



**By the time you have read
this sentence, one more
person will have been
infected with HIV.**

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the spring issue of Happiness is Vital. Already the office is a hive of activity as 2007 is the 20th Anniversary of the foundation of AIDS West. We hope to mark the occasion with a number of events throughout the year. When AIDS West first opened its doors the future looked bleak for those who had been diagnosed, many of them dying not so much from the virus as from the toxicity of the medication. Now, every other day there are medical advances. Improvements in anti-retrovirals are allowing people to live much longer lives, scientists have discovered a weak spot in the HIV virus which may go a long way towards finding a vaccine; there is the possibility of medication being reduced to just one pill a day. So there is a lot to celebrate. One of our main projects will hopefully come to fruition for Irish AIDS Day, which will be the publication of the life -story of one of our clients. This story of HIV and hope, extracts of which you may have read in the newsletter over the last year is by a woman who will

finally tell what it has been like living with HIV for over 15 years. We have already started on our preparations for World AIDS Day which we hope will be the culmination of our work to date and an opportunity to reflect on what we have achieved and how we can move forward to further enhance the lives of those who are HIV positive.

There is the misconception in Ireland that HIV doesn't happen in our wonderful green country. For this reason AIDS West is not seen as a priority when it comes to fundraisers or donations so it has been especially heartening for us to see the number of small yet significant groups who have seen the value of our work and in their own wisdom have held all sorts of innovative benefit occasions for us. It is greatly appreciated and goes a long way towards making our work a little easier. Mile Buiochas. Keep well, keep safe,
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 website: www.aidswest.ie

Evaluation of Newsletter

I would like to thank most sincerely everyone who took the time and effort to respond to our questionnaire sent out before Christmas. At present we are evaluating replies and would like to give a last opportunity to anyone who still wishes their opinion/views to be included. If you do, please return your completed questionnaire to our office by April 13th.

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.

Editorial team: Geraldine Mills, Orla Nugent-Irwin, Gerry Coy.

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

Deadline for all your articles, poems, photos for the next issue is 5th May 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.

WHAT'S INSIDE

PAGE 2 EDITORIAL

PAGE 3 TWENTY FIVE YEARS ON

PAGE 4 THE POWER OF TOUCH

PAGE 5 WHAT'S IN THE NEWS

PAGE 6 MAKING A DIFFERENCE

PAGE 7 HEALING HERBS & HIV

PAGE 8 THE LAST WALTZ

photos copyright Andrew Downes, Maureen O'Donnell, Peter Moore

Original artwork by Ness Kelly

TWENTY FIVE YEARS ON

Did you know that in the time it has taken you to read this sentence, one more person has become infected with HIV? Since the first cases were recorded in 1981, HIV has taken an enormous toll on lives around the world. It is estimated that at the end of 2005, 38.6 million people were living with HIV/AIDS. This includes nearly 4.1 million who were infected in 2005 alone. In the last 25 years more than 25 million people have died of AIDS, including 2.8 million in 2005. About 95% of people with HIV/AIDS live in developing countries, and nearly two-thirds of them are in sub-Saharan Africa. In this region, where HIV is mainly spread through heterosexual sex, prevalence rates exceed 20% in the worst affected countries, and the epidemic is

disproportionately affecting young women. In the 15-24 year old age group, three young women are affected for every man. Three quarters of all women and nearly 90% of children with HIV/AIDS in the world live in this region.

HIV/AIDS epidemics in Eastern Europe and East Asia are growing rapidly, notably in the larger countries - China, India and Russia - where commercial sex and injection drug use are the key drivers. The diversity of epidemics between and within regions and countries highlight the need for a range of responses that can be adapted locally.

Global efforts to address HIV/AIDS have advanced in recent years. Greater international political commitment has been accompanied by

increased financial resources and prevention efforts are beginning to bear fruit, with indications of behavioural change and decline in prevalence rates in a number of high-burden countries.

