



THE POSITIVE QUARTERLY

A Publication by and for the HIV/AIDS Population of the State of Michigan

April-June, 2002

Volume 4, Issue 2

Nationally Renown Advocates to Speak at Michigan's Annual PWA Retreat

Cleve Jones, founder of the NAMES Project and AIDS Memorial Quilt, will be keynote speaker opening night at Michigan's PLWH/A Task Force Annual Retreat.

Also confirmed as presenter is executive director of the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) Terje Anderson, who will teach a course in 'Activism 101.'

The highly popular retreat organized exclusively for the HIV positive population will be held at the Holiday Inn in Grand Haven May 10-12.

A panel of task force members including Tracey Dominiack, Derrick Anderson, Rev. James Curry, Mark Peterson and Felix and Paula Sirs, will present



a workshop on 'Advocating for Others: Caring About Cultural Diversity and Social Justice.'

Participants will also learn how to interpret lab results, understand Social Security, participate in open discussions on Women and HIV, and learn basic care tailored both for men and women.

Attendees are given the unique opportunity to participate in task force-created sur-

veys used to identify unmet needs in care and prevention. These surveys have become important tools in the statewide process and results from past surveys have directly influenced the planning and implementation of goals on the statewide level.

One hundred scholarships will be provided for HIV positive residents of the state. Scholarships include the conference registration fee, hotel room and all meals. Attendees are responsible for providing their own transportation to and from the retreat.

First-time participants are given priority in providing scholarships to the annual retreat, but if you have been to past retreats and want to attend again, feel free to apply. *Retreat, continued pg 3*

Thoughts From the Chair.....Mark Peterson

‘There’s Strength in Numbers...and I’m Not Talking About CD4 Counts’

As I write this article, I’m surrounded with just what it is I need to say. Maybe it’s my meds playing their little game of “now you’re crazy...now you’re not.” Maybe it’s my Gemini/ADD/killed too many brain cells in the 80’s attention span that keeps me hopping around in mental gymnastics like a five year old on Pixie Sticks and Cherry Coke.

Maybe (and most likely) it’s the fact that I carry a very specific and not-too-attractive family trait. See, my ability to say the wrong thing at the wrong time and upset an entire room of people is a treasured gift handed down from my Sicilian grandfather. “Pappy,” as we called my Grandpa Carone, would laugh at funerals, embarrass family and friends, and send up-tight White Anglo Saxon Protestants running for cover with his eloquent and stabbing social commentary. God, I loved that man! Not just because he was fun at parties, but because what he said was the simple, unfiltered, unapologetic truth.

My point is, when I should be graciously welcoming fellow PWAs to our retreat and diplomatically spreading the word about Task Force activities to PWAs and service providers, I simply can’t do it. Why? There are so many important issues that deeply impact the lives of PWAs in Michigan. For us as the Task Force and me as Task Force chair, not to comment on them would be a dereliction of our duty to advocate for PWAs in our state. It’s not that I want to bring up things that will upset some of us, it’s that I have to. So, buckle up, here it goes.

The Task Force Department of Corrections Work Group has been meeting to complete our position paper on the state of HIV/AIDS care and prevention inside our state facilities. Our research and first hand knowledge has shown us many ugly truths faced by PWAs behind bars in Michigan. I’m not going to release specific information in this article because the position paper is not yet finished. Look for it in April. I will, however, highlight some of the problem areas we have noticed:

- No clear standards of care for HIV positive inmates
- Very poor linkages to the continuum of care outside of the prison system
- What appears to be systematic confidentiality concerns
- Concerns over appropriateness of prevention education within Michigan

These are just a few of the issues that will be addressed in our upcoming position paper. Please remember that the most disempowered group of PWAs in Michigan are those who have no means by which to advocate for themselves. We must, as a PWA advocacy body, speak out for our fellow PWAs behind bars.

Another issue of growing concern is the return of “just say no” public health messages. We shouldn’t be upset about the philosophy of this message. After all, conservatives will be conservatives. What we should be upset about is our lack of advocacy on this issue. We must educate our policy makers on what are appropriate prevention interventions and for whom.

Oh wait- I just had to go to our front office to distribute condoms to walk-in clients. Can you believe they were *teenagers*? We know that abstinence works for a few people, but what about the rest of the population? That’s where we need to be heard. The only way to be heard on this or any other issue is by actually getting out of our comfort zone and SAYING SOMETHING! If our policy makers choose to make an idiotic policy regarding public health, let them make it because of their own political whims and not because they were uninformed.

