



# QUEENS PRIDE HOUSE NEWS

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## Understanding Important Health Issues for Lesbians

By Peter Pavich

Lesbians and bisexual women may face an increased risk of various health concerns. Know the facts and take simple steps to stay healthy.

Certain sexually transmitted infections — such as human papillomavirus (HPV), bacterial vaginosis and trichomonas — can spread between women. Oral sex and sexual behavior involving digital-vaginal or digital-anal contact, particularly with shared penetrative sex toys, can spread infections as well. Female sexual contact is also a possible means of contracting HIV. To protect yourself:

**Get tested and have your partner tested.** Don't have unprotected sex unless you're certain you and your partner aren't infected with HIV or other sexually transmitted infections. Testing is important because many people don't know they're infected, and others may not be honest about their health.

**Use protection.** During oral sex use a split-open condom, dental dam — a small piece of latex — or plastic wrap. Keep sex toys safe by cleaning them and protecting them with a condom. Don't share sex toys. If you have sex with a male partner, use a new latex or polyurethane condom or dental dam every time you have sex.

**Be monogamous.** Stay with one partner who has tested negative for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and who won't have sex with anyone but you.

**Limit the amount of alcohol you drink and don't use drugs.** If you're under the influence, you're more likely to take sexual risks. If you choose to use injectable drugs, don't share needles.

**Get vaccinated.** Vaccinations can protect you from HPV and the serious liver infections hepatitis A and hepatitis B,

which can spread through sexual contact.

**Remain vigilant.** Remember, there isn't a cure for HIV/AIDS and many sexually transmitted infections, such as HPV. The best way to stay healthy is to protect yourself.

### Tackle depression



Lesbians and bisexual women may be at higher risk of depression, suicidal thoughts and self-harm. Contributing factors could include social alienation, the threat of or loss of family support, discrimination, abuse, and anti-gay violence. The problem may be more severe for lesbians who remain in the closet, aren't traditionally "feminine," aren't in satisfying relationships or lack social support. Left untreated, depression may

lead to a downward spiral of emotional, behavioral, health, and even legal and financial problems. If you think you may be depressed, talk to your doctor or seek help from a mental health provider.

If you're reluctant to seek treatment, confide in a trusted friend or loved one. They can help you take the first steps toward getting treatment.

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## Volunteer Spotlight

By Lianna Newman

Queens Pride House is happy to shine a Spotlight on Dawn-Samantha Russo! Dawn was born and raised in New York. She first heard about Queens Pride House from a friend of hers who lives in Jackson Heights. "I used to walk past the Diversity center of Queens and wondered what it was, but I never went in," commented Dawn. "I looked up the website; called; and then I came in and got one-on-one training to become a volunteer." Dawn was initially lead to search for volunteer opportunities due to a school requirement. She continues to stay for the people and the organization. "I feel so passionate to be a part of something that is right here in the community I live in," said Dawn. "In my time here, I've realized there is a strong need for volunteers."

Here at QPH Dawn volunteers as a front desk receptionist. She greets guests, answers phones and does referrals. "I like being able to help people through providing referrals," Dawn commented. One of the most innovative things she has accomplished during her time at QPH is organizing the volunteer sign-in book in conjunction with creating a database to calculate volunteer hours. Dawn recalls, "One thing that struck me when calculating the hours was how much time people were dedicating to the organization. Time they could be spending with their friends, watching TV or sleeping. But they chose to come here and volunteer and that says a lot."

Dawn's favorite thing about QPH is the freedom people have. "The youth group [Urban Queering] wanted to have a prom and they are able to," said Dawn. "There are so many avenues to help people. The organization makes people feel comfortable like they can do anything, like starting groups, throwing events for the community, etc." Dawn also likes that QPH reaches out to so many people and she is very impressed by the availability of bilingual speakers, website publications, groups, etc within the organization. In regards to changes at QPH Dawn is most excited about the transformation of the Annex. Opening it up to more groups will not only free up the lounge for the computer

labs but it will give those visiting a place to hang out while groups are occurring "...especially with kids being out of school for the summer," commented Dawn. She is also looking forward to seeing an increase in the drop-in rate. "With all the changes I believe more and more people will be stopping by, which is exciting," said Dawn. Out of her volunteering experience Dawn has learned a lot about the number of different resources available, which has shed a light on what she may be interested in doing as a career. "It's enlightening to see how much help there is out there," said Dawn, "I've learned a lot about myself. I really enjoy giving and volunteering."



