

MCAVHN

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

MENDOCINO COUNTY AIDS / VIRAL HEPATITIS NETWORK

SPRING 2015

Speeches from the Heart: MCAVHN Case Aide, Grateful Client and Founding Members

Dubbed "Hearts Aplenty", the 28th Annual Event of the Heart was celebrated this year on Valentine's Day. The program announced one speaker, MCAVHN's newest Case Aide Wendy Lee, but the spirit of heartfelt energy brought several additional speakers to the podium.



Wendy Lee with Darren Pierce

Wendy Lee told how she first met executive director, Libby Guthrie, when she was a student at Mendocino College in Libby's class on dual disorders (mental health issues co-occurring with substance abuse). Wendy was drawn to Libby's compassion and genuine concern for clients and community, "I loved going to her class and hearing about MCAVHN." MCAVHN's focus on harm reduction made a lot of sense to Wendy: "meeting clients where they are at, developing a relationship built on trust, and never giving up on someone".

Libby told the class about MCAVHN's need for volunteers and Wendy jumped at the chance. "I had never been to MCAVHN, but I had this picture in my mind...a medical type building, a receptionist, a clinical atmosphere, and doctors wearing white lab coats. I was pleasantly surprised to walk into an inviting house, comfy couches, pictures on the walls, the smell of coffee, and some very cute friendly dogs. I felt right at home."

Wendy wanted to learn as much as she could about mental health, HIV/AIDS, Hep C, harm reduction and clients with dual disorders. She soon started volunteering on Fridays, doing whatever she could, which she says back then "wasn't a lot".

When she first met Client Services Coordinator John Weber he asked if she could make a couple pies to celebrate a client's birthday, not what she expected, but part of the warm and comfy way things run at MCAVHN. She said of John "as many of his clients already know, he would give the shirt off his back to anyone in need. John is an amazing man and I enjoy learning from him.

Wendy kept on volunteering and was grateful to also be working with Joann Brewer and Tony Cellini who had been class-

mates in the Alcohol and Other Drugs Program (AODP) at Mendocino College. Wendy finished the two year program and has been employed as MCAVHN's newest Case Aide since last October.

She summed up her experience at MCAVHN by saying "I love my job. I love coming to work every day. I love seeing and helping the clients. This is the only job I've had where I get hugs from my co-workers and from the clients. This has been an amazing journey for me. I am working with incredible people, both co-workers and clients. I am learning more and more every day."



Cynthia Rattey at the podium
As she stepped down both Judge Ann Moorman and Sheriff Tom Allman came up to greet her with a hug.

Three years ago Cynthia Rattey was in trouble with drugs and the law. The court assigned her to MCAVHN's care as part of the mental health program known as the 11:00 Calendar. Cynthia ran from MCAVHN and ended up in prison. She credits incarceration in a drug and alcohol free environment for helping her to get clean and adds that "if it hadn't been for MCAVHN I wouldn't be sober now. I just got my six months chip."

"I ran from MCAVHN but they welcomed me back with open arms." Libby and Joann said they didn't even recognize Cynthia when she returned. Libby explained later that Cynthia was
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Yoli Rose pours for Jim and Emjay of Naughty Boy Vineyards



Dance music by Double Standyrd

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"healthier, had gained some weight, had a sparkle in her eye and would now look people in the eye. She was ready now. She wasn't ready before."

This time Cyn became a client under the ROSOC program (Recovery Oriented System of Care). MCAVHN staff helped her with getting ID, navigating through social security, and securing a placement in the shelter and a recovery program. Several staff members came forward and told Cyn she also needed some shopping therapy. After developing and signing a payment plan, she received a loan from MCAVHN discretionary funds so she had new shoes and new clothes to wear to the Event of the Heart, as well as a phone to help her keep her appointments and organize her life.

"I am very grateful and amazed by the loving atmosphere at MCAVHN" she says. "They always listen and are non-judgmental. They told me I had turned around, but I didn't see it". But over time she has come to see that "it's okay to have my past, to embrace it and use it to my advantage, not my disadvantage."

Cyn has "watched MCAVHN help so many people" and has been giving back by working 4 or 5 days per week in the needle exchange, a key component of MCAVHN's harm reduction strategy. By sharing her story at the Event of the Heart Cynthia has given back to MCAVHN's supporters as well, reminding us why we were there and why MCAVHN continues to be here.

Dr. Marvin Trotter with Dr. Mary Newkirk

Dr.



Marvin Trotter, founding member of MCAVN (Mendocino County AIDS Volunteer Network, as we were originally called) and supporter for 28 years, was next to approach the podium. He reminded the

revelers present about the early days of AIDS, taking us back to 1986-87 when patients started showing up with HIV/AIDS diagnoses in Mendocino County. We were beyond the mysterious symptoms phase of the epidemic and knew what AIDS was but were surprised that we had to deal with it here. Up until then, we thought of it as a complicated disease that was being seen in the larger urban areas. Dr. Trotter shared how he and Dr. Mary Newkirk stepped up to address the needs and soon were considered "the AIDS doctors" for Mendocino County.

Dr. Trotter also asked MCAVN founding members Steven Day and Rosalie Anchordoguy to join him on stage. As Rosalie later recapped, "At that time rural folks caught on to the fact that yes, we were going to be deeply affected by this epidemic too, and that we had better get organized and pull together some services." Clients/patients showed up and a core group pulled together services at Public Health and went on to birth MCAVN.

Steven was one of the founding members of MCAVN, served on the board and worked hard to get our non-profit status and articles of incorporation. He is still volunteering, helping with set-up at the Ukiah Valley Conference Center before the Event and graciously attending to our beverage needs that very evening.

Be sure to watch for upcoming issues of this newsletter when founder and long-time board member Rosalie Anchordoguy shares more stories from the early days of MCAVN.



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OFFICE

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

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

mcaavn@yahoo.com

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**Dr. Marvin Trotter
with MCAVN (MCAVHN) cofounders
Steven Day and Rosalie Anchoroguy**
See page 3 for their memories of the
early days of AIDS

Dr. Trotter shares

MCAVHN's Mission: To provide services & comfort to persons & families affected by HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C & the co-occurring disorders of mental illness & substance abuse.