg 1
Hill Country Ride for AIDS.....	pg 2
Pet Therapy.....	pg 3
Pride Parade.....	pg 3
Calendar of Events.....	pg 4
CulinART Juried Art Show Winners Showcase.....	pg 4
Volunteer Appreciation Dinner.....	pg 4
Puzzles.....	pg 5
Don't Forget.....	pg 6
Hypertension.....	pg 6
Stress.....	pg 6
Chia Seeds.....	pg 7

## Cesar Chavez Office Has Moved

After months of planning and tons of hard work by WHWC staff and volunteers, our move is finally complete. Our Disease Prevention and Volunteer Offices have moved from East Cesar Chavez to our new location at the Walnut Creek Office Park on the southeast corner of the intersection of Cameron Road. and Rutherford Lane. Our office locations, phone and fax numbers are listed below.

A special **Thank You** to **M & M Super Moving** for so graciously and expeditiously moving us to the new location. Your support of our community is **AWESOME!**



## Hill Country Ride For AIDS - 10 years and still pedaling

*Anthony Jerome Norris, Rider and Volunteer*

The 2009 Hill Country Ride for AIDS will always invoke special memories for me. From my Facebook fundraising, friends and family supporting me, to the training rides and incredible house parties, and not to mention, the fact that a record number of Riders and Crew smashed through the \$650,000 goal, make this a very special year!

On the day of the ride, we gathered in the Hill Country where volunteers set up fun and festive breakfast stations, drink stations and bike assistance centers. Cliff Bar, Bicycle Sport Shop Whole Foods, and a host of other sponsors provided snacks and bicycle assistance for riders. With every possible amenity taken care of we could keep our sites set on the starting gate.

The Texas weather decided to partner with us providing a cool and misty morning. We all know the Texas temperatures can be brutal, but that day the clouds scattered in the sky and kept it cool and breezy making for a pleasant riding experience. Children, riding groups, and riding pros all came together in harmony to celebrate life. Naturally, the pros tackled the hundred mile century ride while the rest of us chose between the 65, 45 and 10 mile loops.

A few miles into the ride you begin to realize how beautiful the Texas Hill country is and how fun the volunteer pit stops are. With themes like The Love Boat to the Dukes of Hazard we had a blast stopping to rest. Pictures, dancing, food, and more were all provided at every pit stop and if you chose to take a break from riding you were scooped up by the themed SAG wagons. Did I mention the food at every pit stop? I just love the food at every pit stop!

The ride continued on for miles and miles and at times it felt like there was no end in sight. We kept on pedaling for a cause; greater than the pain I felt in my thighs. Hours later, there it was, the last stretch of the ride dedicated to all who have been touched by HIV/ AIDS. The 2-mile Ride of Silence was a time to reflect, rejoice, remember and recommit to next year's ride.

There are more people than ever living with AIDS. They all need our love and support. By being a part of the Hill Country Ride for AIDS, we not only show our neighbors living with AIDS that we are with them, we are also doing something big to provide critical services for our neighbors and friends who need us.

The Hill Country Ride for AIDS has quickly grown to be one of the most loved events of the year. A Hill Country Rider summed it up for many when he said "The fellowship and commitment to the cause is so strong on this Ride, and the money goes where it belongs. I am so proud! I'll be back." The Hill Country Ride for AIDS is for all levels. The spirit manifest in this event stems from the fact that it's a ride, not a race. Everyone is welcome, and when asked why they ride some will say it's about riding to honor a loved one, some will say it's about a physical challenge and achieving more than they ever thought they could, while for some it's about trying to do something really big to help people living with AIDS. While each person has their own special reason for riding everyone will say it's an incredible weekend of a community coming together to show that when we care, nothing can stand in our way.



## The Benefits of Pet Therapy for Sick People

Dr. Eric Barchas, DVM (from <http://blog.dogster.com>)

Emotional well-being and physical well-being are closely linked. This fact seems self-evident. It makes sense that sick people recover faster if they are happy, comfortable, and free of pain. However, anyone who has spent time in a hospital will probably agree that patients' emotional well-being often takes a back seat to raw science.

