

HAPPINESS IS

No 4 Vol 13 Winter 2011

# VITAL





## in this Issue

WELCOME TO the Winter issue of Happiness Is Vital. We have just enjoyed a wonderful concert for World AIDS Day in Galway. This annual tradition has become the perfect way to kick off the Christmas season, with candlelight, music, song and high spirits in the beautiful surroundings of St. Nicholas' Church. We have some lovely images of the evening in this issue plus much more. In addition to our recurring pieces 'Ask Lorraine', High Times, Poetry and Medical Matters, we

also have articles on the recent UN AIDS Report and a summary of the Obama campaigns' statement on achieving an AIDS-Free Generation. To round things off, we have a fun and informative 'Christmas Drinks' quiz for you to try. 2012 is just around the corner and all of us at AIDS West want to wish you and yours the very best for this upcoming holiday season. Stay safe and happy throughout the party season and check back with us for our Spring issue in just a few short months!

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# MEMORIAL CONCERT A HUGE SUCCESS

THERE WERE MANY special events to mark 2011 World AIDS Day on the 1st of December throughout the world. From the lighting of Sydney Opera House to the Empire State Building in New York, all glowing in red. Here in Galway, we had our very wonderful candlelit memorial service at St Nicholas' Collegiate Church. This marked the 11th year of this event. The theme for World AIDS Day 2011 was 'Getting to Zero', zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero HIV-related deaths.

Our Chairman, Keith Finnegan introduced her worship Mayor Hildegard Naughton, who spoke of how important the event has become to the people of Galway. She said, for her, it was time to reflect on those who have lost their lives to the virus. It was also a time of hope because of advances in medical treatments over the past 20 years and the ongoing care and support that organisations like AIDS WEST provide to those living with HIV. Keeping awareness of HIV in the public consciousness is a hugely important part of the work that AIDS West does within the community.

Our keynote speaker, Fr. Peter McVerry, always one to speak on behalf of the marginalised, gave the huge audience both an inspiring and challenging talk on the need for tolerance in today's society. Those who came to listen to him speak were not disappointed. It was wonderful to have him present on the night. It just seemed to highlight, to a deeper level, the need to overcome the stigma that continues to exist across our society. Liz Martin spoke of getting on with her life having lived for over 20 years with the HIV virus. She told a beautiful story about a present given by an elderly man to his younger friend, the present was literally to be able to live in the present, rather than the future or the past.

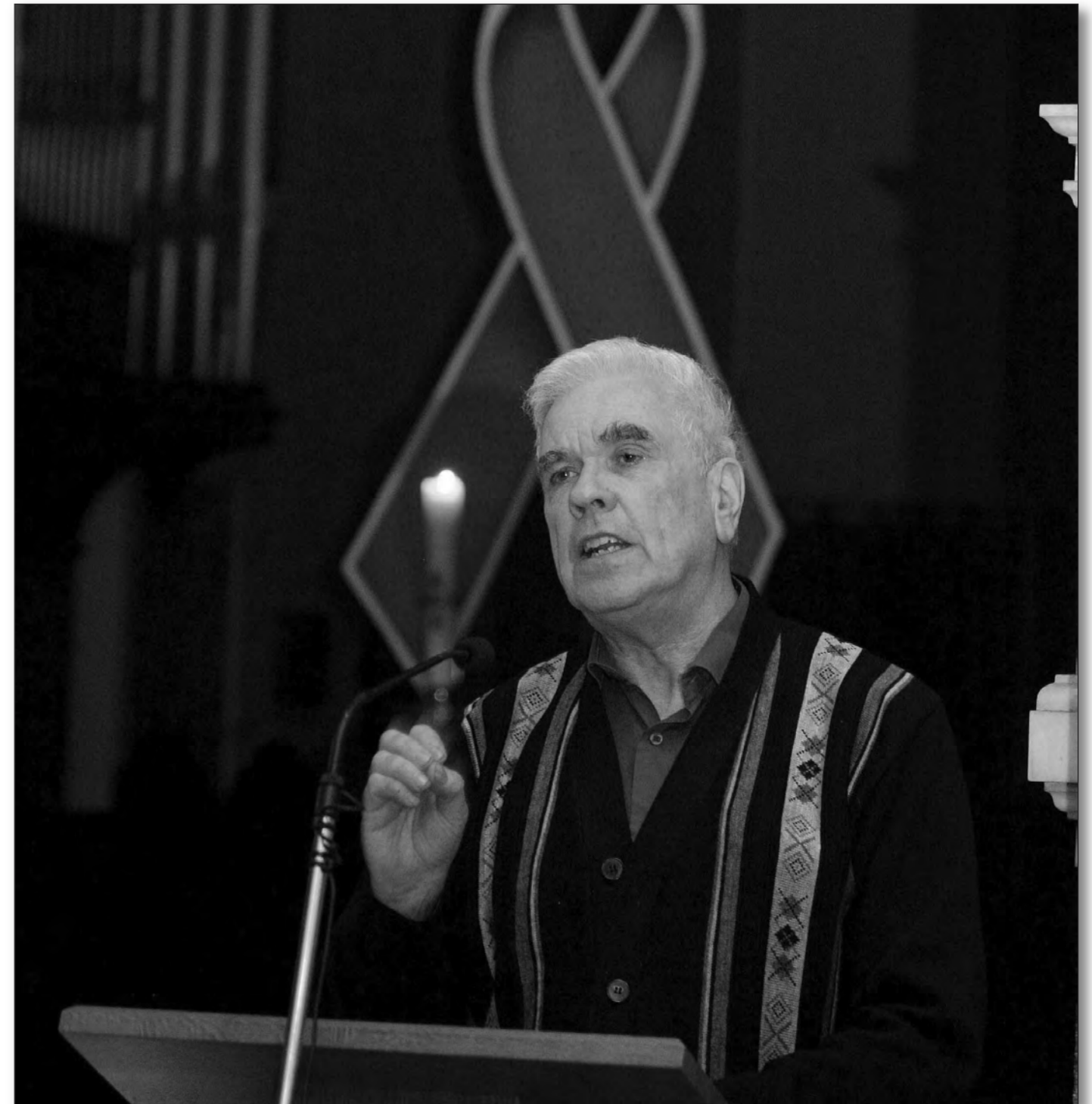
Fresh from the inauguration of President Michael D. Higgins, the voices of Cois Cladaigh filled the church with an eclectic mix of