The final issue I’d like to cover has to do with the Task Force itself. I’m old enough (and my flip-trip-fall down the stairs this morning proves it) to remember the signs and T-shirts which stated “Silence=Death.” Not a truer statement has ever been said about HIV and AIDS. However when it comes to PWA advisory groups, I’d like to re-tool that saying by stating “Drama=Death.”

THOUGHTS, continued on page 8

AIDS Memorial Quilt Display will be Largest Public Presentation for 2002

Western Michigan will play host to the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt when it is displayed May 9-12, 2002 at the Grand Valley State University Field House in Allendale. This showing is the largest planned

by the NAMES Project anywhere in the country this year.

Opening ceremonies are Thursday, May 9, 7-10 pm. Quilt founder Cleve Jones will be in attendance at the opening and at a reception.

The Quilt will also be open for viewing Friday, May 10 and Saturday, May 11 from 9 am to 9 pm., with various seminars offered on Saturday.

Closing ceremonies are Sunday, May 12, from 12 noon to 5 pm. Sunday at 5 pm, new panels will be dedicated.

The AIDS Memorial Quilt is a unique educational tool that celebrates the lives of those who have died of AIDS. It also serves to raise awareness about the disease by providing an educational experience for individuals, families, churches, organizations and students. Its overwhelming presence confirms the fact that the AIDS crisis is not over, and in many ways is still just beginning.

A devoted group of citizens, members of academia, AIDS service providers, social service providers from Kent, Ottawa and Muskegon counties and representatives of the Kent County Health Department helped to make this event possible.

Helping to unfold and fold up sections of the Quilt can be an especially moving and reverential experience. Persons interested in volunteering in various capacities for the event may log on to the event website at: www.westmichiganquilt.org.

A shuttle bus will be provided to transport Task Force retreat participants to and from the AIDS Quilt presentation.

RETREAT, continued from page 1

ply. Last minute cancellations often open a spot.

Applications can be printed from the task force website, www.mipwa.org, or may be requested by calling task force liaison Belinda Chandler at 517-241-5926. The deadline for scholarship applications is April 19.

Cleve Jones is a nationally recognized advocate who has been on the forefront of the AIDS battle since the very beginning. Jones is author of the book "Stitching a Revolution" which chronicles his journey from a young politically involved young man into one of the nation's most intelligent and prescient voices on HIV/AIDS issues.

NAPWA is primary sponsor of the annual AIDS Watch advocacy training held in Washington DC every year.

In Stitches

I first saw the Quilt in Houston, Texas. I knew no one represented by those patches of fabric. There were the individuals I had nursed in San Francisco, who passed quickly, painfully and mostly alone. The Quilt room was eerie, like walking in an invisible graveyard, being newly infected myself and diagnosed for death.

I saw the Quilt in San Francisco, California, and it had grown, taking up a wing of an arena. The quilts were only a portion of the total patches and I knew some of the people and even who had put in some of the stitch.

I saw the Quilt in Detroit, Michigan, and wondered who would make mine. There were even two of the ten quilts I had helped make on display. By now I knew names and faces. The weight of those images made me cry and smile and gave me strength to be proud and to fight through all of the baggage that HIV carries. The pieces took up so much space, and still there are more to be made.

Today I represent the Quilt, as a living seam in the pride of those that stood up and spoke out, were closeted and afraid in denial and self-denigration. Those who were HIV born, chemically dependent, good wives and sexual partners. Those who were prostitutes and substitutes, those raped, incarcerated and just out and out whores, gay, straight, and Bi, Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, young and old, male and female.

I am the thread of them all, bound by the cloth of our lives that has caused me to be positive in so many ways. Where? When? How? How about right now, and I can still laugh in stitches.

Felix Sirls
1-17-02

A Story of Three Black Men

It takes a man of conviction and personal strength to express his views even if they are contrary to those of colleagues and persons in position of power within his political party. Such is the case of Secretary of State Colin Powell who recently made headlines for publicly supporting the use of condoms by sexually active persons in order to protect themselves from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Far from spouting the accepted Republican Party opinion, Powell, who is obviously autonomous enough in action and secure enough in his official position to speak his mind, provided the public a more open look at the person who really embodies such a unique position in this difficult and tumultuous time in history. That he has the presence to call it as he sees it without thinking he must watch his tongue gives hope that he has not compromised his principles in order to succeed in what is still in many ways a white man's world.