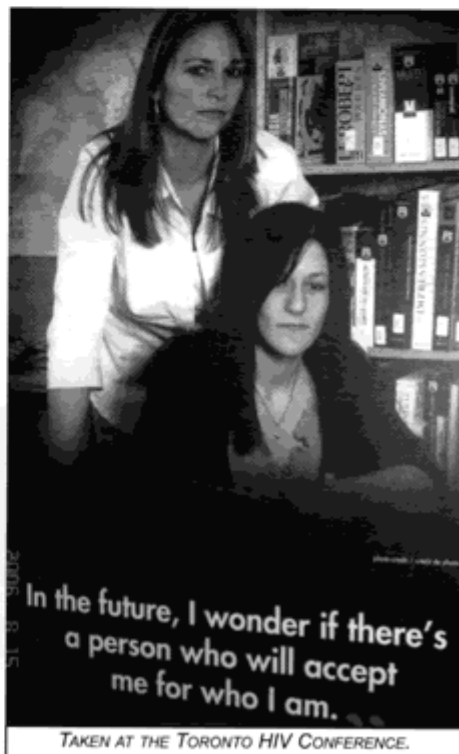
Yet much more remains to be done if the goal of universal access is to be achieved. The growth in the number of new infections and people in need of treatment continues to outpace the capacity of health services to respond. Allocated global financial resources also fall short of what will be needed to achieve universal access, and the sustained political commitment needed to tackle HIV over the long term is still lacking in some countries.

ORLA NUGENT-IRWIN

SEEING IT FIRST HAND

Last summer my friend Maeve and I travelled to Zambia and spent three amazing months living in the bustling town of Kabwe which is two hours north of the capital, Lusaka. While there, we worked in the Ranchhod Hospice. Ranchhod Hospice provides health care for people living with HIV and AIDS. Its aim is to "give them quality of life in a peaceful atmosphere". The hospice is not just about purely palliative care but its greatest focus is on supporting people and starting them on ARV's. It was set up in 2003 by Mary Chidgey in conjunction with Kara Counselling (a Zambian organisation working with people living with HIV/AIDS). Mary maintains this lively 18 bedded hospice centre with 4 other nurses and 10 care assistants, a cook, gardener and driver. The hospice also provides VCT testing (Voluntary Counselling and Testing) and in recent years has set up outreach programmes to 3 neighbouring areas up to 25km away with health care, nutritional support and education. Home based carers are also linked to the hospitals for the surrounding areas. Next to the hospice there is a children centre where 60 orphaned children come each day for nutrition, social interaction and health care. We were involved in all aspects of the hospice from nursing care to cleaning, to stirring the local porridge, nshima and to playing with the children. It was such a life changing experience that when we returned we vowed to do something to help both the hospice and AIDS West and that's when we decided to get involved in Wear Red Day which was a great success. Through selling red ribbons and candles we raised nearly €800 for both charities.

SIOBHÁN LYNCH





The Power of Touch



Massage is a form of tissue manipulation which has developed over thousands of years. From ancient China to present day Europe it has been used for the promotion and restoration of health. Massage is suitable for everyone from the newborn baby to an elderly person. It is beneficial to all the body systems and is a natural and effective way to treat both physical conditions and psychological problems. Its effects are immediate but they last a lifetime. In Roman times gladiators were given massage before and after their bouts of fighting. Julius Caesar, the renowned Roman emperor had massage daily.

The benefits of massage are manifold. It helps to ease muscular tension in the body. It improves circulation and gives a feeling of relaxation and well being. It helps to reduce pain, enhances lymphatic drainage and stimulates the body's natural immune system. It promotes a general state of well-being as well as helping to reduce nervous tension and lift the mood thus reducing the feelings of depression.

There are many different types of Massage Therapy from Indian Head Massage, to aromatherapy which uses essential oil treatments. On-site massage is a short 15 minute massage with the client sitting in a special portable massage chair. Pregnancy Massage can be done after the first three months of pregnancy. Infant massage is a

wonderful experience shared between parent and baby. Hot Stone Massage is an exciting new treatment combining the benefits of heat and massage together in one unified treatment. This treatment is ideal for those with muscular aches and pains, those suffering from stress, or problems affected by these issues.

