

# HAPPINESS IS VITAL



Quarterly Newsletter of AIDS WEST ©

NO.2 VOL 9 JUNE 2007

## IRISH AIDS DAY LAUNCH of ***STILL STANDING*** by **LIZ MARTIN**



# EDITORIAL

Welcome to our very special Irish AIDS Day edition of Happiness is Vital. It is the day we support those living with HIV and remember those who have died from the virus. So in this issue we say goodbye and pay our own special tribute to the courage of Linda Reid who was the public face of HIV positive women in Ireland until her death in March of this year.

At the same time we celebrate the autobiography of Liz Martin who was diagnosed HIVpositive 16 years ago. AIDS West is so privileged to have published *Still Standing* especially for Irish AIDS Day.

When AIDS West asked me in 2005 to read the opening chapters of Liz's memoir, with a view towards publication, I knew immediately that this was a project I wanted to see to fruition. And so we

worked together as one chapter of her brave journey followed another, and now it is in print.

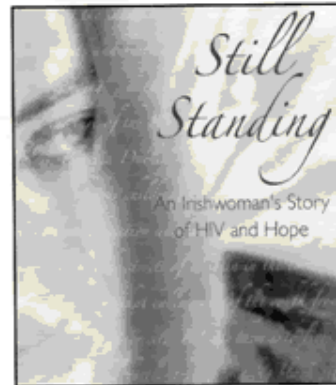
To say it has been a privilege to work with someone as courageous and determined as Liz is an understatement. When she was first diagnosed with HIV, she would have given anything to have been able to get her hands on the story of someone living with the virus in Ireland. Sixteen years on, she clearly shows that it is possible to live a long and healthy life with HIV. She has survived on her own triple therapy of medical treatments, laughter and hope and the greatest of these is hope. Thank you, Liz for trusting me with your life experience. I salute your enormous courage in putting your name to *Still Standing*.

Ed

AIDS West is a voluntary organisation based in Ozanam House, St. Augustine Street, Galway.

Support for people affected by HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, and education/prevention services are offered throughout the HSE West area (counties Galway, Mayo and Roscommon).

The organisation can be contacted in confidence by phoning: 091-566266 (office) or 091-562213 (helpline) Fax on 091-564708 or e-mail: [info@aidswest.ie](mailto:info@aidswest.ie) website: [www.aidswest.ie](http://www.aidswest.ie)



## USEFUL SERVICES - USEFUL SERVICES - USEFUL SERVICES

### AIDS West

Sexual Health Helpline 091-562213

### STI Clinic Galway

091-525200 by appointment only

### 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

### 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 NORTH WEST

Letterkenny, Co.Donegal 074-9125500

### Red Ribbon Project,

9 Cecil St. Limerick. Helpline 061-316661

### Alliance Sexual Health Centre,

16 Peters St. Cork 021-4276676

### Dublin AIDS Alliance

53 Parnell Square West Dublin 1 Tel.01-8733799

### STI Clinic Waterford, Clonmel, Carlow

Tel. 051-842646 for all appointments.

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

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Layout: Marie-Noëlle Biddulph. Printing: Ace Printers, Galway

Deadline for all your articles, poems, photos for the next issue is 5th August 2007. Send to: The Editor, Happiness is Vital, AIDS West, Ozanam House, St. Augustine St. Galway.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of AIDS West. We reserve the right to edit where necessary.

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Artwork Ness Kelly Photography Michael Dillon

# AIDS WEST FAREWELL TO LINDA REID

AIDS West wishes to pay tribute to Linda Reid, a prominent activist in the area of HIV. Linda died on the 19th of March 2007 at the age of 45. She was diagnosed HIV positive in 1988 while living in Germany. At that time she was told she would be dead within three years but proved everyone wrong. When she returned home she discovered that in Ireland HIV was seen as a disease associated with gay men or intravenous drug users only, though she had been infected through heterosexual contact. Soon Linda became the public face of HIV positive women in this country. She became an AIDS worker, and talked openly about her condition.

