

HAPPINESS IS

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# VITAL



## Questions about your Sexual Health?



Pick up this handy booklet, or phone the  
confidential helpline on 091 56 22 13

If you are concerned about Sexually Transmitted Infections or you are looking for information on the causes, symptoms and prevention of STIs, including HIV, please ask for a copy of "A simple guide to your Sexual Health" visit [www.aidswest.ie](http://www.aidswest.ie) or phone the confidential helpline.

[www.aidswest.ie](http://www.aidswest.ie)



## from the Editor

clean all of that and the time to start is now.

Here at AIDS West we are buoying ourselves up by the successes of last year whether it was our constant campaigns to highlight awareness around HIV and STIs, our continual support of our service users, or access to up-to-date information on our new website.

This year it will be no different. Heartened by the feedback from our sponsors we will work even harder to offer the highest quality support to our service users, their loved ones, partners and caregivers. Through our education/prevention service, we will continue to promote

positive sexual health and HIV awareness to all communities in the west of Ireland. Our door is open for anyone who is worried by any aspect of his or her sexual health.

One of the things that is so uplifting at the moment is the sight of daffodils, crocuses and bluebells flowering in gardens and all along the dual carriageways. They do what they do best. They did it while we were in the exuberance of boom and they do it in the depression of bust. We could learn a thing or two from them. Just bloom where you're planted. *Keep well, keep hopeful.*  
GERALDINE MILLS

## What you always wanted to know about STIs

WITH AN INCREASE in the number of people contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) up by 30% in the last year, and the largest group affected by them in the 20-29 year olds bracket, it is more important than ever that people are able to make clear informed choices about their health and have access to concise easy-to-read information. Experts in the field say that it is necessary for health promotion campaigns to focus on STIs and that is why AIDS West recently published its simple guide to sexual health. Launched in NUI Galway in February at lunchtime, it allowed students time off from their lectures to enjoy free sandwiches and condoms before the speakers took to the podium. We were delighted to have Dr Shay Keating who is Medical Officer and Occupational Health Physician with the Drug Treatment Centre Board, Dublin as keynote speaker. His particular clinical and research interests include the medical consequences of intravenous drug use, particularly Hepatitis C infection. He is currently treating Hepatitis C positive patients attending the DTCB in liaison with infectious disease services in St James's. He is also widely published in the fields of biochemistry, sexual health including HIV and Hepatitis C. He talked about the changing faces of STIs from twenty years ago when anyone who was worried about a sexual infection had to go to a tiny little room in the

bowels of Patrick Duns Hospital. He gave a very informative talk about the most common STIs, the age groups of people whom he sees and even talked about an eighty two year old who came to be tested because he had had a fling with someone and was worried if he had contracted an infection and might pass it onto his partner.

It is always an uplifting experience to hear Liz Martin, author of 'Still Standing, An Irishwoman's Story of HIV and Hope' speak about her life and how she has overcome many obstacles, including violence, homelessness, HIV stigma and discrimination. She has now changed all that and lives a full life, a dedicated mother who works with the homeless and gives talks to groups about her life and the power of hope. Listening to Dr Paula Walsh from the Medical Centre, NUIG should put anyone's mind at rest if they were worried about going to be tested. Open, friendly, funny yet caring is how she came across as she talked about the sexual health clinic she runs two evenings a week in the Medical Centre at NUIG. She talked about students coming to be tested, sometimes not sure if they wore a condom or if they even had sex because they had been drunk or taken drugs. 'Drink' she said 'puts health and safety at risk.' Eavan Daly of GlaxoSmithKline spoke of the importance of bringing sexual health issues to the forefront and Michael Reagan, vice president of the

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Eavan Daly GSK; Declan Traynor GSK; John Flannery, general manager, AIDS West

Students' Union cut the ribbon and officially launched the booklet. Michael spoke about how the Students' Union had been working closely with AIDS West over the past year increasing awareness about the dangers of infection. AIDS West is very grateful also to be a benefactor of funds raised during NUIG S.H.A.G. week.

Our gratitude to all who made the launch such a success. To GSK for their financial support of the project. We were delighted that Eavan Daly and Declan Traynor could make it to the launch.

A special thanks to our volunteers Fergal, Kari and Aoife; to Damien of the Students' Union who provided the refreshments and Anne Marie for looking after the catering. Dr Shay Keating finished his address by saying that education is the key and encouraged everyone to read this booklet and get tested. So start, by picking up your free copy at the Students' Union, your local medical centre or library. Why don't you call our office at 091-566266 and we will send it to you.

