

VOICES

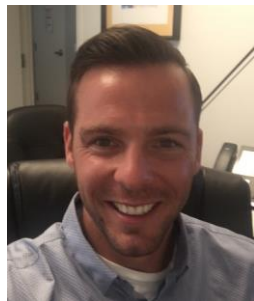
THE VOICE OF DELAWARE'S HIV COMMUNITY

DELAWARE HIV CONSORTIUM

Winter 2021

Change, one positive result of this collective crisis.

As we make our way through the COVID-19 pandemic, I am, *for the first time*, beginning to feel hopeful – beginning to see the light at the end of, what has been thus far, a yearlong tunnel. Despite challenges in vaccine distribution, one in ten Delawareans have taken at least one dose of the COVID vaccine – a rate higher than the national average – and the number of new cases and hospitalizations has declined to pre-holiday levels.



Here at the Consortium, our team continues to work a structured hybrid in-office/virtual schedule, making every effort to meet and exceed our clients' needs in the form and environment that the client considers safest and most comfortable to them; throughout this year we have provided service in-person, over the phone, virtually, and by mail. Through a year in which the entire world was forced to operate under COVID restrictions we served more clients than ever before – adding over 100 clients to our case management program alone – and we have worked hard to maintain the highest-level of standards of service. While the format of services may have changed for some of our clients, we remain steadfast in our commitment to support their needs. For some, it's additional food assistance. For others, it is helping them continue to access their meds. For still others, just a friendly voice to talk to, helping them through the isolation this pandemic has caused (by the way our average encounter time on the phone has doubled!).

When we, as a community and an agency, exit this long and trying tunnel, as I can now see coming, I am sure we will be stronger for it. I know we will also internalize the lessons that we have learned through this year to be

better than we were pre-COVID, and we will continue to serve in ways that we have now proven can work. For this, I am hopeful. We know that we couldn't continue to do this without you, our caring community.

All the best,
Tyler Berl
Executive Director

DoMore24DE

For the first time, the Delaware HIV Consortium will be joining United Way of Delaware's "Do More 24" campaign, a 24-hour social media fundraising effort. The event will run from March 4th at 6:00 p.m. through March 5th at 5:59 p.m. We ask you to consider making a donation on this day to help us do more!



Delaware's Giving Day

Here are examples of what your gift could fund:

- A \$10 contribution would buy 4 bottles of sanitizing floor cleaner for our Personal Care Items Closet
- An \$18 donation would pay for one Hepatitis C test kit
- A \$28 donation pays for an In Home, DIY HIV Test kit - made necessary by the COVID pandemic.
- A \$50 donation would pay for 25 jugs of laundry detergent for our Personal Items Closet.

Please consider supporting this important new fundraiser – sign up to receive an email reminder about the fundraiser by clicking [HERE](#).

Thanks from all of us at Delaware HIV Consortium!

Save the Date! AIDS Walk Delaware 2021

2021 AIDS Walk Delaware has been set for September 18! LIVE and in person! Please mark your calendar.

In-Home HIV Testing

The Consortium's free in-home HIV Testing program has grown in leaps and bounds over the past year. In response to the limitations to in-person testing caused by the COVID pandemic, the Delaware Division of Public Health pushed out QraSure Technologies OraQuick in-home testing kits to HIV prevention programs across the state. Launched by the Consortium in June 2020, the program mails enrollees a test kit, and offers them access to a Consortium prevention specialist by phone to walk them through the testing process and empowering, non-judgmental risk-reduction counseling. This effort was supplemented by COVID-19 grants from the Delaware Community Foundation and New Castle County that provided for the purchase of 580 test kits and postage.



By the end of 2020, the Consortium had mailed 148 testing kits, with one person testing positive and being linked to HIV treatment. Through advertising dollars provided by the NCC grant, the Consortium has targeted promotion of the In-home HIV Testing program to underserved communities in Delaware. So far in 2021, 46 test kits have been ordered and mailed.

Housing News

We have great Housing Assistance Program news to announce!

- The Consortium is grateful to have been awarded a grant by the Crystal Trust Foundation for new database for managing the program. Our old system was developed in 2002 and is sorely in need of updating. The new system will allow our Housing staff to serve our clients more efficiently. The new database will launch by summer 2021.
- The Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) has awarded the Consortium additional emergency financial assistance funds through the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program. These funds are available to people living with HIV in Kent and Sussex counties who are facing financial challenges due to COVID-19. Funds can be

requested for rental assistance, utility assistance, and mortgage payments. This program can be accessed through your HIV case manager or social worker.

- **New Staff** – The Consortium is glad to welcome Willie Howard, Housing Program assistant, who joined our Housing department in November. Willie recently received his bachelor of arts in political science from Lincoln University and worked as a case manager at Visiting Angels before joining us.



Save the Date!

WOW Virtual Auction – April 23!

Our second annual virtual auction, the WOW Virtual Auction will be held completely online from **Friday April 23, 7 p.m., through Friday, April 30, 7 p.m.** This year's virtual auction will be hosted on an auction website that will allow bidders to place a bid on any item they like, as well as set a limit to the highest amount the bidder is willing to make. Throughout the auction period bidders will be able to be notified by email and/or text message if they've been outbid or if they have won! There will also be select items offered as "Buy it now!" so that you can snatch up those items right away.

The Auction Show! A live broadcast will be held on Friday, April 23rd from 7-8 p.m. to launch the Virtual Auction. The show, featuring some famous Delaware friends, luminaries, and entertainers, will be hosted of YouTube, our Facebook page, and our website (You will be emailed a link to join in the fun).

[Support the WOW! Virtual Auction:](#) Are you interested in sponsoring this year's auction? The Consortium is seeking sponsors for two different levels of sponsorship for this event: Presenting Sponsor, for a donation of \$2,000 and Logo Sponsor, for a donation of \$250. Scott MacKenzie is available (smackenzie@delawarehiv.org) to answer your questions about the benefits of being an event sponsor.

[Sign up to receive an email reminder.](#)

[Submit an Auction Item Donation Form](#) (and we'll contact you)

[Donate](#) – Simply make a donation to support our work with people living with HIV.

Case Management Grows 25%!

Since January of 2020 – in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown it caused, and the closure of an AIDS service organization – the number of clients has grown substantially, from 287 to 390 individuals. Our case management staff, of course, has also grown to meet this new need!



Through the Ryan White program, the Consortium provides HIV case management to Cheryl, right, and roughly 400 other people living with HIV in Delaware. Case management provides coordination of the many support services that empower clients to manage their HIV, helping them live healthier, more productive lives.

“I don’t know what I would do without you all helping to pay my insurance and making sure I get my meds,” says Cheryl. “You save my life every day.”

COVID Prevention Care Packages

Thanks to grants from the Delaware Community Foundation and a COVID CARES grant from the State of Delaware, the Consortium mailed COVID Prevention packages to all our clients just before Thanksgiving. These kits contained hand sanitizer, facial tissues, dishwashing liquid, sanitizing cleaner, and 50 facemasks to help our housing and case management clients and their families stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.



“Thank you for this package,” said Sean, one of our clients. “I never expected this and it is truly amazing to get things we really need in this time.”

In Memory

Michael Schwartz, longtime supporter and friend of the Consortium, passed away peacefully on February 21, 2021. Michael, loving husband of Mark Manchen, social worker at the William J. Holloway HIV Community Program at Wilmington Hospital, donated the printing of the WOW Awards program for well over a decade. We feel Michael’s loss deeply and ask you to keep Mark in your thoughts.



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