Linda joined Dublin AIDS Alliance (DAA) where she counselled HIV positive women. In St. James' Hospital, Dublin her role in teaching young nurses the sensitivities involved in dealing with those who were HIV positive was particularly valued. In due course she became a member of the Government's National AIDS Strategy Committee, on which she remained for the rest of her life. She also became the Irish representative on the International Committee for women living with HIV/AIDS. Through this position she was given the opportunity to address the UN World Conference on AIDS in Durban 2004.

Linda's saying was that "there were no innocent victims of HIV/AIDS, because there were no guilty ones". This I believe epitomises her beliefs. We sympathise with her family and friends, thank Linda for the work she has done in the area of HIV and pray that she has gone to a very peaceful resting place.

ORLA NUGENT IRWIN



## WESTSIDE YOUTH TO TAKE TO THE STAGE

The Annual Westside evening of Youth Music, Dance and Drama took place on Friday 27th April at the NUIG Bank of Ireland Arts Theatre at 7.30pm. It was a display of the hard work and dedication of the young people from Westside who have attended the clubs week after week throughout the year.

The evening kicked off with the young dancers who designed some very exciting dance performances under the guidance of dance tutor Charlene Brogan. This was followed by a drama piece looking at real issues that affect young people's lives. 'Who's got HIV?' was a game show like no other. For the contestants, the more incorrect answers they gave, the closer they got to winning the grand prize- a brand new HIV infection. This drama piece was devised by the young people of the 'Youth in Action' group of Youth Work Ireland, Galway, Westside following the theme of this year's One World Week, 'Tackling the stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV and AIDS'. The young people told me that they decided to do something about the issue after a Zambian visitor told them about the virus and the stigma attached to it. They decided that drama would be the best medium in which to approach this issue and so asked Markus Quinlan to write the script for them and help them produce and direct the drama piece.

I got the opportunity to see the play and I was very impressed with the way the issue was handled and how Marcus used satire and humour to highlight some of the issues around HIV and AIDS. The message was very clear, aimed at teenagers and young people to show that the more they know about the virus, the better chance they have of protecting themselves. It therefore became a very effective educational tool that can be used in an entertaining but hard-hitting way. The acting was great and all those involved in it deserve great credit. I hope that they get an opportunity to stage it again as I think in an age where the celebrity TV show is the thing, it's a very clever vehicle in which to carry the message.

The evening finished with a performance by the young Samba Band under the enthusiastic direction of samba tutor, Aoife Kane and I would like to congratulate all who took part.

GERALDINE MILLS



LIZ MARTIN, AUTHOR, GERALDINE MILLS, EDITOR,  
LIAM TURLEY, CHAIRPERSON BOARD OF DIRECTORS, AIDS  
WEST, JACQUELINE TIERNEY, ABBOT LABORATORIES  
AT THE LAUNCH OF STILL STANDING.

AIDS West would like to congratulate James O'Connor from Open Heart House for being one of the successful volunteers to be chosen as part of the Global Awareness Programme. James will be spending two months on an HIV/AIDS programme in South Africa and returning to Ireland to raise awareness about what he has learnt in the community-based projects.

# MEDICAL MATTERS

## Betadine for herpes simplex infection

L.J. Waters MRCP, S.E. Barton MRCOG and F.C. Boag FRCP

The clinical value of aciclovir, oral or topical, in the episodic treatment of recurrent herpes virus infection is limited. Betadine (povidone-iodine) could provide a cheap, effective alternative for managing symptomatic recurrences. We describe a case where povidone-iodine was used successfully to treat a recurrence of genital herpes simplex and review the literature supporting povidone-iodine in the treatment of genital tract infections.

A 27 year-old woman presented to our genitourinary (GU) medicine clinic having developed an itchy, vulval rash 10 days before. The rash had developed two days after unprotected oral and vaginal intercourse with a new male partner, and was associated with dysuria, mild vaginal discharge and flu-like symptoms. After an internet search, she self-diagnosed herpes simplex infection and started using topical betadine (povidone-iodine) solution; she noted a clear temporal relationship between povidone-iodine application and reduction in her symptoms.