# Animistosis and all that...

I USUALLY ARRIVE soon after nine in the morning because I like to get the occasion out of the way. I'm often fasting too so the early start is important. Straightaway, I give my name to the always friendly and polite receptionist. I take a seat in the cramped waiting room, studiously avoiding eye contact with others there, and await developments. It's another check up at the HIV clinic.

The waiting is always the most tedious part of it. There are magazines to flip through, some very high quality (like the one you're holding) and some that are too filled with ads to bother turning the pages.

On the walls there is an array of leaflets and posters dealing with a wide range of topics; genital warts, alcoholism, help-lines for those experiencing domestic abuse; how to put on a condom correctly. As I sit there, surrounded by such a grim sociological collage, I wish for a poster to raise spirits. A Far Side Cartoon maybe, a Claude Monet Poppy Field, or the words "Do you remember the last time you laughed so much it gave you a cramp? Go visit that place in your head right now."

Time passes slowly. The radio pipes in the Ray D'Arcy show. I beguile the time by observing my fellow patients when they're not looking and imagining their story. I try to read something of their personality in their faces and clothes. The clinic is not exclusively for people with HIV, so I wonder about what ailments have brought them here.

It's possible that I am rapidly losing your interest and sympathy now because I sound like some horrid, nosy busybody, but my theory is that everybody does this, especially in a doctor's waiting room where time sure does drag and dawdle.

Finally, my name is called. I follow the doctor into the consulting room, trying to remember if there are any questions I need to ask her. I am chronically over-prepared for most occasions and usually have a list written down and stashed in my wallet where I can't lose it. More often than not, however, I forget to look at it.

It will be either the consultant, a registrar or one of the staff doctors I

see for a check-up. Because it's a training hospital there may be a student medic present to observe. I'm always asked very courteously if I'm comfortable with that, but the truth is I'm quite delighted. It makes me feel as though my medical case is somehow interesting and useful. It's like I have an audience. This appeals to me, but I can understand how it may not be to everybody's taste.

We go over any problems I've been having; coughs or chills? Any night sweats or shortness of breath? Medication going ok? How are the side-effects? An Australian doctor asked me once if I had: "Animistosis?" "No, I don't think I have that... I don't even know what that is!" I replied. Only when he repeated the words did I realise he had said, 'Any missed doses?'

Sometimes I get physically examined to check for glandular swellings or suspicious sounds in my chest; clues to my well being or otherwise. Then it's back to the waiting room where, clutching the bloods order list the doctor has handed me, I await until the very cheery phlebotomists are free to weigh me, blood pressure me and drain me into lots of little colour-coded test tubes. Sometimes I get to speak with a specialist nurse who gives me advice on anything that's going on with me; emotional, physical and on lots of other practical matters.

We can often find aspects of the HSE to bemoan and deplore, but for them to find and hold on to shining examples of health care personnel such as this lady and the rest of her colleagues in the clinic shows that the organisation is doing something very right.

I collect my medication; quite a tidy little sack as it's usually a three month supply, make a follow-up appointment, and emerge back into the world.

Crucial though these visits are to my good health, I'm always glad to be getting out of there and always reward myself with some kind of greasy or cream-filled treat to accompany me on the way home. Another clinic visit out of the way.

FERGAL

# GCN COMES OF AGE

21 YEARS AGO, as Senator David Norris was winning his European Court of Human Rights case against Ireland, which eventually led to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993, a small group of activists had the idea to create a regular gay Irish publication.

"We wanted something that was immediate," says Gay Community News (GCN) co-founder, Tonic Walsh. "It had to be irreverent and earnest at the same time, and it had to look like a newspaper."

GCN was first published on February 10, 1988, leading with a story about the implementation of Margaret Thatcher's Clause 28, which outlawed the 'promotion of

homosexuality' by local authorities in the UK, while the inside pages gave readers a guide on how to individually campaign against the continued criminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland.

In the intervening years, GCN has gone through many stages, from newsprint to magazine format, from underground publication to commercial success, but it has never lost sight of its original intentions.

"Whether it was by accident or design, GCN has managed to be a window on the complexities and diversity of queer communities on this island," says Walsh.

The 21st birthday issue of the magazine



celebrates everyone who has pulled his or her weight to bring gay Ireland to where it is today. "It is an exciting and thought-provoking issue," says current Editor, Brian Finnegan. "It's a fitting tribute to a thriving, strong and always socio-politically active community."

# Gene Therapy offers hope of cure for HIV

DOCTORS have succeeded in ridding a man of the HIV virus by giving him a bone marrow transplant in what they claim is the closest treatment yet to a cure for the disease. The remarkable case recently published in the New England Journal of Medicine gives new impetus to the development of gene therapy for HIV which could ultimately replace the need for expensive and toxic antiretroviral drugs. Instead of taking drugs for life, HIV sufferers might instead have a one-off treatment that would leave them virus-free.