Similarly, another black man of significant power, former surgeon general David Satcher, gave the Administration pause when his report on sexual health, released just before his term ended, concluded that evidence does not support "teaching teens sexual abstinence by itself is effective." This fact, clearly evident to those involved in public health and STD prevention, is a reality that the current Administration needs to readdress if it intends to make any headway into the problem.

Satcher made other profound scientifically-based conclusions during his tenure. His research led him to support the success and validity of needle exchange programs in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and other blood-borne diseases such as Hepatitis A, B and C. All recent Administrations of both major political parties have balked at federally funding those programs.

Now we find Cal Thomas, another black man, but one who uses his position as a nationally syndicated columnist to more often than not selectively choose his facts to bolster his preconceived opinions, rather than allowing facts to reshape his opinion, emulating the mode of the Pat Robertson-Rush Limbaugh school of quasi-journalism. His recent prattling denounced AIDS funding in broad generalizations as if the worst pandemic in modern history should not receive adequate financial support, citing various misuses of funds documented by the organization Citizens Against Government Waste.

Not one of us who is HIV positive, or our supporters, wants to see misappropriation of HOPWA, Ryan White CARE Act funding, or prevention dollars. Many of us have heard of such shenanigans, even in Michigan, and we are not pleased. However, Thomas does not substantiate that the safe-sex workshops with which he holds such contempt were necessarily financed with the government funding in question or from private donations that may in fact support such creative uses.

Supporters of the annual AIDS Watch, including the National Association of People With AIDS, the National Organizations Responding to AIDS coalition, and AIDS Action, among others, have provided detailed analysis which proves that AIDS dollars are an economic investment that is easily cost effective. Every infection prevented also eliminates a well-over-\$100,000 cost of life-time treatment and keeps the person as a healthy, active, tax-paying citizen. In addition, AIDS research discovers incredible scientific breakthroughs that vastly increase our collective knowledge of other disease and immune system processes.

Which is why, if you are HIV positive, and if you have had enough of close-minded obstructionists posing as politicians in positions of power making decisions that affect your life, you owe it to yourself to become involved with AIDS Watch 2002. Yes, it's happening again, May 5-7, 2002, in Washington, DC, and there has to be at least hundreds of you out there in Michigan who are capable of taking hold of your disease and becoming advocates with the public and politicians.

Once again, the Bush Administration has proposed a new budget that flat-funds HIV and AIDS. This comes on the heels of an extraordinarily difficult and hard-fought battle over the current budget, which did finally receive a modicum of funding increase and for which those of us who were involved thought our point had finally been made so that we wouldn't have to go through the whole process again.

Check out the information at www.napwa.org/aidswatch.htm, or call 202-898-0414, ext. 124. Whatever your race, gender or sexual orientation, look to Colin Powell and David Satcher for inspiration. Speak the truth. Loudly.

**The Positive Quarterly
Publishers:
Michigan's PLWH/A Task Force
P.O. Box 30195
Lansing, MI 48909
Email: info@mipwa.org
Http://www.mipwa.org
© 2002 Michigan PWA Task Force**

**Editor/Marketing Chair: Gary Karch
Task Force Chair: Mark Peterson
Chair-Elect: Tim Monahan
Membership & Management Chair: Barb Garrison
Special Events Committee: Selvy Hall-Kinnard
Outreach & Needs Assessment Chair: Mark Peterson
Legislative Education Chair: Rick Otterbein
Executive Advisor: Sammye Stamper**

Collaboration Proves Beneficial for Politically Involved PWA Community

By **RICK OTTERBEIN**
Legislative Education Chair

On February 27th and 28th, members of the HIV/AIDS Alliance of Michigan (HAAM), the Michigan AIDS Fund, and the Task Force visited Lansing in an effort to educate our state legislators on the current trends, statistics and needs for HIV care and prevention for residents of Michigan. The event started out with training for advocates on how to talk to our elected officials about our needs.

From there, advocates went off to meet with elected officials during scheduled appointments that afternoon and the next day. Legislators were informed that HIV/AIDS is still an infectious, incurable and usually fatal disease that strikes people in the prime of their lives. It also causes devastating financial and emotional destruction to those infected with the disease and also creates a strain on current government programs that are in place to care for these individuals. We also discussed that HIV/AIDS is still growing in pandemic proportions and has been classified as a public health emergency.