numbers such as Alma Redemption, Shenandoah, Rejection and Beannacht. Our heartfelt gratitude to every member of Cois Cladaigh, under their renowned musical director Brendan O' Connor, accompanied by John Rowe on piano for a truly outstanding performance. Delia Boyce and Sandra Schalks, who have given their time to our concert over the years, delivered stunning solo performances, but also joined together for a beautiful rendering of Amigos Pera Siempre. Board member, Patrick Towers, closing address was inspiring and rounded off what was truly a remarkable night. The Grand Finale had Patrick and Brendan stirring up the audience to fever pitch with some seasonal carols. The girls joined the choir once again and delivered a truly wonderful rendition of 'O Holy Night'.

The audience were treated to light refreshments of mince pies, savouries, tea coffee or wine, which was a fitting ending to a memorable night. It was a wonderful Galway social evening.

Our sincere thanks to Mayor Hildegard Naughton, Cois Cladaigh, Delia and Sandra for their wonderful voices, and John Rowe for providing the music and of course the extraordinary Brendan O' Connor, without whom this would not have been possible. To our special guest Fr Peter McVerry and to our long time friend Liz Martin. A very special thank you to Rev. Gary Hastings and Catherine Moore-Temple for all their wonderful support throughout the years and for making this beautiful church available to us for the concert. We have always been so grateful for having St Nicholas' Church, in the heart of the city, with its wonderful acoustics. It is an oasis from the busy world outside.

Thank you to John Mannion of The Front Door who was so generous in providing the food and refreshments and to the many volunteers who helped on the night with the church and the catering. To the staff of AIDS West and everyone who attended, you made it the best ever.



## World AIDS Day events in Ireland

IN GALWAY, besides the annual memorial concert, AIDS WEST hosted the Keith Finnegan show on Galway Bay FM at our offices. The show included contributions from Fr Peter McVerry, Dr. Shay Keating and Kevin, a client. Galway Community Circus joined with us in distributing red ribbons and information around the streets of Galway, raising awareness of World AIDS Day. We also ran a workshop for our service users, which

focused on healthy living. In Dublin World AIDS Day the Mansion House was washed in red light at 7a.m. as a symbol of solidarity with people all over the world who are living with and are affected by HIV and AIDS. All Dublin based HIV support agencies, Dublin AIDS Alliance and Open Heart House were in attendance. Other events included a special celebratory members candlelight dinner in Open Heart House. The evening included the

dressing of the Open Heart House 'Tree of Life' with personal messages from members and friends. There was also a carol singing, as a fundraiser by the staff of MAC Cosmetics Dublin. The event took place on Grafton Street. In Cork, the staff from the Sexual Health Centre spent the day in UCC distributing condoms and information. They also launched their new website 'Be Sexy Stay Healthy'.