The 42 year old American had been infected with HIV for a decade. He was treated with antiretroviral drugs in Berlin, where he lives, for four years to hold the disease in check, but then developed leukaemia. Since being given a bone marrow transplant two years ago, he has not taken antiretroviral drugs to control HIV and has had no resurgence of either disease. He is believed to be the longest HIV-free survivor who was previously treated with antiretroviral drugs. An editorial in the journal says it "places further emphasis on gene therapies" for HIV, adding: "The case paves the way for innovative approaches that provide long-lasting viral control with limited toxicities for persons with

HIV infection."

The man's treatment began with a search by doctors at Berlin's Charité Hospital for a bone marrow donor with a genetic resistance to HIV. One of the strangest features of the disease is the way some people who have been exposed to the virus on many occasions remain uninfected. Twenty years ago, it was noticed that certain prostitutes in Nairobi remained uninfected despite exposure to the virus through thousands of sexual contacts. It has since emerged that some people carry a mutation of a gene (CCRS) that confers protection against HIV. In western populations an estimated one to three per cent has the mutation.

Dr Gero Hutter, a haematologist at the Berlin Charité Hospital, and colleagues tested 61 potential donors before they found one with the CCRS genetic mutation, who agreed to the operation. The American recipient of the transplant who lives in Germany has undergone regular checks in the two years since the treatment. The doctors have tested his bone marrow, blood and tissues and found no sign of HIV. "For as long as the viral load remains undetectable, this patient will not require antiretroviral therapy," they say in the journal.

Dr Hutter said there had been several previous reports of patients being virus-free following treatment but none to compare with the latest case. "The difference is that in our patient we had a plan. It was not an accident," he added. "It is the longest time someone who has had antiretroviral therapy and stopped, has lasted without the virus rebounding. Normally it rebounds within weeks. It is the closest we have come to a cure."

Dr Hutter said a bone marrow transplant would be too risky as a routine treatment for HIV and too difficult to find donors with the right genetic make-up. But a modification of the approach using gene therapy to render a patient HIV-resistant could work, he said.

Professor Jay Levy, an AIDS specialist at the University of California, said claims that the patient had been cured of HIV would be premature because of the virus's capacity to hide in other parts of the body including the brain, gut, liver and lymphatic system, from which it could always re-emerge. "Nevertheless, the results provide further encouragement for those examining approaches to treatment that reduce CCRS expression in persons with HIV infection," he writes.

*The Independent. Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor*

# Exercise and HIV

EXERCISE doesn't fight HIV, but it can have other important benefits for people with the virus. Loss of muscle mass and strength is often seen in people with untreated HIV, and exercise can help prevent or delay this.

Exercise can also lower levels of blood fats and sugars. Many people who take HIV treatment have increased levels of blood fats and sugars, and this can increase the risk of some serious long-term health problems such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Low levels of HDL cholesterol (often called 'good' cholesterol) have been linked to faster HIV disease progression and muscle wasting. Exercise can increase levels of HDL cholesterol, whilst reducing levels of 'bad' LDL cholesterol.

Some anti-HIV drugs can cause changes in body fat called Lipodystrophy. These changes include the accumulation of fat around the waist and breasts, as well as loss of fat on the limbs. Regular exercise has been shown to reduce fat accumulation in people with



*AIDS West staff at the launch of A simple guide to your Sexual Health.*

lipodystrophy, whilst helping to build muscle in the areas where fat has been lost.

Mention to your doctor that you are thinking of starting an exercise programme. He or she will probably be pleased that you are taking an interest in your health. They'll also be able to tell you if you need to be careful because of medical problems that might prevent you from exercising safely.

[aidsmap.com](http://aidsmap.com)

# KNIGHTHOOD for head of UK charity

NICK PARTRIDGE, head of the UK's largest HIV charity, has received a knighthood in the New Year's Honours list. Chief Executive of the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) since 1991, Sir Nick Partridge was previously awarded an OBE in 1999. The Knighthood is for services to health care. As well as heading THT, Sir Nick Partridge was appointed as a Commissioner of the Healthcare Commission in 2004, and is also chair of INVOLVE, a group that advises on public involvement in the NHS. Sir Nick Partridge first joined THT in 1985 as Office Manager and was responsible for the charity's press relations before becoming its Chief Executive in 1991. A calm but forceful advocate for the rights of the communities and individuals affected by HIV, Sir Nick oversaw the merging of THT with numerous other HIV charities across the UK, from the late 1990s onwards making the charity a national provider of services for people with HIV. Commenting on the award, Sir Nick said it was "great recognition of the pioneering work of Terrence Higgins Trust."