Massage therapy plays a vital role in helping patients cope with the various symptoms of HIV/AIDS and indirectly boosts the immune system at the same time. The factors that seem to contribute to immune enhancement are pressure strokes, dosage and the frequency of the therapy. 73 HIV positive men were studied by Antoni, et al. (Journal of Consulting & Clinical psychology 2000;68(1):35-45.) to determine how cognitive-behavioural stress management (including massage therapy) affected anxiety, T-cytotoxic/suppressor cells and 24hour urinary norepinephrine output. The results showed significant reduction in anxiety, anger, total mood disturbance and perceived stress. It also lowered norepinephrine output. Even after 6-12 months there was a significant increase in T-cytotoxic/suppressor (CD4+CD8+) lymphocytes. In another study by Ironson and Field conducted in 1996 which was performed on 23 HIV positive and 10 negative men, the massage group showed significant increases in natural killer (NK) cell cytotoxicity, cytotoxic T-cells and relaxation levels as well as significant

decreases in urinary cortisol and states of anxiety. NK cells have been shown to be highly protective in HIV-positive patients, thus massage therapy could prove significant. For immune enhancing results the technique should include pressure strokes and deep strokes which should last approximately one hour and be performed at least once a week over a period of months.

For more information, contact Mary Kenny 087 9641246.

Poetry

The Great Pyramid of Mayo *Built 1786 at The Neale*

He fashioned a crude sentence
In rough cut stone
Out of the grammar of grief,
Unloaded the mannered
Egyptian afterlife
Onto the plains of Mayo,
Its fixed churches,
And reticent prospects,
Its armoured understandings.

No knowing how far
The impulse spread.
The river Robe the Nile,
Claremorris was maybe Cairo,
Karnac in Castlebar.
The meanings at their widest
Near high ground,
Otherwise a perfect secret.

Crows took turns to visit
By day, at night the light
Clatter of bats was heard
Circling the impulsive apex.
The builders laughed up sleeves,
Into their cups. Told brazen
Women at night in Ballinrobe,
About fools and good money.

Lately the locals nibble
At his canvas edge,
For new bungalows, dog kennels,
Children's swings, extensions,
With their seed-like eyes
And indoor tans.
Watch the immortal glow
From Hollywood at night.
Stand accused of little.

Ed Boyne

TOWARD UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE BY 2010, WHO

In 2005, leaders of the G8 countries agreed to work with the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNAIDS and other international bodies to develop and implement a package for HIV prevention, treatment and care, with the aim of achieving the closest possible universal access to treatment for all those by 2010. This goal was endorsed by the United Nations Member States (including Ireland) in September 2005. Working toward universal access is a very ambitious challenge for the international community and will require the commitment of all governments and key stakeholders. Among the most important priorities is the strengthening of health services so that they are able to provide a comprehensive range of HIV/AIDS services to all those who need them. It is important that we as Irish people demand that our government fulfils its obligations within Ireland and internationally in relation to HIV and AIDS.



WHAT'S IN THE NEWS



A Glasgow High Court recently found Italian national, Giovanni Mola, guilty of 'reckless' injury for sexually transmitting HIV and Hepatitis C to a former girlfriend. It is the first time that anyone has been successfully prosecuted for the sexual transmission of Hepatitis C, and the second successful Scottish prosecution of the sexual transmission of HIV.

Mr Mola, 38 was originally charged with "culpable and reckless conduct" in 2005. It was alleged that Mr Mola knew or believed that he had HIV and Hepatitis C; that he knew or believed it could be transmitted through vaginal and oral sexual intercourse; that he did not disclose his infection to his former girlfriend, and repeatedly refused to wear a condom when they had sexual intercourse; that HIV and Hepatitis C were transmitted as a result and that this was to the permanent impairment of 'Miss X' and endangered her life and health.

During the trial Mr Mola admitted all but one of the charges. However, he denied repeatedly refusing to wear a condom. Thus, the outcome of the trial hinged on the credibility of Mr Mola and that of his former girlfriend. BBC online reported that whilst the former testified that he always used condoms during vaginal sex with 'Miss X' between September 2003 and February 2004, 'Miss X' testified that he "aggressively" refused to wear condoms.