On examination in clinic, she had bilateral inguinal lymphadenopathy, a number of healing lesions and one new vesicle which was swabbed and subsequently tested positive for herpes simplex type 1 on a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay; the rest of her GU screen was negative.

She obtained the povidone-iodine in Bulgaria to treat genital warts after failure of prescribed medication; the genital warts also resolved with the use of povidone-iodine.

Therapeutic options for many conditions continue to be researched, developed and elaborated; newer treatments often have the advantage of randomized, prospective clinical outcome data, and older treatments may fall by the wayside, often, but not always, justifiably.

Genital herpes simplex virus (GHSV) is caused by herpes simplex virus types I and II; in the UK over 50% of first-episode GHSV is caused by type I. Approximately, 40 and 90% of individuals with type I and type II GHSV, respectively will experience one or more recurrences in the first year after infection.

The main reasons for treating a recurrent episode of GHSV are reduction of symptoms and reduction of viral shedding. For mild recurrences, no treatment or saltwater bathing can be advocated. Evidence for topical anti-virals in the treatment of recurrent GHSV is conflicting. One large trial using topical aciclovir, showed no significant reduction in symptom duration, but another demonstrated a statistically significant, though small, reduction in symptoms in women. There is clear evidence of benefit when using oral anti-virals to treat primary HSV infection, but the evidence for recurrent disease is conflicting. Some studies have demonstrated a reduction in symptom duration with the use of oral aciclovir or valaciclovir, but others have shown no significant difference between placebo and oral aciclovir.

Povidone-iodine is a broad-spectrum disinfectant with a wide range of antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal and antiprotozoal activity. Povidone-iodine solution has been shown to be active against bovine papillomavirus *in vitro*, suggesting a potential role in the reduction of transmission of human papillomavirus, and is also effective against HIV *in vitro*.

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(EDIT)

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AIDS West would like to thank the Naugatuck Chamber Choir very much for the wonderful performance in St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church, Galway on Thursday 22nd February. The choir, which hails from the Naugatuck High School, Connecticut, USA has been widely recognised for its outstanding contribution to the arts in Connecticut and has performed extensively in North America and Europe. Their very wide programme included a cappella choral music including themes based on Gregorian Chants and choral work by famous composers. This choir clearly demonstrated that the human voice is the most perfect instrument on earth. We thank them most sincerely for their generous performance, which raised €182 for our organisation.



AIDS WEST TEAM CELEBRATING  
THE LAUNCH OF STILL STANDING  
ON 13TH JUNE 2007

AIDS West would like to thank the following for their generous donations.

Naugatuck Choir  
HC21  
Corrib Oil  
Gallagher Ireland LTD  
DCC  
Irish Stock Exchange  
Marguerite Gannon  
Udáras na Gaeltachta  
TG4  
Galway Crystal  
PJ Carroll



# WHAT'S IN THE NEWS



## Green Tea Extract may fight HIV

Green tea could form the basis of a new generation of HIV drugs, say experts. Scientists in Japan have found a component of green tea that can stop HIV from binding to healthy immune cells which is how the virus spreads. Green tea is made up of a class of chemicals called catechins, the most abundant of which is Epigallocatechin Gallate (EGCG)

Writing in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, the scientists said the discovery could lead to new treatments to fight the disease. It is believed that this chemical is responsible for green tea's health benefits. Previous studies have suggested it can protect against a range of diseases, including cancer and heart disease.

Scientists at the University of Tokyo carried out tests to see if the chemical could help beat HIV. They found that EGCG stopped the virus from binding to CD4 molecules and human T cells. The concentration of the chemical used in laboratory tests is many times greater than the blood concentration that could be achieved by just drinking green tea so simply drinking the tea would not offer people protection from the virus. The scientists said that further research is needed to see if EGCG could be used in new anti-HIV drugs.

BBC News

## Condom testers required by Durex

Durex has launched its first UK recruitment drive for thousands of condoms testers.

The condom maker wants a panel of 5,000 people, single, married or in couples to report their experience of using

condoms and lubricants. Men and women of all ages, ethnic groups or sexual orientation have been asked to apply on its website. Durex was inundated with 14,000 applicants on the first day it started a similar scheme in France.