# AIDS is China's deadliest disease

CHINESE OFFICIALS have said that HIV/AIDS was the leading cause of death last year – compared with other infectious diseases. It is thought to be the first time this has happened. The number of deaths caused by tuberculosis and rabies fell back into second and third place.

China's Ministry of Health says that until three years ago, fewer than 8,000 people altogether had died from HIV/AIDS. By last year, the total had risen to five times that many with almost 7,000 people dying in the first nine months of 2008.

Data on HIV in China are still unreliable. The central authorities seem more willing to recognise HIV as a public health crisis and address it with education campaigns. But there are still concerns that officials at local and provincial level are under-reporting, either by mistake or because they think it's not in their interest to show rises.

Initially it was concentrated in high-risk populations, injecting drug users in particular. Infection from contaminated blood transfusions was also common. But now the main cause of transmission is thought to be unsafe sex. Even though China is still a deeply conservative society at the moment it is going through a period of rapid social change. Greater freedom of movement means millions of migrant workers have left small communities to enjoy the anonymity of cities. Male workers, away from their families, have more sexual opportunity. Prostitution has increased and premarital sex is also becoming more acceptable.

**BBC News**

# Time to 'reclaim the night' for sleep

WE ARE LIVING in an increasingly "tired" society. Many of us go through life feeling tired all the time. One reason is the increasing extension of daytime activities into the night. Technology never sleeps, and thus people can work around the clock – whether they are in the office or at home. The long hours, information overload and stresses associated with 21st century living negatively affect our sleep which, in turn, is detrimental to our health, work performance and even our relationships.

Good sleep is vital for good physical mental and emotional health. In terms of healthy living, sleep is as important as good diet and exercise. Poor or inadequate sleep can have serious consequences on overall health and wellbeing and has been shown to lead to lower immunity, poor performance and mood changes. In the longer term, inadequate sleep is associated with a greater risk of a number of diseases, such as heart disease, depression and diabetes. There are also important consequences of poor or inadequate sleep which negatively affect the way we feel and perform during the day. As a society we need to give much more serious consideration to our work/life balance particularly with regards to sleep. There is a large body of evidence which shows that working shifts is bad for health and increases accidents at work.

It has been reported that tired drivers now cause more deaths on European roads than drunk drivers, and yet whilst it has become socially unacceptable to be drunk behind the wheel or in the workplace it is almost a matter of pride that we believe we can function properly when tired.

Over the past decade there has been an increasing body of evidence that shows that sleep plays an important role in regulating weight and controlling appetite so all healthy living campaigns should include the importance of sleep. **BBC News**



## Galway Refugee Support Group (GRSG) Health Services Information Open Day

25th March 2009, 11am – 4pm  
Orbsen Building, NUIG

Information stalls from 50 different health-related organisations and service providers including those concerning cancer, citizen's information, complementary health, depression, drugs awareness, mental health, nutrition, organic food, sexual health, etc... as well as fitness, health checks and health screening

This is a **FREE** event, and is open to **EVERYBODY** New residents of Galway, refugees and asylum seekers are particularly welcome.

For full details contact [helengrsg@eircom.net](mailto:helengrsg@eircom.net) or GRSG on 091 779083

# Advice from Afra

Afra 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 Afra

I'm a bit worried because I had a one night stand a week ago. He has since contacted me to tell me he's got Chlamydia. I don't have any symptoms or anything but I'm concerned as I have heard that Chlamydia can cause infertility. We used a condom, should I go for a test?

## REPLY

CHLAMYDIA is a very common bacterial infection that is sexually transmitted. Latest figures suggest that there is an increase in the number of young people who have been infected with the bacterium. One of the main issues with the infection is that most people who have it do not get symptoms, so it's really easy to pass on without realising it. I would definitely recommend going for a test at your local sexual health clinic or GP surgery. The test is quick and easy to do. However, it is important to note that it can take up to 2 weeks before Chlamydia will show up in a test after a contact so you might want to wait a little

longer as your risk was only a week ago.

The doctor that sees you may well offer you treatment anyway (a simple course of antibiotics) if you know that you have been in contact with the infection, regardless of your test result.

There is some evidence to suggest that Chlamydia infection in women can be linked to fertility problems. This is especially likely if the infection is not treated for some time, and therefore may spread into the fallopian tubes causing scarring, pain and inflammation. If you have had the infection for a short period of time and get it treated quickly, it would be unlikely to cause any long term complications. Using a condom will certainly reduce your risk of acquiring the infection but does not eliminate it completely, therefore it's really important to go for a test just in case.

