



*Providing service and comfort to people affected by HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C*

**MENDOCINO COUNTY AIDS / VIRAL HEPATITIS NETWORK**

**FALL 2012**

## MCAVHN Changes Lives-Don's Story

I grew up in the Bay Area and I was addicted to heroin for about 28 years. I started smoking pot when I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and went on to other. Heroin was my drug of choice. I spent from 1990 to 2006 in and out of prison. I went to a drug program for parolees in Milpitas and they sent me to Ford Street. The last time I got high was December 29, 2006. I got arrested and told myself, "I just can't do this anymore" and I've been sticking to that.

I come from a family of a hard-working single mom. She worked at Laguna Honda Hospital and went back to school and became an LVN, then became a psych tech for the Veterans' Administration. She raised eight children and two step children. Me and my brother are the only addicts and he's deceased. I lost him to a gunshot. I lost my oldest brother after three heart attacks and a bypass. I was in prison when he died. That affected me too-it was another excuse to keep using. I always found an excuse to keep getting high. When my mom was at the VA they transferred her to the veterans' drug program and she knew about addiction and recovery. She used to tell my brothers and sisters, "He'll stop when he's ready. Leave him alone. He's not going to stop till his time. Let's just hope he doesn't die out there." When I was using I didn't go around my family, but now we're really close since I've been clean and sober.

I caught bacterial pneumonia from some dirty heroin in 2003. My whole nervous system shut down. I was in the hospital for four months, two months in intensive care. I flat-lined twice and was on a breathing machine and intubated and everything. They didn't think I would make it. I went to physical therapy for a year and a half because I had to learn to walk and breathe and eat all over again. I was on a walker for about six months and it took me about a year and a half before I could run at a slow pace. I got right out of the hospital and started using again. The hospital had me on methadone. When they released me I had to go to the methadone clinic every day to get my script. I was on a walker and I could get heroin instead of chug-a-lugging on a walker all the way across town.

I came to Ukiah in March of 2007. I was in the first group of ICDDP (In-Custody Drug Treatment Program) clients at Ford Street. There were 15 of us. We came to Ford Street in a van and it dropped us off. I'd only seen Ukiah on the weather report. I was there seven months and I did the program. Then I was hired onto their CalTrans program and I moved into transitional housing.



*Don Bowen and his toy Chihuahua Mister at MCAVHN*

While I was at Ford Street I kept seeing this guy coming in to see clients. He was doing HepC and HIV testing. It was John Weber. Me and my roommate decided to come over to MCAVHN and get tested. I came up positive and decided I was going to do the treatment-interferon and ribavirin. I was on it for about six months. I've been trying to eat healthy, thanks to MCAVHN and I do the best I can. Being from the South I still like my fried foods, but I don't eat as much. I started volunteering and hanging out at MCAVHN in 2008. It was a safe, supportive place and a place where I could give back. I met a lot of people here and we became friends.

The CalTrans program was discontinued due to budget cuts. I was unemployed for a while, but I volunteered at MCAVHN every day and still do. I got my housing through MCAVHN and then got hired by the Buddy Eller Center in 2008. I enjoy helping people. We do a lot of counseling, but we don't look at it as counseling. We look at it as suggestions. I get satisfaction seeing other people succeed because I've been homeless and I've been addicted. I want everybody to see what it's like to be clean, even if they don't stay clean, maybe something will click and they'll hang in there. We do a lot of referrals. Every time a client gets housed or graduates from AODP (Alcohol and Other Drug Programs), that keeps us going.

This is my family-between Ford Street and MCAVHN-my peoples. Life is good. Some days I just want more, but I guess God expects "This is all you're getting right now." It's better than what I had before-it's a lot better-thanks to MCAVHN and Ford Street and my friends. I have a circle of people I respect and want to be like. I don't want to go out and use again. The desire is gone.

## Coming February 9, 2013-Our 26th annual Event of the Heart

MCAVHN's 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Event of the Heart, "Expressions of Love", will be held on February 9, 2013 at the Ukiah Valley Conference Center. The event will feature an elegant wine and beverage reception with gourmet hors d'oeuvres, a sumptuous dinner with wine, dessert and coffee. Dinner will be followed by a live band and dancing.

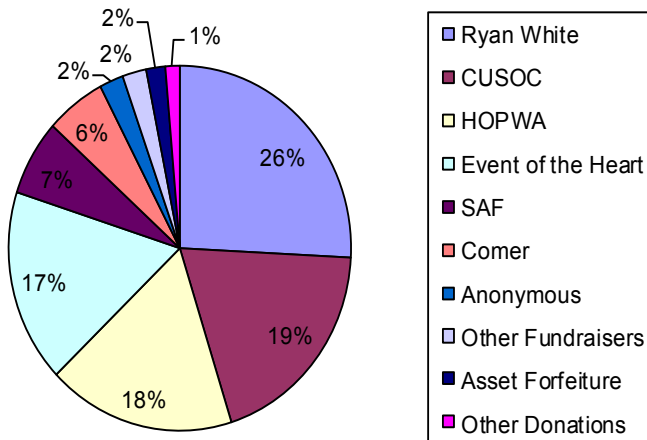
We welcome your help in supporting this elegant event which raises funds for MCAVHN in order to provide services. In a time where grants are lean and restricted mostly to the providing of services, there aren't many options when it comes to covering operating costs. Thanks to the continued generosity of this community,

this particular fundraiser goes a long way toward covering the annual operating costs for MCAVHN.

Sponsorships for Event of the Heart are available at various levels on the enclosed form. Additionally you can help MCAVHN with the Event by promoting your business with a product or service for the auction. Larger ticket items will be showcased in the live auction.