Some members of the nursing profession are working to make hospitals more pleasant for patients. An article in the May, 2008 issue of [American Nurse Today](#) points out one way to enhance patients' emotional well-being: pet therapy. (Hat tip to Denie for passing along the article, which is written for nurses.)

By providing the benefits of human-animal interactions, pet therapy can promote a patient's health and recovery. And you can use this creative intervention for patients in almost any setting—even patients who don't have pets.

The article makes several points. First, the authors state that people who are hospitalized often worry about pets who are at home without anyone to care for them. The authors suggest that nurses help to confirm that the pets are being responsibly cared for. This leads to decreased stress and improved clinical condition in hospitalized humans.

The authors also recommend that, if possible, sick people should be allowed to visit with their pets. And they point out that people who don't have pets often benefit from time spent with specially trained and certified therapy animals.

Finally, regular readers of this blog know that I love to talk about the health benefits that humans derive from their pets. (For instance, see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).) Therefore, I found the following boxed text in the article to be completely irresistible.

**How pets improve our health.** The benefits of pet companionship and interactions include:

- less stress
- lower blood pressure
- lower cholesterol levels
- less cardiovascular disease
- increased fun
- reduced sense of loneliness
- increased socialization and reminiscences
- increased physical activity
- increased sense of responsibility and alertness
- improved overall health leading to fewer doctor appointments

The article discussed in this post was written by Charlotte McKenny, BSN, RN and Rebecca Johnson, PhD, RN, FAAN.

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## 2009 Pride Parade

Chris Peterson, Volunteer

The 2009 Austin Pride Parade was a great success. This year's theme was "One Community One Pride." Thanks to the help of multiple organizations including AIDS Services Austin, The Care Communities, MHMR - CARE Program, Project Transitions, and the Qboyz we were able to construct a beautiful float for the parade. Across many Monday volunteer meetings and the Saturday prior to the parade, we were able to make thousands of florets and assemble the various other components for the float.



The finished float was more amazing than we could have imagined. Pictured above, there were five figures outlined in lights, each representing a color of the rainbow flag. The entire float was draped in florets and included two sets of streamers at the front and back. Once the sun set, the float lit up and looked brilliant as it moved down the streets of downtown Austin proudly representing the groups that work so hard to help educate and inform those with and at risk of contracting HIV. The crowd was amazing and we all had a wonderful night.

## **Can You Feel It? Volunteer Appreciation Dinner**

*Chris Peterson, Volunteer*

Volunteering for The Wright House Wellness Center is a reward in itself; however, once a year The Center hosts a special evening to celebrate everyone that gives of their time. The Volunteer Appreciation Dinner was held at Kleberg Hall, located just steps from The Wright House, and dinner featured lasagna prepared and donated by Magnolia Café.

A video and slideshow of the many wonderful WHWC events held throughout the year was the highlight of the evening. The video was accompanied by The Jackson's "Can You Feel It" and featured volunteers at events including: CulinART, Summer Soiree, Pride Parade, MasqRed Ball, and Jingle Bell Jubilee.

After the slideshow, select volunteers were recognized with Volunteer of the Year Awards in 5 categories. Two Honorable Mentions were also given out as WHWC has had so many valuable and giving volunteers over the past year.

### **Volunteer of the Year Award recipients include:**

- Administrative Volunteer - Melody Cheney
- Event Volunteer - Kristin McDuffie
- Direct Service Volunteer - Tim Bailey
- Outreach Volunteer - Elaine Quesada
- Practitioner - Nicole Hines
- Honorable Mention - Al Shults
- Honorable Mention - Chris Peterson

I was greatly honored to get this award though it wouldn't have been possible if The Wright House wasn't such a wonderful place with magnificent and caring people.