Hope that answers your query. If you need any more information, please don't hesitate to call the AIDS West helpline on 091-562213, where a counsellor will give you the information you need.

Afra

# Anam Cara Reaches out to the Bereaved

Anam Cara, the national organisation set up to support bereaved parents throughout the country, has touched and directly supported in excess of 500 bereaved parents and siblings since its launch 12 short months ago. The name Anam Cara, an old Celtic term for Soul Friend, was chosen as it conveyed the friendship of recognition, understanding and belonging. With the aim of bringing this support to a national level, the founders created and developed the website and the other support group activities.

The organisation has grown from a single parent support group in Dublin a year ago, to nine support groups, organised and facilitated by 20 liaison parents, and has extended its services to the four provinces of Ireland. Anam Cara offers a safe place where bereaved parents can meet and support each other through the journey after the death of their son or daughter/ sister or brother. Groups are held in Cork, Mayo, Galway, Louth, Tipperary, Dublin West, Dublin South,

Dublin South West and Donegal with more groups planned in 2009/2010.

Anam Cara does not differentiate between how old the children were, how they died, or even how long ago their death happened. Anam Cara is about supporting the families after the death and trying to help reduce the feelings of isolation that can follow.

The website [www.anamcara.ie](http://www.anamcara.ie) has over 200 registered members and parents can access its Message Forum, which has proved very successful with fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters from all over Ireland as a means of communicating with each other. Kathleen Kirby from the Cork Support Group added, "After the death of two sons in a road traffic accident, I found myself in a world I did not recognise anymore. The only people who could



reach me were other bereaved parents. They knew the horror I was feeling because they had experienced a similar tragedy themselves. Although the number of dark days diminishes, it is reassuring to know that an organisation like Anam Cara is out there when you need support and a listening ear."

For Further Information contact: Sharon Vard, email: [s.vard@anamcara.ie](mailto:s.vard@anamcara.ie)  
Tel: 087 2231170  
[www.anamcara.ie](http://www.anamcara.ie)

# Poetry by David Surette



DAVID R. SURETTE's two books of poetry are *Easy to Keep, Hard to Keep In* and *Young Gentlemen's School*. His poems have recently appeared in the anthologies, *French Connections: A Gathering of Franco-American Poets* and *Cadence of Hooves: A Celebration of Horses*. He was an instructor at the 2008 Cape Cod Writing Conference and will teach at the 2009 New England Young Writers' Conference at Bread Loaf, VT. He's a contributing editor at the literary journal *Salamander*. He lives in south eastern Massachusetts.

## In the Backyard

I smelled death. No wonder we fear it.

It took a mower to uncover

A young fox on its side. Fully furred. Empty eyes.

Legs extended like it died dream-running.

I fetched a shovel from the shed, pried it off the grass.

Under, the bugs had eaten him to the bones,  
his skeleton marvelous.

He left a shadow on the grass  
like the cloth of Veronica.

It's there still, a profile of a fox running  
from death or maybe towards it.

## Intelligent Design

In awe of the trees in my backyard,

I stand with the sheep dumbly

and watch the echoes of Katrina bend the boughs  
backward.

Amazed at the night sky,

I stand alone, the sheep in their stall with the evening  
hay.

I shake all the science from my head.

I know what you're thinking.

*He's going to talk about God.*

Not yet.

It's love that makes us stand with sheep.  
moves us to watch the wind in the trees,  
stirs us to stare at the sky  
longing for her asleep in the house.

## Sex Education

One place to get it is the cemetery

That's what Bert said. It's amazing what  
you learn in a junior high locker room.

The woods beside the hospital, too.

I thought about nurses and then the terrible crimes of  
Richard Speck.

It's easy to get mixed-up at thirteen.

Bert said she took boys behind the gas tanks.

She was Italian with more vowels than you could fit in  
one mouth.

Gas tanks that rose, fell, and might someday explode.

What chance did I have when I dreamt of her and

woke sticky and strangely happy,

thinking of graveyards, the dark forest, energy enough  
to power a city.

## Beat the 'recession blues' at Galway Youth Information Centre

Are you aged 15-25? Are you feeling the bite of the current economic recession?

*Galway Youth Information Centre can help you:*

- Upskill through a range of part time and full time courses.
- Update your C.V.
- Sharpen your interview skills
- Practice for the Driver Theory Test
- Find out about volunteering options both locally and internationally
- Work or travel abroad
- Take up a new hobby or leisure activity

*The good news is that the service is free and confidential*

Galway Youth Information Centre is a project of Galway Diocesan Youth Services and is funded through the city of Galway VEC.