**Dawn-Samantha Russo**

When she is not volunteering at QPH, Dawn is reading (which she loves), hanging out with friends and/or family, or doing school work. "My favorite warm weather activity is hula hooping so I'll be doing a lot of that since the weather is getting nice out," said Dawn cheerfully. When it comes to reading, "I let my brain do what it does best...learn!" When asked what she thought the biggest challenge facing the LGBT community was Dawn replied, "Personally I think it's the stereotyping." Dawn expressed that people in and outside of the community make judgments. "People need to be

open and accepting of people who are different/diverse. Since childhood I never understood why two people of the same sex couldn't get married. Everyone's different and we all need to let people be."

When asked if she was single Dawn replied, "No, I'm married." If she had to go to a deserted island and bring one person, one food and one movie Dawn said, "I would bring my best friend; my husband Salvatore. [For food] assuming there were fruits and vegetable on this island, I'd bring oatmeal, which I could eat all day. [For the movie] I'd take a 6 hour long commercial free VHS of the Simpsons."

## Queens Pride House Events for June

By Kevin Wehle

Kevin Wehle and Queens Pride House would like to wish everyone a Happy Gay Pride Month. Kevin is the Special Events Coordinator at QPH. "This is our month to hold our heads high, and be proud of everything we are, and even though we are fabulous all year long this is our month to shine. Our month to show the masses that we are not different from anyone else, and that we are everywhere. So we here at QPH have put together these events for everyone to attend, and join in the fun and celebrate the original beauties that we all are," commented Kevin.

FRIDAY, JUNE 3, 2011, 6PM – 9PM -- **Artists Lounge**, we will be showcasing local artists and will have a wine and cheese



SATURDAY, JUNE 4, 2011, 7PM - 9PM -- **Queens Got Talent**, we have various local performers show us how talented they are. Light refreshments will be served.

SUNDAY, JUNE 5, 2011, 12PM -- **Queens Pride Parade**. After the parade stop by our booth, or visit us at Queens Pride House.



MONDAY, JUNE 6, 2011, 6PM-7:30PM — **Forum on Health Care Reform with U.S Rep. Anthony Weiner**, U.S Rep. Anthony Weiner represents the 9th New York Congressional District, which includes large parts of Brooklyn and Queens. As a member of the House Energy & Commerce Committee, Rep. Weiner shares responsibility for oversight over public health, and he has played a leading role in discussion and debate on health care reform.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2011, 7PM-9PM — **Women's Sexuality and Health Survey**, sponsored by the Lesbian AIDS Project at GMHC and Researchers at Columbia University.



The survey is being conducted at QPH. All participants will be compensated for their time with a gift bag, which includes a gift card worth \$10. To find out more about the Survey or the Workshop, or to check if you are eligible, please contact the research team at (212) 543-3708, or [WSW.Study@gmail.com](mailto:WSW.Study@gmail.com).



FRIDAY, JUNE 10, 2011, 7PM-9PM -- **Movie Night**, in honor of Judy Garland's 89<sup>th</sup> birthday: *Judy Garland In Concert*. It's Free To Get In. You can buy a bag of popcorn for \$1.00 and You can get a can of soda and a slice of pizza for a \$1.50.

SATURDAY, JUNE 11, 2011 --

**Brooklyn Pride**, we will have a booth and will be marching in the parade. The booth will be from 11AM – 6PM, and the parade is from 7:30PM – 9:30PM. All are welcomed to join us.



FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 2011, 3PM — **Urban Queering Gift Wrapping**, at Barnes and Noble Forest Hills to raise money for their prom on July 2<sup>nd</sup> so come buy a book, get it wrapped and give a donation, so our youth can have a prom! Location:

Barnes and Nobles  
70-00 Austin Street  
Forest Hills, New York 11375

FRIDAY, JUNE 24, 2011, 7PM--

**QPH Community Potluck**, (open to all), RSVP on Facebook and list what you will be bringing.



SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 2011 --

**Manhattan Pride**, we will be marching with Anthony Weiner in the Manhattan PRIDE Parade. Come out and join us!

### VOLUNTEER TRAININGS --

This month: FRIDAY, JUNE 17<sup>TH</sup> and SATURDAY, JUNE 18<sup>TH</sup> 2011 – If you are interested in volunteering with QPH please come to one of these trainings.



Wishing You a Happy and Healthy Gay Pride Month!

## Spring Fling!

By Lianna Newman

Queens Pride House celebrated the return of spring the best way they know how: A Spring Fling Fundraiser Party! The music was bouncing and the possibility of winning the 50/50 raffle, along with a little encouragement from the QPH event coordinator Kevin Wehle, had guests diving in their purses and wallets to purchase tickets.

Kevin donned a bright pink bonnet with a purple crown and green sunglasses in hopes of winning the best bonnet contest. Though the majority of the crowd did not partake in the contest a select few bravely wore their bonnets throughout the event. Food and refreshments were available and as the night went on the crowd began to fill the dance floor.