UK panellists will be expected to report online on how enjoyable their condoms and lubricants were to use and whether their sex lives have improved. 'The idea is to create a massive panel of testers who can try Durex condoms, have sex and then give us feedback about their experiences- in strictest confidence, of course,' a Durex spokesperson said. 'It is some crazy kind of '60's love-in,' she added.

BBC News



TINA M LEDWITH, BERNADETTE PADDEN AND LILLIAN LEONARD AT THE LAUNCH OF STILL STANDING

## What you think about Happiness Is Vital

First, I would like to sincerely thank all those who took the time to respond to the questionnaire on the evaluation of 'Happiness is Vital'. There were 112 completed questionnaires returned to the office. Overall, the feedback was very positive with 96.4% of readers happy with the issues dealt with in the newsletter. The response to the title of the newsletter was very positive with 82.3% of readers satisfied with it. Names suggested for future consideration included 'The Westside Story', 'A Brighter Future' and 'Awareness'.

Another section of the questionnaire sought information on content and style to include font size, photography and the cover page. Feedback again was generally positive. Only 1.78% respondents were unhappy with the photography and 3.57% dissatisfied with the front cover page. With regards to providing enough information for family and friends, 80.3% of respondents stated there was adequate information with 9.8% reporting there was not enough.

In response to information on medical, educational and sexual advice, 12.5% of respondents did not feel there were enough articles provided in these areas. Having ascertained the respondents reading habits of the newsletter, a question was asked about their awareness of

its availability on the AIDS West website. The majority of respondents were unaware that the newsletter can be downloaded from the website.

A wealth of valuable information in relation to improvement in the newsletter was also given by respondents. These included - linking with issues in the developing world, more information relating to issues in the West of Ireland, Galway/Mayo area, shorter snappier articles and more attention given to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual communities. 98.2% of readers still wish to receive the newsletter which is most encouraging.

LORRAINE O'CONNELL

AIDS West would like to thank Lorraine for her valuable work carried out while on work placement with us from her MA in Health Promotion at NUIG. Over the next number of issues we hope to take on board some of the suggestions especially in the area of medical matters and HIV support organisations. All those interested in medical matters might like to read the case report on 'Betadine for herpes simplex infection' published in this issue courtesy of the *International Journal of STD and AIDS*.

# The Terrence Higgins Trust

During a recent trip to England, Gerry Coy, Jennifer Corbett and I had the great pleasure of visiting the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) in London. Terrence Higgins Trust is the UK's leading HIV and sexual health charity, providing a wide range of services to over 50,000 people a year. The organisation was named after Terry Higgins who was one of the first people in the UK to die from AIDS aged 37, on 4 July 1982, in London. By naming the Trust after Terrence, the founder members who were his friends, hoped to personalise and humanise AIDS in a very public way.

We had the great privilege of meeting with Caroline Mason, Service Development Manager, and Andrew White, Clinical Service Development Manager. In the course of our visit, we discussed the history of THT, their vision and mission. We also discussed in great detail the services both THT and AIDS West provide. When we compared the services that THT offer to those of AIDS West it was very reassuring to know a lot of our services, though on a smaller scale are the same. The two organisations have common goals and aspirations for people living with HIV.

THT's vision is a 'world where people with HIV live healthy lives free from prejudice and discrimination, and

good sexual health is a right and reality for all.

The mission of THT is to: *Encourage people to value their sexual health, thereby minimising the spread of HIV and sexually transmitted infections; drive for the best possible treatment and support services for everyone living with HIV in the UK; lead innovation and increase access in local sexual health services so that they are available in ways that best meet the needs of the people using them; lobby for public and political support for HIV and sexual health issues, and campaign to eradicate stigma and discrimination.*

The charity also campaigns and lobbies for greater political and public understanding of the personal, social and medical impact of HIV and sexual ill health.

Since 1999, THT has merged with a series of other organisations, both within London and further afield, and now employs at least 300 staff and has more than 800 volunteers. These mergers have brought with them a wealth of expertise and experience which enables THT to provide services across England, Scotland and Wales.