For more information contact, Galway Youth Information Centre

Ozanam House, St Augustine Street Galway Tel 091 562434

Email: [yicgalway@esatclear.ie](mailto:yicgalway@esatclear.ie)



## FROM AFRICA TO IRELAND

EIL, A Cork based, non- profit organisation is looking for 4 Irish people to travel to South Africa and Nigeria this summer to volunteer with local organisations working with people living with HIV and AIDS. On return to Ireland the volunteers will be involved in a series of events around Ireland in the lead up to World AIDS Day on December 1st. The objective of the Global Awareness Programme initiated by EIL Intercultural Learning is to raise awareness in Ireland about the HIV and AIDS crisis in Africa. "We want to

find people willing to travel to Africa for two months and on their return to Ireland to give a voice to the stories of the people living with HIV and AIDS they encountered in Nigeria and South Africa," says Caterina Totaro who co-ordinates the programme on behalf of EIL. "We want to turn statistics into real stories about real people struggling to survive and in this way raise awareness here in Ireland about the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Africa."

Participants will receive a grant from EIL to cover a substantial part of the costs. Applications are open to anyone over 18 years of age willing to learn and to help others learn more about HIV & AIDS. More information is available from [www.eilireland.org](http://www.eilireland.org) or by calling Caterina Totaro on 021-4551535. The closing date for applications from suitable volunteers is 3rd April 2009.

EIL Intercultural Learning has been designated as a Peace Messenger Organisation by the United Nations in recognition of its work in the promotion of international understanding.

## A Second Chance for a Happy Life Stories from Khayelitsha, South Africa



I HAVE COME TO A SCHOOL in Khayelitsha, the largest 'township' in Cape Town, to look for a five-year-old girl called Zola. After an hour of searching along rows of shacks I would have been lost only for my companions, two social workers, who were working on this child's case. We found the school and Zola who had been recently discharged from care with Thembacare, the organisation I am volunteering with as part of the Global Awareness Programme. She has now been placed with a dedicated foster mum and her teacher says she is doing incredibly well and getting stronger every day. Zola is full of smiles and playing with the other children in the crowded classroom; she seems to be the life of the party. Thembacare is an 18 bed care unit for

babies and children living with HIV. The organisation offers a second chance for a happy life to the children lying neglected in the Cape Town hospitals. Sadly, because Zola was taken in by Thembacare as an infant, and previously did not receive the correct care an HIV positive baby needs, she has to live with a severe disability and cannot walk. However, determined to keep up with the other children she uses a small plastic chair as a walking frame. Part of the organisation's work is to provide follow-up home-based care to the children who have been discharged, and that was what brought me to this school.

This was just one of the unforgettable experiences I had while volunteering in South Africa as part of the EIL Global Awareness Programme which focuses on raising awareness of HIV and AIDS. Thankfully most of the stories I witnessed were positive and of children who had hopeful futures. However I was very aware that these kids, despite each one's tragic past, were the

fortunate ones, and in South Africa there are a quarter of a million children living with HIV, most of whom live below the poverty line. Is it any wonder that Thembacare has a long waiting list of babies hoping to receive proper care? On one of my trips to the hospital to collect a baby who had reached the top of the waiting list, a mother of a different child approached me and tried to convince me that it was her child I was there to collect. Such was her desperation and her harsh reality. I have been asked many times if working at Thembacare was difficult or depressing. My answer is that the work at Thembacare is uplifting. It fills you with hope and optimism in the face of the difficult and depressing challenges we are up against, those of HIV and AIDS.

Amy Rose McGovern



## Putting the Pieces TOGETHER

CONGRATULATIONS to WRDTF drug education workers, Jennifer Corbett and Sue Redmond on the recent launch of 'Putting the Pieces Together' a drug and alcohol resource for trainers. It was officially launched by Minister of State with responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy, John Curran T.D. The minister welcomed this new resource as a valuable guide for trainers, teachers and all those involved in drug and alcohol education and was encouraged by such initiatives that work for positive change in the lives of young people. Over two years of hard work and dedication went into its preparation and the minister acknowledged that and thanked all those involved in the development of the resource.

'Putting the Pieces Together' aims to serve as a resource for trainers involved in drug and alcohol education. It has been developed as a way of challenging attitudes, dispensing knowledge and hopefully influencing behaviours. It is designed to be used with young people, parents and communities of mixed abilities from 10 years and older,

including people with poor literacy skills. The activities will enable trainers deliver programmes to young people in order to increase their knowledge and understanding of drug/alcohol use and the risks associated with such use. It also sets out to explore attitudes and values associated with drug/alcohol use and to increase the personal and social skills required by young people to make informed choices in their daily lives in the areas of decision making, negotiation, communication and assertiveness.