## **2009 CulinART Juried Art Show Winners Showcase**

*Chris Peterson, Volunteer*

On Thursday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, Austin Art Garage graciously hosted a showcase of the four artists that won the juried art competition at this year's CulinART event. CulinART is WHWC's annual event mixing culinary and visual arts together, planned and hosted by the International Special Events Society - Austin (ISES). All art was donated by the artists and once judged for the competition, entered into a silent art auction. Winners of the competition include:

- First Place - Misty Meadows,
- Second Place - Jonathan Stoffregen,
- Third Place - Paul McGuire
- Honorable Mention - Catherine Hart
- Honorable Mention - Misty Meadows

WHWC thanks Austin Art Garage for hosting the Showcase, Jonathan Stoffregen for providing catering/drinks and Stacy Hoyt for coordinating the Showcase.

## **Calendar**

### **July**

- 2 - Board Meeting
- 11 - *Tainted Love* Benefit at Chain Drive,
- 15 - Volunteer Orientation
- 18-19 - Austin Pond Society Tour, [www.austinpondsociety.org](http://www.austinpondsociety.org)
- 23 - Summer Soiree Client Social

### **August**

- 8 - United Court of Austin Emperor/Empress Voting, 9a-5p at 4301-B North IH-35, bring valid picture ID
- 13 - Board Meeting
- 15 - United Court of Austin Coronation XVI, [www.unitedcourtofaustin.org/coronation.htm](http://www.unitedcourtofaustin.org/coronation.htm)
- 19 - Volunteer Orientation

### **September**

- 7 - Offices closed for Labor Day
- 10 - Board Meeting
- 16 - Volunteer Orientation
- 17 - Meet WHWC Event; Board, Volunteer, Donor, Supporter Recruitment Event

Call 467-0088 or go to [www.thewrighthouse.org](http://www.thewrighthouse.org) for more information.

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## Summer Time

Summer is officially here! Find each of the summer time words below in the diagram.  
Words can be up, down, forward, backward, or diagonal. Good luck!

- Air Conditioning
- August
- Beach
- Cookout
- Family Reunion
- Heat
- Ice Cream
- Independence Day
- July
- Road Trip
- Snow Cone
- Summer Soiree
- Sunshine
- Swimming
- Vacation

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## What is this Hypertension Word All About?

*Karly Slayton, Volunteer*

So there is a lot of hype these days about hypertension, also known as high blood pressure. This is for good reason. Did you know that one in three of us have it and do not even know it. This is why high blood pressure is called the silent killer. Scary huh. Even worse it can cause heart attacks, heart failure, kidney problems, and strokes to name a few. The only way to catch this sneaky booger is to have a simple blood pressure check. No needles—just a quick squeeze around your arm.

There is good news though. There are things we can change on our own without medications which may help lower our numbers. The American Heart Association web site says 140/90 is considered high blood pressure. Although I will tell you I have heard they are going to lower those numbers.

So what can you do to lower your blood pressure? If it's ok with your doctor exercise is a great first step. Not only will this help you lose weight and keep fit it also helps control stress which can cause an increase in blood pressure.

Decreasing salt intake is another very important step to take. There are salt substitutes such as Nu-Salt and NoSalt which are good, but you need to check with your doctor before using these.

Reducing your alcohol consumption is another great way to lower your blood pressure. If you can it's best to abstain completely. Other methods for reducing hypertension include yoga, meditation, reading, and deep breathing exercises. Explore these options and find out what works best for you.

There are three things people have no control of:

- **Race.** Blacks develop high blood pressure more often than whites. Often starts earlier and more severe.
- **Heredity.** If your parents had it you have a greater chance.
- **Age.** As you age your chances for developing high blood pressure increases.

For more information visit the American Heart Association website at

## Don't Forget...

- All Volunteers are invited to participate in our
- Volunteer Club! Volunteer Club continues to meet each Monday evening at 6:00 p.m. at the Volunteer Offices.
- Yoga and Acupuncture services will resume August 2009.
- Massage services continue at the new location by. Call 512-236-8901 to schedule an appointment.
- Disease Prevention services are offered at our new Walnut Creek (WC) location.
- Disease Management Services are still being offered at The House (4301-B North IH-35). Call

## Stress

*Karly Slayton, Volunteer*

Okay we all have it. Some have it worse than others. There are many things we can do to make it less uncomfortable.