We sincerely thank you in advance for helping us to make MCAVHN's 26<sup>th</sup> Event of the Heart our very best yet. **Please set aside Feb. 09, 2013, and join us for an evening to remember.**

### MCAVHN's Funding Sources



If you decide to become a cash sponsor, auction donor, or both; please return the enclosed form to

**MCAVHN**  
PO Box 1350,  
Ukiah, CA. 95482  
attn: Judy Popowski

Or visit [MCAVHN.org](http://MCAVHN.org) to donate using PAYPAL.

### July Yard Sale a Big Success

A hearty thank you to all those who worked so hard to make the MCAVHN yard sale such a success. We want to thank Andrea Summer, Betty Petitt, Gerri Brasher, Don Bowen, Larry Cristiani, Cody Minch, Fred Innerbrenner, Maya Carlos, Judy Popowski....and of course our intrepid executive director, Libby Guthrie. A special shout out goes to Andrea, who stepped in and spent an enormous amount of effort on organizing and pricing hundreds of items (with the help of her rotating crew). She then went on to help during both days of the actual sale. We'd also like to thank all those who donated merchandise, with special thanks going to the estate of Larry Marrinan and to Pascal Milon for his generous donations.



*Libby Guthrie, MCAVHN Executive Director, with artwork from the estate of Larry Marrinan*

## Highlights from a Month in the Life of MCAVHN

### Advocacy in the Criminal Justice System:

Public Defender Linda Thompson recently announced at a Public Health court planning meeting, "John Weber goes to court and advocates for people the rest of the world has thrown away."

**Housing Advocacy:** We were able to help three clients maintain their housing by attending administrative hearings. These clients were threatened with loss of their housing vouchers because of non-compliance. For one client in particular help

was attained by soliciting legal services, gathering information, building a case and presenting it to the arbitrator. Other clients whose housing has not been jeopardized have been served by continuing to help them with re-certifications, problem solving and advocacy.



*Brad*

**Education:** John is teaching Hepatitis C Virus Education at AODP (Alcohol and Other Drugs Programs-Public Health).

**Social Security Advocacy:** Three clients within the CUSOC (Chronic Users System of Care), HIV and Hepatitis C programs had long-standing applications for disability that had been through the initial application and then the reconsideration process (first appeal) and were eventually awarded based on providing new or missing supportive clinical findings.

**Harm Reduction /Syringe Exchange:** In the realm of harm reduction services there are some common misconceptions regarding why a syringe exchange is needed. We at MCAVHN believe in harm reduction; anything that reduces harm to individuals and their communities is our mantra. A syringe exchange saves lives and greatly reduces health care costs.

Substance users are our own children, brothers, sisters and other family members. When collecting used and distributing new syringes, we have the opportunity to have a conversation with the user and to show that somebody cares. It is well known that once you encourage an injection user to use clean sterile syringes, alcohol prep pads, and take other measures to care for themselves and others, there is often a spark of self-worth which can encourage more positive behaviors. The returning visits foster a familiarity that supports a trusting relationship with someone who is there to help them without judgment. This can create a bond that leads to discussions about freedom from drug dependence, referrals to health-care and psychosocial providers, the ending of pointless incarcerations and a return to community values.

Our continuing outreach to outlying and hard-to-reach areas in the county has resulted in a doubling of syringe exchanges. In the fiscal year 2011/2012 we distributed approximately 32,500 needles. This year, according to current numbers and estimations, the number of exchanges could reach more than 65,000. We have much better distribution on the coast, Covelo, Laytonville and Willits. We still need active exchangers in Hopland and Anderson Valley to serve the southern part of the county.



*John*

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Judy Popowski , President

April Cipriano-Haines,  
Vice President

Liz Popowski, Treasurer

Claudia Prochter, Secretary

Susan McLean, Media Relations

Terri Boudreaux

Steve Cook

### STAFF

Libby Guthrie, Ed. D  
Executive Director

John Weber  
Client Services Coordinator

Bradley Wright  
Client Services Advocate

### OFFICE

148 Clara Avenue  
P.O. Box 1350  
Ukiah, CA 95482

phone: 707-462-1932  
fax: 707-462-2070

mcavhn@yahoo.com  
[www.mcavhn.org](http://www.mcavhn.org)  
[facebook.com/MCAVHN](https://www.facebook.com/MCAVHN)



**Special Thanks**  
to  
Our Newsletter Sponsors

Ukiah Valley  
Medical Center  
&  
Dick Selzer,  
Selzer Realty



Mendocino County  
AIDS/Viral Hepatitis Network  
P.O Box 1350  
Ukiah, California 95482

**Do we have your current contact information?**

If you would like to receive future correspondence via email please contact us at [mcauhn@yahoo.com](mailto:mcauhn@yahoo.com) or call 462-1932 and ask for Judy or clip and return the form below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/zip \_\_\_\_\_  
email \_\_\_\_\_

*Send to MCAVHN, PO Box 1350  
Ukiah, CA 95482*

**Gratitude to Beneficial Reggae for  
Generous Support of MCAVHN**

To I-Taweh and Kristi Cunningham of Tap Nat Muzik, Lagunitas Brewing Company, Bear Republic and Anderson Valley Brewing Company



*I-Taweh in the spotlight at 3rd Annual Beneficial Reggae August, 2012 at Tomki Meadows, Frey Ranch, Redwood Valley*

**MCAVHN's Mission:**

**to care for people affected by AIDS and HEPC and to prevent the spread of these diseases in our County.**