It is hoped that the training will be rolled out throughout the province in the next couple of months. The manual can only be used upon completion of the 'Putting the Pieces Together' training.

Three other reports were also launched: Minor Tranquillisers and Sedatives; Substance Use in New Communities, and Substance Use in the Traveller Community. 'Putting the Pieces Together' was funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs through the Western Region Drugs Task Force.

## REASONS TO SMILE

*Be yourself...  
everyone else is already taken.*

*Every seven minutes someone  
in an aerobics class  
pulls a hamstring.*

*My mind not only wanders, it  
sometimes leaves completely.*

*The nice part about living in a  
small town: when you don't  
know what you're doing,  
someone else always does.*

*Just when I was getting used to  
yesterday, along comes today.*

*Sometimes I think  
I understand everything.  
Then I regain consciousness.*

## ALUMNI AWARD

CONGRATULATIONS to Brendan O'Connor who was presented with an Alumni Award from NUIG at the 10th annual Gala Banquet and Alumni Award ceremony in the Radisson SAS Hotel, Galway. These awards are in recognition of individual excellence and achievements among the university's 65,000 graduates worldwide. Brendan was awarded the AIB Alumni Award for Literature, Communication and the Arts.

Brendan O'Connor is a marine scientist and graduated with an Honours B.Sc. in 1973 and was awarded a Ph. D. in 1985. While in NUI Galway, he sang with, and then conducted, the College choir from 1969-1981, during which period the choir won several prizes at the Cork International Choral Festival.

In 1982, he was invited to conduct the newly-established mixed voice a capella choir Cois Cladaigh and has been its main conductor since then. The choir's initial musical aims were to focus on music from the Renaissance and the 20th century, two periods where

unaccompanied choral music was prominent. Claudio Monteverdi was one of the composers the choir specialised in and in 1993, performed a concert of his secular and church music to commemorate the 350th anniversary of his death.

Cois Cladaigh has also been active in commissioning new works and composers include Micheal Ó Suilleabháin, Hugh Kelly, Jenny Walshe, Marion Ingoldsby, Martin O'Leary, Máire Ní Dhuibhir, Br. Ben Hanlon, David Hamilton (New Zealand), Javier Busto (Spain), Matthew Harris (U.S.A.). A number of composers have written music for the choir including John Buckley, Eamonn Murray, Dottie Knauer, Ann Hoban, Peter Michael Hamel (Germany).

The choir has had considerable success in Cork and other festivals in Ireland and has toured extensively in Europe. Cois Cladaigh has released 4 cds "Lux Aeterna", "An Equal Music", "Beatus Vir" and "Puer natus in Bethlehem".

Brendan has adjudicated at a number of



Brendan O'Connor at World AIDS Day Memorial Service

choral festivals including the Cork International, Sligo International, Channel Islands International Festivals and at an tOireachteas.

In 2007, he was presented with the Mayor's Award for Arts and Culture and also Galway Person of the Year Award for music by the Chamber of Commerce. His is founder member and MD of Aqua-Fact International Services, a Galway-based marine consultancy company. He is married to Deirdre Townley and they have three children, Béibhinn, Brendan and Jasper. Brendan and Cois Cladaigh gave a memorable performance at our World AIDS Day commemoration. Everyone at AIDS West sends him their congratulations. Well deserved.

WE WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME Neil Wilson, who has just taken up the position of Drugs and Alcohol Co-ordinator with AIDS West, a post that is funded by the Western Region Drugs Task Force. Neil is from Peterborough in England where he worked in a number of teaching roles before moving to Ireland with his wife and two children. Now that he has settled into a new role at AIDS West, he will be contributing to the newsletter in the form of articles that take an interesting look at some of the history around drugs and alcohol.

## High Time 1 Prohibition AMERICA

“WHY don't they pass a constitutional amendment prohibiting anybody from learning anything? If it works as well as prohibition did, in five years Americans would be the smartest race of people on Earth.” (Will Rogers).

That American humourist certainly had a point. Some studies suggest that there was an increase in alcohol consumption of over 500 % during prohibition or ‘The Noble Experiment’ as it was called in the US.

America's first alcohol law was passed in 1697 in the state of New York. The new law stated that all saloons had to close on Sunday because Sunday is a day for worship, not drinking. This was the motivation behind that law and the later temperance movement – it was the agenda of the puritanical streak within American Protestantism.