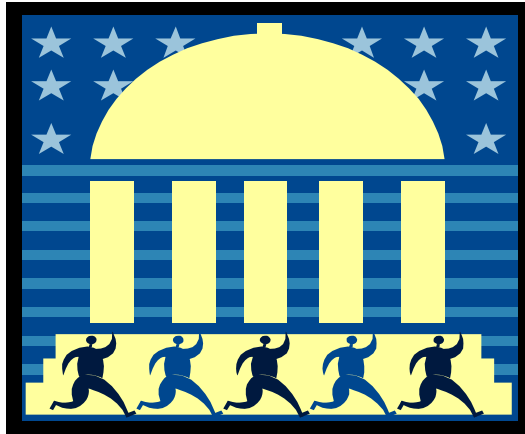
Our goal for the two days was to ask our state government for reinstatement of the \$600,000 to the Michigan Health Initiative (MHI) that Governor Engler removed from the budget in his executive order this last year. This money was supposed to be used for HIV prevention in HIV testing and counseling centers and some funding for teen health centers where this education is most needed.

According to an Institute Of Medicine report, a 50% increase in funding could produce nearly a 50% decrease in new HIV infections each year. Currently, new infections are outpacing appropriations for HIV prevention. We also explained that the MHI has remained level funded for at least the last ten years, which is in fact a cut in funding, given that there are an estimated 1,100 new infections in Michigan each year.

We asked that our legislators keep an eye on the current and future changes to the Medicaid program so that these changes did not impact the federal programs

that are currently working in good manners like the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) and the Ryan White Care Act funding which provides care to those infected with HIV.

One of the state representatives that we spoke with advised us that the state had discovered a few million dollars in lapsing funds and the legislature would be making a determination as to how those funds would be disseminated. We hope that our voices were heard and the \$600,000 in care/prevention budget cuts will also be restored to the Michigan Health Initiative.



The continuing efforts of HAAM, the AIDS Fund and the Task Force are necessary as our legislators need to hear from us on the front lines of this fight - those living with, caring for those with, and preventing HIV infection. The fight

now goes to Washington, DC as President Bush released his proposed budget for fiscal year 2003, which begins on October 1st of this year. Included in this proposal are his suggested funding levels for domestic and international HIV/AIDS programs. The President is calling for no increase for HIV/AIDS care and treatment programs funded through Ryan White CARE Act and the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). With the growing number of people living with HIV and increased cost of healthcare and treatment, this budget request is, once again, a cut in funding.

This event was unfortunately poorly attended. I am amazed that the people who receive these funds are not there with us to advocate for themselves and others. It has been proven that seeing the face of AIDS in their offices gives members of our government a better idea of how their citizens are living with and trying to prevent HIV infection.

Our thanks to the HIV/AIDS Alliance of Michigan, the Michigan AIDS Fund for helping to coordinate this event, and Tracy Fischman, Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs for the Chicago Department of Public Health, for taking the time to put together this great training that was a benefit for all who attended.

Alternative Solutions: Safe Sex Advocate Confirms that Size DOES Matter...

By GLENN JAMES

There are many complaints surrounding the reasons why men won't use prophylactics during a sexual encounter. Complaints range from condoms being too small, or the feel not being right, to problems with the advance planning involved. In either gender, heterosexual or homosexual, STD/Is are real and occur on a daily basis.

STDIs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases/ Infections) are reasons enough to understand the importance of practicing safe sex. However, information related to safe sex is not enough or does not tackle the real issues related to why most men don't feel comfortable enough to conform to latex lovemaking.

Information that is readily made available discusses the benefits of using prophylactics and some simple basic instructions. But what does one do when in a situation in which an erection cannot be maintained while using condoms, or the lack of sensitivity causes a lack of interest in sex?

Of course, somewhere out there are the answers to these issues, but hardly ever is any of it publicized or brought to the forefront of this battle against STD/Is. With that in mind, I share with you some information I have learned that addresses the issues of size, sensitivity and planning.

Condom size is very important. Even after being a witness to a condom guru stretching a piece of ringed rubber over his head just to prove to everybody that yes, they are big enough, **size does matter**. Sensitivity is very important as well. There are those guys who just don't care for that non-insertion feeling which is often experienced during intercourse using condoms.