## Discuss with *Dr Shay*



# Oral transmission of HIV

ONE OF THE MOST frequently asked questions of a HIV specialist is 'what is the risk of getting HIV from oral sex?' This is a very difficult question to answer. There have been few well designed studies undertaken and most cases of HIV reported to be as a consequence of oral sex, rely on the accurate disclosure of risk i.e., no anal or vaginal sex. Fellatio is defined as oral stimulation of the penis while cunnilingus is defined as oral stimulation of the vagina. This may or may not be followed by ejaculation into the mouth. For infection to happen one would imagine that there needs to be infectious pre-cum or semen ejaculated into a mouth, the mucosa (lining) of which is damaged, thereby facilitating HIV passage into the bloodstream. Similarly, the mucosa of the penis or vagina would also need to be damaged for receptive oral sex.

There are several cofactors which may, hypothetically increase or decrease the susceptibility to HIV through oral sex. These include dry mouth, trauma, sores, inflammation, concurrent sexually transmitted diseases, ejaculation and immunosuppression. It also depends on the probability that the sex partner is HIV positive either the person performing or receiving oral sex.

The saliva contains HIV-inhibitory properties. It does not support the replication of the virus. If one has dry mouth (xerostomia) the risk of HIV infection may be theoretically be increased. The dry mouth may be a consequence of taking some medications. Next, it has been speculated that poor oral health and hygiene or recent gum or oral surgery may play a role in increasing the risk of acquiring HIV through oral sex due to the damage of the mucosa. Similarly, concomitant sexually transmitted infections which cause inflammation of the mucosa such as gonorrhoea or ulceration of the mucosa such as syphilis may increase oral transmission of HIV. Smoking crack cocaine which causes blisters, sores and cuts on the lips and in the mouth has also been implicated in the oral transmission of HIV. Smoking cigarettes also predisposes to oral ulceration and especially for a short period following smoking cessation. Furthermore, scientific evidence suggests that tonsillar tissue is susceptible to infection. A male partner ejaculating into someone's mouth particularly around the tonsils may increase HIV infection. Similarly for the recipient of oral sex, damage to the mucosa of the penis or vagina would

facilitate viral passage into the blood stream. Infection is also believed to be higher if the non HIV positive partner is immunocompromised, if for example on cancer chemotherapy or high dose steroid medication.

Partner infectiousness is also a risk. One would need to know the risk that the sexual partner is HIV positive. If so, the viral load, or level of the virus in the blood would be higher at extremes or infection, at seroconversion or very early disease and in advanced disease. Reported risk of unprotected oral sex with a HIV positive partner who is not on antiretroviral medication (ART) is 1 in 2500. When on appropriate and effective ART and when the viral load is undetectable, the risk of acquiring HIV through the oral route must be very low indeed. My feeling is that HIV acquisition following unprotected oral sex in the absence of any oral, penile or vaginal disease is extremely low with a partner who is virally suppressed on ARTs. Reports of such transmission of HIV through oral sex when virally suppressed are awaited.

*Dr Shay Keating, Medical Officer and Occupational Health Physician with the Drug Treatment Centre, Dublin.*

## UNAIDS: AIDS-RELATED DEATHS DOWN 21%

ACCESS TO COMBINATION HIV therapy has significantly improved. AIDS-related deaths are at the lowest level since their 2005 peak, down 21%, figures from UNAIDS suggest. Globally, the number of new HIV infections in 2010 was 21% down also on that peak, seen in 1997, according to UNAids 2011 report.

The organisation says both falls have been fuelled by a major expansion in access to treatment. Its executive director, Michel Sidibe, said: "We are on the verge of a significant breakthrough." He added: "Even in a very difficult financial crisis, countries are delivering results in the AIDS response." "We have seen a massive scale up in access to HIV treatment which has had a dramatic effect on the lives of people everywhere."

This latest analysis says the number of people living with HIV has reached a record 34 million. Sub-Saharan Africa has seen the most dramatic improvement, with a 20% rise in people undergoing treatment between 2009 and 2010. About half of those eligible for treatment are now receiving it. International HIV/Aids Alliance UNAids estimates 700,000 deaths were averted last year because of better access to treatment. That has also helped cut new HIV infections, as people undergoing care are less likely to infect others. In 2010 there were an estimated 2.7m new HIV infections, down from 3.2m in 1997, and 1.8m people died from AIDS-related illnesses, down from 2.2m in 2005. The figures continue the downward trend reported in previous UNAIDS reports. The UN agency said: "The number of new HIV infections is 30-50% lower now than it would have been in the absence of universal access to treatment for eligible people living with HIV." Some countries have seen particularly striking improvements. In Namibia, treatment access has reached 90% and condom use rose to 75%, resulting in a 60% drop in new infections by 2010. UNAIDS says the full preventive impact of treatment is likely to be seen in the next five years, as more countries improve treatment. Its report added that even if the Aids epidemic was not over: "The end may be in sight if countries invest smartly."