Finally, visiting THT established a link between our organisations, one that we hope will flourish over time. We

were honoured that Ms Jackie Redding, Associate Director of Service Delivery & Development from THT kindly returned the visit to AIDS West to launch *Still Standing. An Irishwoman's Story of HIV and Hope.*

We look forward to an excellent working relationship and we wish to thank Caroline Mason and Andrew White for their kindness towards us during our visit. A very special thank you to Jackie for making the launch a memorable occasion and we hope her next visit to Galway won't be so hectic.

ORLA NUGENT IRWIN



CELEBRATING THE LAUNCH OF STILL  
STANDING IN GALWAY CITY MUSEUM,  
13TH JUNE 2007

## Gort Community School Winners

AIDS West would like to congratulate the transition year students of Gort Community School for winning a Silver Award at the Young Social Innovators competition for their entry titled *Making Our World, One World*. This project aimed at raising awareness and tackling the stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV and AIDS. You will remember these wonderful innovators as it was their human red ribbon that was the cover of our March issue. We are delighted with their success and wish to thank Carmel Neylon and Aisling Collins for all the support they gave the project throughout the year and we look forward to more social innovators from Gort Community School.

## STILL STANDING

*Still Standing* is the highly courageous and true account of Liz Martin's life which begins in Dublin's inner city in 1967. The youngest of four children, she has a burning ambition to do her Leaving Cert and become a social worker. Her life follows a very different course however, when she falls in love with Simon and finds herself pregnant and engaged by the time she is 16.

From the outset, her relationship with Simon is a turbulent one, becoming even more so when she discovers that he is a heroin addict. In clear and honest prose, she starkly portrays how his addiction hurtles them into a dark world of terror and violence. When he is diagnosed HIV positive, the relentless aggression towards her drives herself and her children to flee the family home and seek refuge in different parts of Ireland. What follows is a testimony to her bravery and survival instincts as she deals with the discovery that she has also been infected with the HIV virus and the stigma and discrimination attached to such a diagnosis which is still prevalent today.

The first of its kind in Ireland, Liz has written her story to tell what it's like to live with HIV, to educate people about the virus and to give hope to those who are living with it or have just been recently diagnosed. It is available in all good book shops nationwide or if you wish to purchase a copy of *Still Standing* from us, please send a cheque /money order to the value of €12.50 (incl.p&p) to AIDS West, Ozanam House, St. Augustine St, Galway, Ireland.

# POETRY

## BRITISH HIV ASSOCIATION (BHIVA) CONFERENCE, EDINBURGH, 2007

### Laura Nyro's Window

Morning surprises her:  
sucked from the sky  
over Gibsom Street,  
fragile and hollow,  
it waits at her window.

She watches the city sleep  
fall off the skyscrapers, canyons  
in clouds that have burst  
in the night  
unnoticed.

A pool on the balcony  
mirrors the broken sky:  
it glistens, one tear  
in the huge blue  
eye-of-a-giant.

### Road Sign

From a distance  
I think it's a cat,  
a black cat, a sign  
and a good one at that.

But then as I get near  
it sees me, turns  
back in  
towards whatever

wildness seeded it  
beside the motorway:  
a baby fox,  
on tenuous, inked legs,

skittering away.

ENDA COYLE-GREENE



Enda Coyle Greene's work has been published widely in magazines as well as broadcast on RTÉ and Lyric FM. Her first collection *Snow Negatives* was the winner of the Patrick Kavanagh award in 2006

BHIVA is the leading UK professional association representing professionals in HIV care. Now 13 years old, it is a well-established and highly respected organisation committed to providing excellence in the care of those living with and affected by HIV. Every year it holds its annual conference in a different city and this year the choice was Edinburgh.

Accompanied by two of my colleagues we arrived in Edinburgh on the opening day of the conference. Being reasonably familiar with the city, having experienced its wonderful festival on a number of occasions, it was easy to settle in. We had accommodation on the Royal Mile which is very central for most activities.