However, BBC online also reported that 'Miss X' told the court that she had been a virgin before she met Mr Mola. Mr Mola's defence lawyer, however, referred to evidence from Miss X's sexual health clinic records that conflicted with her account.

Mr Mola's conviction follows that of Stephen Kelly, who was the first person in Scotland - and in the UK - to be successfully prosecuted for the 'reckless' sexual transmission of HIV. Mr Mola was due to be sentenced on March 7th. (NAM)

Tests of Drug to Block HIV Infection are Halted Over Safety.

Efforts to develop a topical microbicide to prevent HIV infection during sex suffered a surprising

setback when researchers announced that they had stopped two full-scale trials for safety reasons.

The trials, in Africa and India, involved a chemical, cellulose sulfate or Ushersell, and were the second failure of a potential microbicide in a full-scale trial in recent years.

AIDS researchers at the World Health Organisation, the United Nations AIDS programme and other organisations expressed hope that at least one of three other potential microbicides undergoing full-scale testing would prove to be safe and effective.

In the absence of an AIDS vaccine, specialists say development of a microbicide is a public health priority, mainly to protect the many women in poor countries whose partners refuse to use condoms. Such protection could take the form of a gel, cream, film, tablet or sponge that could be inserted into the vagina or rectum. Conrad, a health research organisation in Arlington, said the independent committee found more new HIV infections among those who used cellulose sulfate than among those who used an inactive gel, but did not report any numbers. Final numbers are expected in March, a spokeswoman for Conrad said.

The new findings were surprising, researchers said, because 11 similar trials of more than 500 women conducted since 1999 showed that cellulose sulfate was safe. The chemical, which was developed as Ushersell by Polydex Pharmaceuticals in Toronto, was active against HIV in laboratory tests.

Dr Peter Piot, the executive director of UNAIDS in Geneva, said the new findings were puzzling because there appeared to be no biological explanation for the failure of cellulose sulfate, as there was in the case of nonoxymol-9 and the ulcers associated with its use. He speculated that one of the antiretroviral drugs to treat AIDS might be needed for an effective microbicide. The world needs a microbicide because "the stakes are so high" Dr Piot said.

(THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Happiness Is Vital - page 5

Scientists expose HIV weak spot.

Developing a vaccine for HIV has proved extremely difficult. This is because the virus is able to mutate rapidly to avoid detection by the immune system, and is also swathed by a near-impenetrable cloak of sugary molecules which block access by antibodies. But certain parts of the virus must remain relatively unchanged so that it can continue to bind to and enter human cells. A protein, gp120-that juts out from the surface of the virus and binds to receptors on host cells is one such region, making it a target for the vaccine development. Now scientists have exposed the HIV weak spot. They have been able to show what happens when an infection fighting antibody attacks a gap in HIV's formidable defences.

"Researchers at the National Institute of Health and their colleagues have revealed a gap in HIV's armour and have thereby opened a new avenue to meeting that challenge." They have published an atomic-level image in the journal Nature showing the antibody, b12, attacking part of a protein on the surface of the virus. HIV avoids attack by constantly mutating, but this protein segment is a weak spot because it remains stable. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases team says the work could aid HIV vaccine development. Previous analysis of the blood of people who have been able to hold HIV at bay for long periods has revealed a rare group of antibodies - including b12 - that seem to fight HIV with a degree of success.

The latest study has revealed the detailed structure of the complex, which is formed when b12 docks with gp120. Until now this has proved impossible, because of the flexible nature of some of the chemical bonds involved. Researcher Dr Gary Nabel said the work had revealed a critical area of vulnerability on the virus. "These findings are very important because they show what sort of antibodies are likely to be most successful in neutralising HIV."

(BBC NEWS.)

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

40 Million people are living with HIV. The Global Awareness Programme is looking for four people, interested in learning more about HIV/AIDS, willing to volunteer in South Africa or Nigeria for 2 months and eager to raise awareness in Ireland about what they learn about the issues.