The charity Medecins Sans Frontieres urged governments to keep up their funding. MSF's Tido von Schoen-Angerer, said: "Never, in more than a decade of treating people living with HIV/Aids, have we been at such a promising moment to really turn this epidemic around. "Governments in some of the hardest hit countries want to act on the science, seize this moment and reverse the Aids epidemic. But this means nothing if there's no money to make it happen." The International HIV/Aids Alliance said: "We welcome the ongoing commitment of UNAids to changing behaviours, changing social norms and changing laws, alongside efforts to improve access to HIV treatment. "For bigger and better impact though, we must not be complacent. There is still much more to do."

BBC



## MARTIN SHEEN BACKS WAD

BAGLAN STAR MICHAEL SHEEN has thrown his support behind a new sexual health campaign to mark World Aids Day. The actor is backing the Terrance Higgins Trust's new campaign, Stand Up, Stand Out, which aims to raise greater awareness about HIV and raise funds for vital prevention services. The film star, who is currently wowing audiences playing Hamlet at the Old Vic, said: "HIV is still on the rise in the UK and it's not something we can keep ignoring. Terrence Higgins Trust provides lifeline services for people with the virus and vital information and advice to help people safeguard their sexual health and reduce HIV infections. Please join me in getting involved so this wonderful charity can continue to be there for even more people who need them throughout the UK."

SW Evening Post

### SPECIALIST SCREENING AT HAROLDS CROSS

Do you ever worry that you may have been exposed to a Sexually Transmitted Infection? Harold's Cross Surgery offer full specialist screening for Sexually Transmitted Infections for men and women. Screening is carried out in a confidential manner in comfortable surroundings. The screening includes blood testing for HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B. They also test for gonorrhoea and chlamydia, the commonest bacterial sexually transmitted infection in Ireland and the UK. The surgery provides on-site treatment for genital warts, a HIV test result in 10 minutes and post exposure prophylaxis following sexual exposure to HIV and hepatitis B. In addition, they offer vaccination against hepatitis A and B.

Most importantly, confidentiality is guaranteed.

The clinic runs Monday to Friday from 7pm to 8.30pm and is strictly by appointment. Appointments can be made by phoning Paul, the practice manager at 01-4970022 or 087-2345551.

Basic Consultation: 60 Euro. Full Sexual Screening: 120 Euro  
Harold's Cross Surgery, 254 Harold's Cross Road, Dublin 6w, Ireland  
Dr. Shay Keating, MB, PhD, MRCP, Dip Gum, Dip Occ Med—  
Medical Practitioner.

# Ask Lorraine



Lorraine is here to answer any of your questions in relation to sexual health. If you need a prompt reply to your query please contact our confidential helpline 091-562213

Dear Lorraine

*I'm 18 years of age and I'm really embarrassed about the problem I'm having. I've been with my girlfriend for nearly two years and we decided to have sex about 6 months ago, (she's the first person I've ever had sex with) the problem is I start off ok and then my penis goes flaccid, I thought this only happened to older men? I don't know what to do, my girlfriend is beginning to get annoyed and I'm afraid she may leave me. I'm also starting college soon and need to find a place to live and part-time job to help pay my fees. Can you please give me some advice?*

Jamie.

DEAR JAMIE,

First things first, try not to worry, you have a lot going on in your life at the moment so it's only to be expected that you must be stressed and this may be adding to or indeed be the cause of your problem. Erectile dysfunction is defined as a man's inability to get an erection that is good enough to satisfy sexual intercourse. For example some people who are affected by this medical condition are simply not able to get any kind of erection (total inability), while some manage to, but not hard enough for penetration (inconsistent ability). In some cases, the person is able to penetrate but eventually loses it (sustains only brief erection). All these scenarios are associated with erectile dysfunction symptoms.

The male anatomy involved in sexual arousal is a complex system. It incorporates the brain, hormones and emotions with the result that malfunctions in any of these systems can harm the delicate balance between these systems and cause erectile dysfunction. Factors that are responsible for causing erectile dysfunction do not necessarily have to be of a psychological nature. There are causes which may have

their source in certain medical conditions and these side-effects of some medications. Erectile dysfunction any age group may be caused by heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity. Apart from these, erectile dysfunction in young men (or men of any age) may also be the outcome of the usage of certain medications, tobacco, alcohol or drug abuse, Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis.