Best Bonnet Contestants

Eventually, it was time to announce the winner of the best bonnet contest. While Judy Garland's *Easter Parade (1940)* played in the background, contestants strutted their stuff for the audience.

The two finalists were QPH Social Media Coordinator Lianna Newman and Men's Group Member Elyaqim Mosheh Adam. Ultimately the audience choice was Lianna. She was wearing a homemade old fashion bonnet with flowers made from pipe cleaners and origami. Lianna was awarded a \$100 cash prize.



Lianna Newman



George Zafiriadis

The evening came to an end with two dance numbers performed by Urban Queering member George Zafiriadis. His second number, Lady Gaga's *Born This Way (2011)*, had the audience dancing in their seats and applauding loudly.

## Volunteer Column

By Luz Hernandez & Dawn-Samantha Russo

At Queens Pride House volunteering is essential to maintaining the organization. Between February and April of this year there has been a significant growth in both volunteers and volunteer hours. In February, there were 22 documented volunteers, totaling 181 hours. This averaged out to 8.23 hours per volunteer. In March, there were 25 documented volunteers, totaling 343 hours. This averaged out to 13.7 hours per volunteer. In April, there were 30 documented volunteers, totaling 486 hours. This averaged out to 16.2 hours per volunteer, which is nearly double the hours in February. QPH has had over 50 volunteers for those three months.

## Group Spotlight: A Brotherhood Grows in Queens Pride House

By Kevin Wehle

On the first and third Thursday of every month from 7PM -9PM the Mens's Group (English), a diverse group of men ages eighteen to seventy, from all different backgrounds, and cultures, meet at Queens Pride House. The group discusses topics related to their identities as gay, bisexual and transgendered men. In the last meeting they discussed LGBT equality and justice day, and ended with random current event stories about LGBT issues. Although they have a core group of members who come on a regular basis, they are always welcoming to any men who want to join.



As the facilitator, Kevin Wehle has never seen a nicer, friendlier group of men. "It's a group where you can come relax in the company of other men, and just be yourself," said Kevin. Men's Group also co-sponsors the community potluck, which is the last Friday of every month for anyone who wants to come, and make new friends. Men's group members can also be found at other events held at Queens Pride House. If you're looking to make new friends, and like to be a part of a lively discussion come and join the Men's Group!

### THE MORE YOU GAY...

Test your knowledge about the LGBT community in media today.

1. In what year was the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy introduced?

- A. 1990
- B. 1993
- C. 1998
- D. 1994



2. Which television show has positive LGBT main characters?

- A. Pretty Little Liars
- B. Glee
- C. Modern Family
- D. All of the Above



3. How much money was raised by the AIDS walk in NYC on May 15, 2011?

- A. \$5,140,423.00
- B. \$6,287,269.00
- C. \$6,214,768.00
- D. \$8,530,487.00



## Health Issues for Lesbians cont'd...

### Seek help for substance abuse

Some lesbians and bisexual women may face unique risk factors for alcohol abuse, such as:

- Relying on women's bars for socializing and peer support
- Impact of sexism and discrimination
- Stress related to passing as a heterosexual or coming out
- Low self-esteem related to the perception of being different
- Trauma due to bullying, violence, abuse or self-abuse



If you have a substance abuse problem, remember that help is available. Local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender health, mental health, or community centers often provide substance abuse treatment. Organizations such as the National Association of Lesbian and Gay Addiction Professionals also may provide referrals.

### Recognize domestic violence

Domestic violence can affect anyone in an intimate relationship. Warning signs specific to lesbian or bisexual women may include a partner who:

- Threatens to tell friends, family, colleagues or community members your sexual orientation or gender identity
- Tells you that authorities won't help a homosexual, bisexual or transgendered person
- Tells you that leaving the relationship means you're admitting that homosexual relationships are deviant
- Tells you that abuse is a normal part of homosexual relationships or that domestic violence can't occur in

homosexual relationships

Staying in an abusive relationship may leave you depressed, anxious and hopeless. If you don't want to disclose your sexual orientation, you may be less likely to seek help after an assault. Still, the only way to break the cycle of domestic violence is to take action — the sooner the better. If you're a victim of domestic violence, tell

someone about the abuse, whether it's a friend, relative, health care provider or other close contact. Consider calling a domestic violence hot line and creating a plan to leave your abuser.

### Seek routine health care

Some lesbians and bisexual women struggle to find a doctor knowledgeable about lesbian health issues and with whom they feel comfortable discussing their needs and concerns. To take charge of your

health, look for a doctor you feel comfortable talking to. Identify yourself as lesbian or bisexual, and ask about routine screenings recommended for women in your age group. If you're not in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship, schedule regular screenings for sexually transmitted infections. Share any other health concerns you may have with your doctor as well. Early diagnosis and treatment is often the key to long-term health.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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