This is a heavily subsidised scholarship offering training, a volunteer experience, and the opportunity to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and the UN Millennium Development Goal 6.

The four participants will be offered training on HIV/AIDS issues in Ireland and then go to South Africa/Nigeria for two months volunteering in a key HIV/AIDS community based project. After this they will return to Ireland to carry out awareness raising activities in the lead up to World AIDS Day on December 1st.

According to Tara Finglas, a Global Awareness participant in 2006 *"The Global Awareness Programme is different from other volunteer programmes; it is sustainable and you continue your work when you get back to Ireland. It is not just about going abroad for a few weeks but giving whatever time you have to really make a difference."*

The closing date for applications is April 2nd at 1pm. For more information on the scholarship, please contact Yvonne Egan at (021) 4551535 or Yvonne@eillireland.org or go on the programmes page of www.eillireland.org/deved

Small Steps Are All That It Takes

In Sept 2006 the transition year students of Gort Community School entered the Young Social Innovator competition and began to work on the challenge 'MAKING OUR WORLD ONE WORLD.' As the Irish Government had just launched its first National HIV and AIDS awareness campaign, this group of students wanted to play their part in it. Nathan Mullins one of the students explained that their aim was to "launch a year long campaign tackling the discrimination and stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS. We hoped to raise awareness and promote action inside our school community. We hoped that our actions would challenge the stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV and AIDS in Ireland and around the world."

This group of students organised a very special event on December 1st for World AIDS Day. They

brought to life the Gort Human Red ribbon. They asked their fellow classmates in 4th year, the principal Mr. Corry and some of the teachers to take the form of the words HIV and AIDS on the school hurling pitch. HB ice cream kindly donated 120 red umbrellas which once opened created a perfect red visual display. Students purchased 30 metres of bright red fabric to form the ribbon and special guests, including AIDS West Education co-ordinator Dee Vaughan helped to hold this up. A 60 ft cherry picker was hired and local photographers battled gale force winds to get the photo which makes the front cover of this issue of Happiness is Vital. Congratulations to everyone involved.

Volunteering in Galway Made Easy

Galway Volunteer Centre, a new free service for the public and for community and voluntary organisations, is now operating in Galway City and County. The centre is a one-stop shop for voluntary activity, providing volunteering opportunities for the public, and sourcing much needed volunteers for organisations. The centre operates as a link between voluntary organisations and potential volunteers. Organisations can advertise vacancies for long-term volunteering and more short-term once-off events. Since September 2006, 160 people have registered with the GVC and 60 vacancies have been advertised. The Galway Volunteer Centre is part of a growing national network of centres, and is run by a voluntary board of directors and serves both Galway City and County.

If you are interested in volunteering you can contact the GVC by visiting www.volunteergalway.ie or calling 091 583696. Donncha Foley Development Officer



EIL MEMBERS AT ONE WORLD WEEK EVENT
FOR NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL.

HERBAL MEDICINE & HIV



I have always felt a link with AIDS charities because I used to volunteer for one whilst living in New York in the 1990s called God's Love We Deliver. This is the sister charity to the famous charity Project Angel Food which is based in Los Angeles. Both are a meals-on-wheels service for those who are affected by HIV/ AIDS, and their families. Dieticians prepare the menus to ensure nutritionally balanced meals. I spent many a happy afternoon working in the kitchens preparing everything from protein packed casseroles to delicious chocolate brownies. The chefs were wonderful, all giving their time for free as was everyone helping out in the kitchens. We cranked up the music and chopped and cut up vegetables to the strains of Aretha Franklin and

George Michael. I would then go out in one of the vans with a driver and deliver the meals. I went to some fairly frightening places up in the Bronx and Harlem - looming tower blocks where often the lift had broken and I would have to walk up to the 19th floor with my boxed meal in hand. But it was worth the effort for the clients were so grateful for a proper meal for both themselves and their families.