As mentioned earlier Jamie, thoughts and emotions (psychological factors) are the major elements in getting an erection. Younger males often undergo erectile problems due to anxiety, which involves nervousness about indulging in sex for the first time or inexperience (you did say you just started having sex 6 months ago). Erectile dysfunction also involves fear or anxiety of causing a pregnancy or sometimes even having to use a condom. Surveys among young men, suggest sometimes that after they try to put on the condom, they lose their erection – this may be due to lack of experience using condoms. It often helps to practice to become more confident.

Out of all the factors which play significant roles in developing feelings of sexual excitement, the brain is the one which is responsible for deciphering the physical events that trigger the erection. So the intervention of things such as fatigue, depression or stress are the most common reasons for erectile dysfunction in young men. Disturbances in love life or even poor communication between partners can also result in low sex drive or erectile dysfunction. Before you consider medical treatment, I would try talking to your girlfriend about your anxieties and explaining the pressure you're under, with trying to find a new place to live, etc. If you need any further advice you can call our helpline on 091566266. Best of luck with college Jamie and I hope everything works out.

Regards,  
Lorraine

# Poetry

by Seamus Ruttledge

SEAMUS RUTTLEDGE is a poet and songwriter who speaks from the heart. In addition to his critically-acclaimed albums, Seamus has also published two collections of poetry. A recently featured 'PLAY IRISH' artist, his live performances seamlessly blend songs, spoken word and his own unique wonderful journey through poetry and song.

## I Sat Down

I sat down  
Amongst beautiful colours  
And I felt beautiful.  
Each colour  
Stood alone to speak.  
Each one told me  
How it had become  
Part of the Rainbow,  
And how the Rainbow  
Brought colour to the universe  
And how the universe  
Betook of it.  
My eyes opened  
And I saw beautiful things,  
My heart opened  
And I felt beautiful things,  
You are beautiful  
Amongst beautiful things  
And your Beauty sings.

## Come Break Bread With Me

Come break bread with me  
In the garden of Gethsemane  
Prepare to welcome  
Our soldier friends  
Who come to us  
With death in their hearts  
  
Let us shed tears  
For their salvation  
Let us sweat blood  
For their resurrection  
Beneath this Tree of Life  
  
Sleep your gentle sleep  
While I pray to God the father  
Let us humble fear and transform its power  
Let us break bread with our soldier friends  
And commune with their broken hearts  
In this their darkest hour.

## Better Yet

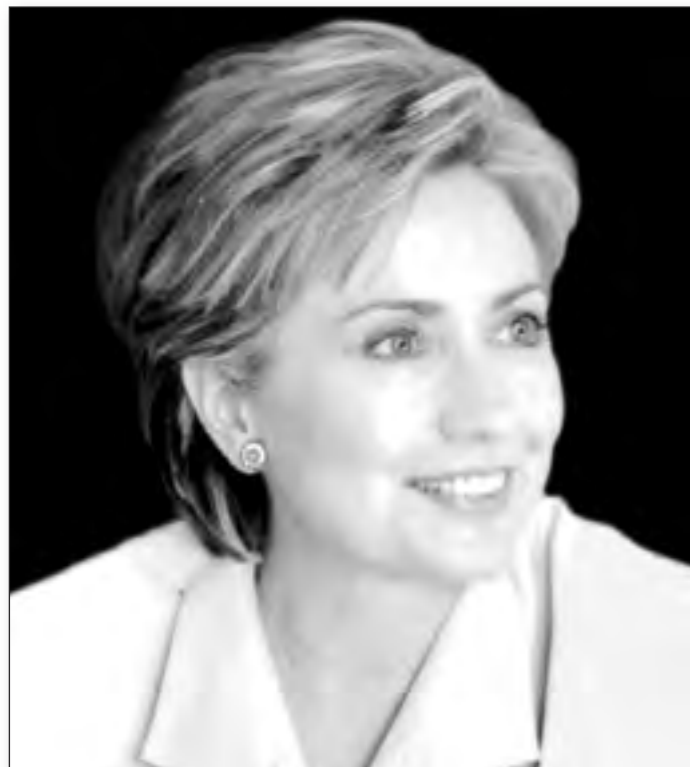
Have you a memory  
With no regret  
Or better yet  
Have you a memory  
That helps you live  
Gives you life  
And springs a dawn in your soul  
Or better yet  
Have you no memory  
And no regret  
Just the pure sun  
To make you dance  
And spin like a dervish  
With the truth  
And better yet  
To set you free  
To sing songs of freedom  
With every breath  
You know you live  
And it gets better yet.