A simple solution to these complaints lay in the proper size and usage of the condom. If you find regular condoms a bit tight or you faithfully lose your ability to rise to the occasion while using a condom, try a larger size. Larger sized condoms are sold at major drugstore chains and many other corner stores, with an added well-worth-it expense, but



it doesn't help with all the free condoms lying around at the clubs printed with the one-size-fits-all clause. Um, yeah right!

As for the non-insertion feeling, using water based lube on the inside of the condom will increase the state of pleasure to a more realistic feeling. Be careful to not use too much which can cause the condom to slip off during your encounter, and remember to use plenty of lube on the outside for your partner's pleasure.

An alternative solution to either case is the female condom which has been successfully used for anal intercourse (affectionately called the "butt bag"). With a little bit of patience and education on how to use them properly—which is not included in the manufacturer's instructions—these new wave condoms will take you to a height of erotica that you only can get from bare back- ing while assuring the safety of using regular condoms.

The female condom, which is made from polyurethane, is stronger than the latex condom, and can be used with just about any type of lubricant. It has been

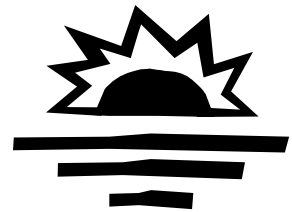
rated by Reality, the manufacturer of the female condom, to be 97.1% efficient in reducing the rate of HIV transmission if used properly.

Just to let you know, the FDA has not approved the female condom for anal intercourse; however, no condom has been approved by the FDA for anal intercourse.

So, with all that said, here are some useful tips on condom use: 1) Use plenty of lubricant 2) Use the correct size or use the female condom 3) Remember, not all sexually transmitted diseases are visible to the naked eye 4) If a person tells you they can't need protection because they are clean, they are either lying or don't know if they are infected with anything. USE A CONDOM! 5) Talk to your partner about STD/Is and safe sex.

*This article had previously been rejected by a GLBT publication in Indiana. **The Positive Quarterly** stands by our mission to provide clear and applicable safe sex education to impacted communities and therefore provides the opportunity for this author's work to be published. –Editor.*

Reality TV Proves Exactly What Real Survival Means



By **ODIS BULLOCK**

On the 34th day of their 39 day challenge, the tribe awoke on a normal day to prepare their wonderful mush meals, collect what dried material the land supplied them for the all-important fire, take a trip with broken gourds to fetch water from the mud hole that was shared with wild animals of the countryside - only to discover an elephant had recently visited that same mud hole, not only for a drink but also for a toilet - and to wait to see if the mail delivered to the tree would give them another puzzled warning about the next reward challenge.

Little would they know that by the end of the day some of them would learn more than they thought possible about the AIDS crisis devastating the people of Africa. For two of the tribe members, the experience would send them on an emotional journey back to memories they held of loved ones back in the United States who lost their battle with the virus; for the winner, a life-altering journey would affect that member's existence for eternity.

The popular reality-based American television show, Survivor, has been called everything from just more self-absorbed entertainment to progressive, thought-provoking programming that stretches the norms. But no one can question the importance and timeliness of the producers in choosing to include as part of the series a visit to a struggling AIDS clinic by one of the contestants vying for the coveted million dollar prize.

Being the first to finish the crossword puzzle challenge, Lex Van Den Berghe, the 38 year old marketing manager from Santa Cruz, Ca., eagerly awaited his two-part mystery prize. The first prize was a 2002 Chevy Avalanche, unknowingly loaded with much-needed medical supplies and HIV test kits. The second prize was the life altering journey to deliver the supplies to the Wamba Catholic Hospital and to spend the day with children and orphans infected with the HIV/AIDS virus, most of whom had been born with the virus. In route to the hospital, Van Den Berghe said, "Up till now I have been concentrating on the game Survivors, and had not given much thought of what the true meaning of survivor meant."

Survivor host Jeff Probst, a supporter of the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, called the journey a privilege to be involved with first hand, and was impressed with how quickly and effectively the Foundation helped implement programs to aid the overwhelming number of pediatric HIV/AIDS cases in Africa and the world. Probst serves as spokesperson for the foundation's college outreach program, Caring for Kids 101. CBS began airing the foundation's public service announcements in October and will continue to air them during the network's prime time schedule throughout 2002, using Probst as narrator to help spread the word about the foundation's work.