Let's look at a few things:

- Try to eliminate as much as you can. For example if crowds bother you—try to go to the store when you know it will not be as busy.
- If clutter bothers you. Try having a garage sale or donate what you do not need.
- If you find yourself always running late. Leave ten minutes early for your appointment if possible.
- This one can be difficult. If you have to be around someone that really bothers you, try to have others near you to buffer/absorb some of that pressure.
- Try to do one thing at a time. I have found this to be incredibly helpful.
- Remember that even though our culture has begun to dictate we should always be doing something. It is okay to do nothing sometimes.
- If your stress is feeling out of control talk to your doctor!



## Chia Seeds

Tina Simms, Volunteer

Ch-Ch-Ch-Chia! You may remember this catchy phrase from the Chia Pet TV commercials first aired in the 1980s. Well, chia's making a comeback! Okay, not the pets (which never really went away) - but chia seeds. The same seeds used to grow the cute plant that served as chia pet "fur" are now being recognized for their health benefits.

Some historians date the use of chia seeds as food as early as 3500 B.C. Ancient Aztec warriors relied on chia for nourishment and endurance during conquests, as did southwest Indians traveling from the Colorado River to California on trade missions. More recently, a 2007 University of Toronto study published in *Diabetes Care* revealed that a quarter of a cup of chia seeds has as much omega-3 fatty acid as a salmon filet, 25% more dietary fiber than flaxseed, 30% more antioxidants than blueberries, and as much calcium as three cups of milk. So what does this mean for your health? Here are the highlights:

**Fiber**—Chia contains both insoluble and soluble fiber. The general benefits of insoluble fiber are reduced risk of breast and colon cancer; the general benefits of soluble fiber are reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and some cancers. More specifically, consuming fiber is important for gastrointestinal health (it keeps you "regular"); is associated with reduced risk of type 2 diabetes; can be a component of weight management; and reduces the risk of coronary heart disease.

**Omega-3 Fatty Acids**—Chia contains one of the highest amounts of omega-3 fatty acids known in the plant world. The benefits of consuming omega-3 fatty acids are reduced risk of cardiovascular disease; a decrease in total cholesterol levels; boosting the immune system; and in young children, aid in neurological development.

**Antioxidants**—Chia has a high ORAC value (Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity is a measure used to describe overall antioxidant capacity of foods). The benefit of consuming antioxidants is reducing oxidative stress, and, hence, helping to prevent the onset of various diseases and conditions, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, immune dysfunction, and cataracts.

Additional pluses of chia are that it is a great source of protein (contains approximately 20%, compared to wheat's 14%); is cholesterol, trans fat, and gluten free; and contains niacin, folic acid, calcium, magnesium, iron, and potassium. Also, you can eat as much chia as you want without any negative health effects; and limited allergen tests have shown no reactions to chia, even in people allergic to nuts.

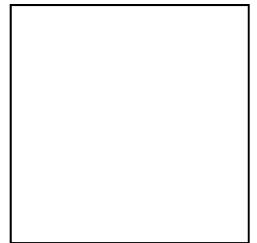
As for taste, chia is bland, not as nutty as flaxseed, and can be added to foods and drinks without changing their taste. Chia bars and chia crackers can be purchased online, but it's more common to buy the seeds and sprinkle them on salads, cereal, and other foods, or mix them in drinks. (They can be found at health food stores, Central Market, and Whole Foods.) If you want to be more creative, you can find recipes using chia seeds on different websites (<http://www.integratedhealth.com/recipes.asp>; <http://natures-emporium.com/chianrecipes.html>; <http://www.naturalremi-teas.com/Chia-Seeds-Recipes.htm>.)

Here's a quick and easy smoothie recipe found at [www.eatchia.com](http://www.eatchia.com):

### Banana Cream Smoothie

- 1 cup yogurt (dairy or non-dairy)
- 1 banana
- 1/4 cup fresh or frozen strawberries
- 2 T soaked Chia seed
- 1 T raw honey

Instructions: Blend 30-45 seconds or to desired smoothness.



Thank you to all our  
Supporters, Donors, and Volunteers  
for over 21 years of service!