## I Have Come To Rest

I have come to rest  
To place a bell at your feet  
To wrap you from the cold  
In warm sheets  
  
I have come  
To pray with you  
And still your tears  
Until bells ring  
Until the choir sings  
  
I will whisper psalms to you  
That will soothe your sleep  
And in the stillness  
Your God will speak

# AIDS-FREE GENERATION POSSIBLE

## *says Clinton*



TV audience and 8 million followers on Twitter" to the cause. The US had been at the forefront of the fight against AIDS over the last three decades, since the first cases of a mysterious disease were recorded there in 1981, she said. "I want the American people to understand the irreplaceable role the US has played in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

"It is their tax dollars – our tax dollars – that have made this possible and we need to keep going ... the world could not have come this far without us and will not defeat Aids without us. "What's more, our efforts have helped set the stage for a historic opportunity, one that the world has today to change the course of this pandemic and usher in an AIDS-free generation."

The science had shown that anti retroviral drugs worked as prevention as well as treatment, removing the old argument over which was more important. The prices of drugs had come down – in 2004, Pefpar paid \$1,100 for a year's treatment for somebody with HIV, but today the cost was \$335 and falling. Every effort was being made to bring the costs down further, she said.

A study published last month had shown that treating people with HIV had economic benefits to a country, increasing returns from its workforce and cutting bills for hospital and orphan care. Clinton called on other countries to follow the example of South Africa and shoulder more of the costs themselves in the knowledge that they would benefit economically in the longer term.

She also praised the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria which, she said, the US helped set up and to which it was the largest contributor. In 2004, virtually none of the people in Malawi, eligible for treatment, received it – but by last year, nearly half of them did. Some donors were considering withdrawing their support from the Fund – but it should instead be strengthened. "To sit on the sidelines now would be devastating," she said. "It would cost lives and we would miss out on this unprecedented opportunity."

Michel Sidibé, executive director of UNAIDS, praised Clinton's speech. "Leadership from the United States has been vital to the AIDS response to date and will be key to seizing this historic opportunity," he said. "Secretary Clinton has reaffirmed the United States' government's strong commitment to this effort and has described a vision that should inspire us all. I hope that her call will galvanise leadership from around the globe to accelerate efforts to end the AIDS epidemic."

**Guardian**

US SECRETARY OF STATE pledges more government money for drugs to treat HIV and urges renewed effort to fight the disease. The US secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, held out the prospect of "an AIDS-free generation", calling on the American people to support renewed efforts against the disease and pledging more money for drugs to keep those with HIV alive and stop them infecting others.

Science had shown that AIDS can be defeated – even if the virus which causes it will be around for the foreseeable future, she said. Three tools, used in combination, could turn the tide: preventing babies from being infected at birth; voluntary male circumcision, which reduces female to male transmission of the virus by 60%; and anti-retroviral drug treatment, which recent studies have shown not only keep those with HIV alive but reduces the risk of transmitting the infection to their partner by 96%.

Clinton pledged new money for pilot schemes in regions of sub-Saharan Africa where programmes on all these three fronts can be implemented and progress measured. In addition to \$50m (£31m) that the US has already given to academic institutions for preparatory work, the government would put \$60m more into Pefpar, the president's emergency plan for AIDS relief, for a rapid expansion. "I want to challenge other donors to join us in this effort," she said.

Clinton also courted popular opinion by announcing a new special envoy to raise global awareness of the disease – the actress, comedian and talk show host Ellen DeGeneres. Clinton said the actress would "bring her sharp wit and big heart, and her impressive

# The AIDS West Christmas drinks quiz!

Way back in 1872 it became an offence to "be drunk in charge of a carriage, horses, cattle and steam engines with a fine not exceeding 40 shillings or imprisonment (without hard labour) of up to one month". Laws concerning drink driving gradually became applicable to the motor car as well, although some countries still have no limits on their statute books. Our BAL (Blood Alcohol Limit) was recently adjusted downwards to 0.05 mg per 100ml of blood. Only the UK and Malta have retained the higher 0.08 limit within Europe. With Christmas fast approaching, it seems useful to think just a little more about quality and a little less about quantity about whichever tittle we may care to enjoy safely. Have yourselves a relaxing time over the holiday period, and see perhaps if you can beat the best score for the Christmas drinks quiz in the AIDSWEST office, which was 14 out of 20!