Although the Prohibition Act took effect in 1920, it did not come out of the blue. The act was both championed and sponsored by Andrew Volstead, a member of the House of Representatives whose name was closely associated with the bill and it is often called the Volstead Act. The politician was a friend of Wayne Wheeler of the anti-saloon league who drafted much of the content of the bill. Thirty-three states were already ‘dry’

before the act was passed. Even in the 21st century over 500 municipalities in the United States are still ‘dry’, 83 of them in Alaska. Almost one half of Mississippi's counties are dry as well.

In passing the act many thought that it would only apply to ‘hard liquor’, but any drink with over 0.5% alcohol was banned. Many believe that this hard-line approach led to the eventual downfall of prohibition. Others argue that it was the need for tax revenues that saw the repealing of the act in 1933. During those thirteen years the consumption of alcohol was pushed underground. Al Capone famously said “Prohibition is business” and justified his activities by saying “All I do is supply a public demand”. That public demand led to the massive growth of organized crime, and wide-scale corruption of municipal administrations and police departments. Many turned to producing their own supplies – and ‘moonshine’ was born. The phenomenon of ‘binge drinking’ also came about then as you had to get rid of the evidence as soon as possible. Middle class folk could usually get better quality supplies by a visit to a ‘speak-easy’. It may have been the prohibition era but the 1920's became known as the ‘roaring twenties’ with Jazz, flappers, and a new



spirit of hedonism in the air – for some. Cocktails became especially popular, partly as a way of disguising some of the rougher elements in the alcoholic mix. A particular favourite was the ‘French 75’, named after a hard-hitting World War I artillery piece. Servicemen returning from World War I were also some of the most ardent opponents of prohibition after experiencing how alcohol was part of the everyday fabric of French society. In the light of its obvious failure to rid America of the ‘demon drink’ President Roosevelt oversaw the end of prohibition. As he did so he made his famous remark; “I think this would be a good time for a beer.”

The legacy of those days still remains in some places in America. Laws concerning the purchase of alcohol and the minimum drinking age can seem tight compared to Irish ones. America still has large numbers (up to the third of the population) of abstainers.

I leave you with the words of another American humourist who had more of a wry way of looking at the world: “Once, during Prohibition, I was forced to live for days on nothing but food and water.” (WC Fields.)

Young people, whatever their level of need, should be able to access support, when they need it, in a place where they feel safe, comfortable and respected.

That is why Jigsaw recently opened its door at 18 Mary St. Galway to give that support. Any one between the age of 15 to 25 living in Galway and the county can drop in and access the service if they want information, are worried and need to talk to someone, discuss an important decision or want to support a friend. Matters of concern can range from school, to stress, to safer sex or harm reduction.

The important thing about the project is that young people are actively

involved in the planning, running and assessment of its programmes. Jigsaw Galway is a partnership between Headstrong (the national Centre for Youth Mental Health), the HSE and Mental Health Ireland. Why don't you drop in if you're passing and talk with the friendly staff in a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

The telephone number is 091-5492; email galway@jigsaw.com or log onto www.jigsaw.ie

**Jigsaw**  
Galway

## USEFUL SERVICES

### AIDS WEST

Sexual Health Helpline 091-562213

### STI Clinic Galway

091-525200 by appointment only

### STI Clinic Portlinculla

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 4966131 Appointment only  
Infectious Diseases Clinical Nurses Specialists  
Cork University Hospital  
087 236124/0876996272

### 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

### 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 (Office); 091-562213 (Helpline). E-mail: info@aidswest.ie Website: www.aidswest.ie

## Useful Websites

www.aidswest.ie

www.aidsmap.com

www.avert.org

www.aidsmeds.com

www.larklands.net

www.tht.org.uk

www.aegis.com

www.aids.org

## AIDS WEST HELPLINE 091-562213

*Jack and Jill went up the hill  
To have a bit of fun  
But Jill the dill forgot her pill  
And now they have a son.*

Deadlines for all your articles, poems or photos for the next issue is 5th May 2009. Send to: The Editor, Happiness is Vital, AIDS West, Ozanam House, St. Augustine Street, 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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# Launch of *A simple guide to your Sexual Health*



*Above:* Lorraine O'Connell, AIDS West; Dr. Shay Keating, DTCB; Edel Quinn NUIG.  
*Right:* Eavan Daly, Declan Traynor, GSK.



*Top:* Author Liz Martin.  
*Above:* Dr Paula Walsh, Medical Centre NUIG.



*Above:* Michael Reagan, Vice President of Students' Union, NUIG launches 'A simple guide to your Sexual Health' with Eavan Daly GSK; Author Liz Martin; John Flannery AIDS West.

*Left:* Deirdre Cody, GMIT; Clare Coleman, STI Clinic, UCHG.

*Right:* Dr Shay Keating giving the keynote address.



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