The main bulk of the conference was based at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre, a vast building just off the Lothian road. Sessions started early and continued until 6.30-7.00 most days. On the first day there were excellent plenary sessions on co-infection with hepatitis B and C, tuberculosis and the HIV-infected traveller. Interspersed with these sessions were oral research presentations on a diverse range of HIV subjects. One of the highlights was a paper by James Molton of the Royal Free and University College Medical School, London. This was a survey of the vaccination history and immune status in HIV infected persons. His conclusions were: *A significant number of HIV-infected adults are at risk of vaccine-preventable infections and should be identified and offered vaccination. Many are unaware of their vaccination status and education may be beneficial.*

Friday morning commenced with a plenary session on treatment strategies. Among the topics was the optimal CD4 count threshold for starting HAART. This led to a lot of discussion around how early patients should commence treatment. New antiretroviral drugs in therapy were also discussed.

In the afternoon among the issues covered were: switching therapies,

cardiovascular risk and complications of HIV or HIV therapy. The keynote lecture was delivered by Dr Douglas Richman of the University of California and was entitled: *Virological consequences of continuing therapy during virological failure*. Alongside the lectures there was a prominent display of poster abstracts. These provided interesting reading during quiet periods and lunch times.

Saturday proved to be the best of the days with plenary sessions on HIV and the brain, non-AIDS- defining cancers and fertility in HIV infected persons. Allied to these the BHIVA guidelines session considered strategies and opportunities around diagnosing the undiagnosed. Lastly the second BHIVA invited lecture looked at HIV and the courts. Titled *From the bench to the courtroom: interpretation of virological evidence of HIV transmission*, this highlighted the difficulties inherent in prosecuting cases of criminal HIV transmission. This is a subject that has caused huge controversy and deep concern for most people who work in the area. NAMS, coincidentally, launched a new book on the subject: *Criminal HIV Transmission* by Edwin J Bernard, which is essential reading particularly for HIV support organisations.

The conference was a success on many fronts. Not only was it possible to interact with many professionals in the field but also with most companies and organisations who were there to explain their contribution to the world of HIV (not to mention the free beers and smoothies available to all). Lastly I would like to say thanks to Abbott Laboratories for sponsoring my trip.

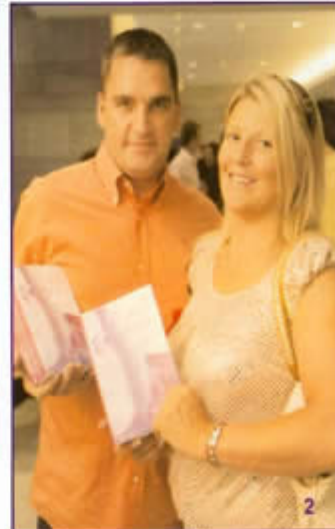
GERRY COY (AIDS WEST)

\*A survey of vaccination history and immune status in HIV-infected persons. James Molton, Kevin Stonebanks, Gaia Nebbia, Ian Cropley, Mike Youle, Margaret Johnson and Anna Maria Geretti Royal Free and University College Medical School, London, UK  
2007 British HIV Association, HIV Medicine, 8 (Suppl.1), 1-8 Oral Abstracts 3

Abstracts of the conference may be accessed through [www.bhiva.org/cms1220091.asp](http://www.bhiva.org/cms1220091.asp)



**TOP PICTURE**  
 Liz Martin, author, Jennie Cotter, Plunkett Communications, Jacqueline Tierney and Killian MacDonald, Abbott Laboratories (Main Sponsors of *Still Standing*), Orla Nugent-Irwin, manager AIDS West, Jackie Redding, Terrence Higgins Trust, Geraldine Mills, editor.  
 1. Liz and Jackie cutting the ribbon.  
 2. Michael and Valerie O'Brien.  
 3. Sue Redmond (WRDTF) and Emma Brogan.  
 4. Pauline Staunton, Secretary Board of Directors, AIDS West and Evelyn Stevens, founder member of AIDS West.



**AT THE LAUNCH**

**This issue of Happiness Is Vital is sponsored by**  **Abbott**