1. *According to legend who invented Champagne?*  
a. Mr Cliquot b. Mr Tattinger c. Mr Dom Perignon
2. *What was the most expensive drinkable wine ever sold at auction?*  
a. Chateau Lafite '45 b. Chateau Petrus '47 c. Chateau Cheval Blanc ' 59
3. *A 'Rusty nail' is a cocktail containing whiskey and which other spirit?*  
a. Cointreau b. Drambuie c. Gin
4. *The Japanese drink Saki or Sake uses which fermented grain?*  
a. Rice b. Barley c. Rye
5. *Whiskey mixed with milk and sugar is called...*  
a. An Aberdeen Kiss b. A Highland fling c. A Nessie
6. *Vikings traditionally used what as a drinking vessel ?*  
a. Bronze goblets b. The skulls of their enemies c. Troughs
7. *Which U.S state never ratified the 18th amendment that brought in prohibition?*  
a. Rhode Island b. Nevada c. New Mexico
8. *Which fruit juice is used in a 'Bloody Mary'?*  
a. Pomegranate b. Pineapple c. Tomato
9. *When was Poitin first banned in Ireland ?*  
a. 1441 b. 1661 c. 1881
10. *And when did the revenue commissioners withdraw their opposition to it being sold under license again?*  
a. 1987 b. 1992 c. 1997
11. *When was Baileys Irish cream first put on sale?*  
a. 1954 b. 1964 c. 1974
12. *Where was the first Irish Coffee served?*  
a. Foynes seaplane port b. Shannon Airport c. The Ritz, London
13. *Hot mulled cider is called...*  
a. Wassail b. Bullhail c. Allhail
14. *Sherry (for that sherry trifle) production is based around which city?*  
a. Granada b. Seville c. Jerez
15. *Which berry is used to flavour gin?*  
a. Juniper b. Cranberry c. Loganberry
16. *Which country produces the most wine annually ?*  
a. Spain b. France c. Italy
17. *Fino, Oloroso and Amontillado are all brands of...*  
a. Port b. Sherry c. Brandy
18. *How many gallons are there in a firkin?*  
a. Twenty-one b. Nine c. Thirty-four
19. *When Arthur Guinness signed the lease at £45 a year for his new brewery in Dublin 1759, how long was the lease for?*  
a. 99 years b. 999 years c. 9000 years
20. *And finally, how many bubbles are there in an average bottle of Champagne?*  
a. 250,000 b. 49 Million c. None

# High Times 10

## High Times with NEIL WILSON

### SOMA

GREEK MYTHOLOGY TELLS US of the story of Achilles. His mother, the sea-nymph Thetis followed the Phoenician custom by anointed him with 'Ambrosia' and putting him on a fire to burn away the mortal parts of his body. Interrupted by Peleus, the father, she stormed off in disgust – leaving only Achilles heel mortal. Most likely to be a form of honey, it was supposed to be reserved for divine beings.

The Greek word *Soma* may mean 'immortal' or 'fragrant'. Whatever the origin, it is clearly closely related to phonetically and semantically to the Sanskrit word 'soma'. Mentioned in many Hindu sacred texts, it again is seen to create immortality. The Rig Veda calls the plant in question the "God of the Gods", implying that it is a god in itself. Elsewhere in the tradition human beings are seen to drink the juice extracted from the stalks of the soma plant. There is no clear agreement as to which plant soma may actually be. Some argue that it is honey, whilst others opt for fly agaric, an hallucinogenic mushroom used by Siberian shamans and also available in Irish headshops until last year. Other research points towards the 19th century Zoroastrians of Yazd (Iran) who used Ephedra, which was locally known as hum or homa. Ephedrine, which is developed from the plant is structurally similar to amphetamine, and again it formed part of the offerings of present day headshops.

Aldous Huxley picked up the word 'soma' and used it in his chillingly sinister vision

of a utopian world that he created in his book *Brave New World* (1932). The 'paradise-engineering' culture which Huxley poses in the novel uses soma as a way of removing 'mental pain' altogether. "Two thousand pharmacologists and biochemists were subsidized. Six years later it was being produced commercially. The perfect drug, euphoric, narcotic, pleasantly hallucinant. All the advantages of Christianity and alcohol, with none of their defects. Take a holiday from reality whenever you like and come back without so much as a headache."

Whilst the drug was said to be better than promiscuous sex it didn't deliver anything that could be said to be life-enriching or open up new levels of consciousness or spiritual understanding. Huxley saw Soma as an empty promise, the product of "unnatural" hedonic engineering. As John the Savage tells the Delta people in *Brave New World* "Don't take the horrible stuff. It's poison, its poison... Poison to the soul as well as the body. Throw it away, that horrible poison".