Now several years on I am a medical herbalist after a rigorous 4 years of studying full time at university. I moved to Galway in September from London because I feel people are more open to herbal medicine here. In London I saw several HIV positive patients. Many had been recently diagnosed and were incredibly stressed, which itself brought many problems such as insomnia, irritable bowel disorders, anxiety, depression, piles, concentration and memory loss. Herbal medicine can go a long way to help with all of these problems as well as looking at the bigger picture by keeping the immune system boosted to fight off

infections. Many herbs are used but a good starter is always garlic - the natural antibiotic - a wonder food which not only fights off infections, it lowers blood sugar and blood pressure, fights fungal infections, is a decongestant and a powerful blood cleanser.

Insomnia and anxiety can be treated with relaxing or the more powerful sedating herbs which include lavender, valerian, passionflower, chamomile, oats and skullcap to name a few. Tension in the gut and the mind is powerfully linked - a flustered mind will frequently lead to an irritated bowel. Again chamomile is a gentle but powerful herb to use in this instance along with lemon balm, marshmallow root and possibly peppermint, fennel and cardamom depending on the symptoms. There are several sunshine herbs which can treat mild to moderate depression - the most famous of these being St John's Wort. Lemon balm and damiana are also mood lifters and give a boost of energy which is so often required in a low state of mind. Haemorrhoids or piles, which can make life a misery can be treated in a number of ways herbally. Herbs are given to soothe, to stop itching and to stimulate the circulation to that area. As its name suggests Pilewort (or Lesser Celandine) is so called because historically it has been used to treat piles. It will not only soothe the inflamed membranes but is very drying, so will shrink the offending piles. Finally herbs that stimulate the circulation to the brain can boost memory and concentration loss which is often found accompanying stress. Rosemary, ginkgo biloba and ginger are excellent herbs to use for this. It is important to remember that many of these herbs can only be prescribed by a qualified medical herbalist. This is done after a thorough medical history of the client has been taken. Great care is taken in prescribing herbs most especially if clients are on medication to ensure there is no interference with treatments. It is important to check with your doctor first.

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SUDOKU SUDOKU

Place a number from 1 to 9 in each of the empty cells so that each row, each column and each 3x3 block contains the number 1 to 9.

SUDOKU SUDOKU

SARAH HUGHES, MEDICAL HERBALIST
087 060 6458.

The Last Waltz

A fantastic night of music was held just before Christmas in Campbells Tavern, Cloughanover, Headford, Co. Galway as a fundraiser for AIDS West. The tribute night was to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of a famous San Francisco Gig, the Last Waltz, which was the final legendary concert of The Band. That gig held on 25th November 1976 has gone down in rock music history for being one of the most prominent line ups at a single concert which included such names as Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Van Morrison and Eric Clapton.

The Cloughanover concert organised by Pearse Doherty, Donal, Willy and the members of the Blue Moon Music Club in Headford was a sellout and the huge line up had the whole place rocking. AIDS West wishes to thank most sincerely all those who participated in the memorable night, to all those who were involved in the promotion, the catering, Willy Campbell for the use of the premises and most especially the long list of brilliant musicians who gave so generously of their time. A whopping €2170 was raised for the organization which is greatly appreciated.



CASSANDRA McNICHOLAS AND COLLEAGUES OF YOUTHREACH, KILTIMAGH CO. MAYO WEARING RED FOR WORLD AIDS DAYS 2006



FROM LEFT: GERALDINE MILLS AND ORLA NUGENT (AIDS WEST) DAMIEN CORRIGAN, PRESIDENT STUDENTS' UNION; SIOBHAN LYNCH, STUDENT NURSE ON BEHALF OF RANCHODD AIDS HOSPICE IN ZAMBIA, ROISIN Mc GROGAN, VICE PRESIDENT/WELFARE OFFICER STUDENTS' UNION.

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

Braun Oral- B Ireland Ltd
 Fyffes
 CRH Plc
 Eden,
 An Chiste Chararachta NUIG
 Students' Union NUIG
 Athlone IT
 Gisela Kissing
 The Musgrave Group
 Youthreach Kiltimagh, Mayo
 O Flaherty's Holdings
 Pearse Doherty and the Blue Moon Music Club