After contacting the foundation and sharing his vision and thoughts of supporting the worthy cause, Mark Burnett, Sur
SURVIVOR, Continued on page 8

POSITIVE HAPPENINGS:

Nationally-renown poet, author, journalist, public speaker, and activist **River Huston** brings her humorous performance "Sex, Cellulite and Shopping" to the **Community AIDS Resource & Education Services (CARES) 5th Annual Benefit Auction and Dinner** on Saturday, **April 6, 2002**, 6 pm, at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in **downtown Kalamazoo**. Tickets available by phone at **616-381-2437**. \$50 per person, or at CARES offices, 629 Pioneer Street, Kalamazoo.

Second Annual HIV/AIDS Network and Direct Services (HANDS) Summer Hike and Campout on Beaver Island is set for **July 26-28, 2002**. Participants expected to raise \$100 in tax-deductible pledges sponsoring their stay on the island. Participants responsible for their own camping and hiking

gear (rustic camping), food and transportation costs. Lodging available on island for the less adventurous. Pets welcome. Call Josh at jjlewis@chartermi.net or **231-347-1264**. Or call HANDS office, **231-526-9213** or **800-526-9213**. Mail inquiries to: HANDS HIKE, PO Box 533, Petoskey, Mi. 49770.

National Minority AIDS Council Regional Training will be held in **Detroit May 6-10, 2002** at **Detroit Crowne Plaza Pontchartrain**. Treatment information, program evaluation, care access, board development, resource development, program software, grant writing, Ryan White CARE Act, and media to be presented. **Email: falam@nmac.org** or call **202-483-6622**.

SURVIVOR, Continued from page 7

vivor executive producer, accepted a position on the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation Board of Directors

The effect continues, and Brandon, the 25 year old bartender of a Dallas, Texas leather-levi bar and former Survivor contestant, helped organize a fund raising event called the 'Community Immunity Challenge.' All 16 contestants of Survivor Africa attended, and memorabilia from the show was auctioned off for cause, including the infamous 220 pound 'blood bar' where contestants had to drink glasses of fresh cow's blood, mimicking what is common everyday practice of true survival by native tribes.

Included in supplies that were delivered to the Wamba Hospital, which was running on fumes and sole charitable contributions, was a generous supply of the drug Nevirapine. Nevirapine is administered in a single dose to HIV positive mothers at the onset of labor and in a single dose to the newborn child within the first three days of life. This treatment can reduce the risk of mother to child transmission (MTCT) of HIV up to 47% during labor and 41% at 18 months of age in a breastfeeding population. The entire course cost less than \$4 when the study was completed, and is now available in many places for free or at reduced cost. Availability of Nevirapine makes it possible to prevent and save hundreds of thousands of MTCT cases.

Regardless of how anyone feels about the reality TV fad, the evidence speaks for itself. Upon airing this tear-jerking episode, Survivor Africa provided hope, pride and relief that tens of thousands of children will not be burdened with the overwhelming battle for life that HIV/AIDS adds to the already tough struggle for life in Africa.

Odin Bullock lives in Region 3 where he coordinates the support group, Survivors and Beyond.

THOUGHTS, continued from page 2

What is it that happens to us once we "join" an advisory group? Why do so many of us do what we accuse other stakeholders of doing? We become "Power Divas." I personally prefer "Ego Junkies" because it speaks to my own ability to become addicted to anything that feels good, and my whole I-need-to-serve-to-feel-complete guilt trip.

Lately there's been way too much "he said/she said" going around, from whispers to personal jabs and just loudly enough to be heard. What are we thinking here? I mean, I'm sorry to air our dirty laundry in public, but if we chose to make our criticisms of others in public, we should expect the same. That's the definition of integrity. The only thing that can destroy us as an effective voice for all Michigan's PWAs is our own personal power trips.

We are an extremely diverse group which needs to increase its diversity. That being said, it can be difficult at times to work together. However, if we fail, we fail for 13,500 others. WE need to (borrowing a phrase from a 12 step book) place principles over personalities and accomplish our work.

Here's a quick was to tell if the ego bug has bitten us. If any of us are sitting in a meeting with other PWAs and we do a quick mental inventory of "us" and "them" around the room, chances are you've just experienced a side trip on the ego express. You see with PWAs we must only see the "us." We can disagree with each other, of course. Disagreement actually strengthens our final position. It's the petty bickering that steals our power.

Please remember, and hold me to it as well, that our strength is in our numbers. Our strength is in our diversity. Our strength is in our sincere commitment to advocate for those who cannot do so for themselves. To do any less or to be any less will surely lead us back to being tokens, or worse...victims.