*Brave New World* is often compared to George Orwell's novel *1984*. Both novelists are extremely negative about the consequences of any project to create a utopian world. The differences between the two are neatly summed up by the writer Neil Postman in his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, who said "Orwell feared that what we hate would ruin us." Despite it's portrayal of Soma as an opiate-like substance, Orwell softened



his bleak view on drugs when he produced a more positive utopian novel some 30 years later in *Island* (1962) following his experiences with LSD and mescaline.

The question therefore remains as to whether a drug could be produced that did indeed 'tick all the boxes' that Soma appeared to initially. It is certainly considered technically feasible by many scientists, but the question of who controls and administers such a drug is beyond the scope of scientists. If science delivers the 'magic pill' then it becomes an immense social, political and economic question for the world community to deal with. Conspiracy theories already abound concerning the attempts of certain governments to permanently 'mood-alter' their populations. If we consider humanity to be on some kind of 'hedonic treadmill', always looking for the next new high, be it naturally or chemically induced, then we should be alert to the possibility of a tyranny controlling that high. As Huxley himself said such conditions could arise if we "failed to take into account man's almost infinite appetite for distractions." *Brave New World* revisited (1958).

**Neil Wilson**

*Drugs/alcohol/sexual health co-ordinator*

## USEFUL SERVICES

**AIDS WEST**  
(091) 566266

**STI Clinic Galway**  
091-525200

**STI Clinic Portlincula**  
Hospital, Ballinasloe 09096-48372

**STI Clinic Mayo**  
General Hospital, Castlebar, Co Mayo 09490-21733

**STI Clinic Sligo**  
Regional Hospital, The Mall, Sligo 071-9170473

**STI Clinic Cork**  
021 4922795 Appointment only  
Infectious Diseases Clinical Nurses Specialists  
Cork University Hospital  
021-496 6844

**STI Clinic Limerick**  
Limerick Regional Hospital, Dooradoyle 061-482382

**G.U.I.D.E. Clinic Dublin**  
St. James' Hospital 01-4162315/2316

**Infectious Disease Clinic**  
Beaumont Hospital 01-8093006

**Open Heart House**  
Contact James or Paul at 01-8305000

**AIDS Help Northwest**  
Letterkenny, Co Donegal 074-9125500

**Red Ribbon Project**  
9 Cecil Street, Limerick. Helpline: 061-316661

**Sexual Health Centre**  
16 Peters' Street, Cork, 021-4276676

**Dublin AIDS Alliance**  
53 Parnell Square West, Dublin 1. 01-8733799

**ACET**  
14 Lower O'Connell St, Dublin 1. 01-8787700  
dublin@acet.ie www.acet.ie

**STI Clinic Waterford, Clonmel, Carlow**  
Tel: 051-842646 for all appointments.

**The HIV Support Centre**  
The Warehouse, 3rd Floor, 7 James' Street South,  
Belfast BT28DN. Tel: 02890249268  
info@thehivsupportcentre.org.uk

*If you would like your organisation to be included in our list of useful services please phone, email, or contact us at the address below.*

AIDS WEST is a voluntary organisation based in Ozanam House, St Augustine Street, Galway, providing support for people affected by HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, and offering education / prevention services throughout the HSE West area (Counties Galway, Mayo and Roscommon). The organisation can be contacted in confidence by phoning 091-566266.

E-mail: [info@aidswest.ie](mailto:info@aidswest.ie) Website: [www.aidswest.ie](http://www.aidswest.ie)

## The STI Clinic Opening Hours

DAY	CLINIC	TIME
Mon afternoon	Appointment Only	2 - 5.45pm
Weds morning	Walk-in Clinic*	9am Doors open 8.50
Weds afternoon	Walk-in Clinic*	2pm Doors open 1.50
Friday	Appointment Only Walk-in Clinic*	9 - 10am 10am

The clinic is located in a self-contained building to the left of the main hospital. As you enter the grounds of the hospital, take the first left, then follow signs for Genitourinary Medicine Clinic, Infectious Diseases and hepatology – in front of maternity services.  
Tel: 091-525200.

\* This clinic is based on a 'first come, first served' basis with a maximum quota that can be seen at any one time.

# AIDS WEST

# 091-566266

Deadline for our spring issue is February 10th, 2012. Send to: [info@aidswest.ie](mailto:info@aidswest.ie) or The Editor, Happiness is Vital, AIDS West, Ozanam House, St. Augustine St. Galway.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily express the views or policies of AIDS West.

We reserve the right to edit where necessary.

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# Celebrating *World AIDS Day*



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