

AIDS Delaware

Frank Hawkins
Director of Advocacy and
Community Engagement

AIDS Delaware

- Started in 1984. Largest and oldest AIDS service organization in Delaware.
- Mission is to eliminate the spread and stigma of HIV/AIDS, improve the lives of those living with HIV/AIDS and promote community health through comprehensive and culturally-sensitive services, education programs, and advocacy.

Do The Right Thing 4LIFE (DTRT4L)

- The HIV/AIDS epidemic in Delaware has particularly affected the state's African-American population.
- According to the Delaware HIV Prevention Planning Committee's 2015-2019 report:
 - African Americans are disproportionately affected by the HIV/stage 3 HIV (AIDS) burden.
 - While 22% of Delaware's total population is African American, this group accounts for 65% of all HIV/stage 3 HIV (AIDS) cases ever diagnosed in the state. This racial disparity is more pronounced in Delaware compared to the general U.S. population and persists. Of all persons living with a diagnosed HIV infection, African Americans account for 41% in the U.S. and 58% in Delaware.

Do The Right Thing 4LIFE

Prevention Challenges

- 1 in 7 blacks/African Americans with HIV are unaware they have it. People who do not know they have HIV cannot take advantage of HIV care and treatment and may unknowingly pass HIV to others.
- Some African American communities have higher rates of some sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) than other racial/ethnic communities. Having another STD can increase a person's chance of getting or transmitting HIV.
- Stigma, fear, discrimination, and homophobia may place many African Americans at higher risk for HIV.
- The poverty rate is higher among African Americans than other racial/ethnic groups. The socioeconomic issues associated with poverty—including limited access to high-quality health care, housing, and HIV prevention education—directly and indirectly increase the risk for HIV infection and affect the health of people living with and at risk for HIV. These factors may explain why African Americans have worse outcomes on the HIV continuum of care, including lower rates of linkage to care and viral suppression.
- <https://hab.hrsa.gov/livinghistory/issues/African-Americans.pdf>.

Do The Right Thing 4LIFE

Strategic Approach: The Popular Opinion Leader Model

- DTRT4L program utilizes the Popular Opinion Leader (POL) model, designed by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, a community level peer based outreach strategy.
- POLs deliver education and prevention messages to community members who they come into contact with on a daily basis through their everyday jobs.
- POLs in the DTRT4L program are owners of the barbershops and beauty salons that serve as venues for the program's activities and services.
- These venues are culturally specific depending on the population being targeted and are selected for their ability to attract large numbers of community members on a daily basis.
- POLs provide informal, one-on-one HIV prevention messages to others in their salon/community. Education messages include endorsing healthy behaviors, dispelling myths and discussion of risk reduction methods.

Salons and barbershops

hosting life-saving parties



Questions about AIDS and HIV still gnaw at people: "If I get tested, does my partner have to get tested?"

"Does saliva transmit the virus?"

"What about kissing?"

AIDS Delaware education and outreach director Frank Hawkins believes more people would ask, if given the right setting.

That's why he started a traveling forum called Do The Right Thing, which helps get the word out to high-risk populations, such as African Americans, in New Castle County.

Through his job, Hawkins took unconventional approaches, dropping off condoms at beauty salons and barbershops.

But he wanted to reach more people.

He asked shop owners if they wanted to have an educational party. "Once I got somebody to say yes, it was a success. I went around to other shops and told them about it."

That was more than a year



Delaware People

By Berlinda Bruce

ago. Since then, Do The Right Thing has reached more than 1,000 people through beauty salons and barbershops. Sixty to 70 of the people who attended were tested.

Like everything else, tests are free.

"All you have to do is come," Hawkins said. "We do the rest."

He also takes the forum to people's homes. The key is to keep the gathering small enough that people will feel comfortable asking questions.

Underwritten by AIDS Delaware, the forums also offer a light meal.

On Monday, Do The Right Thing was held at Styles By Vette in Wilmington. Eighteen people were there, including one with AIDS who answered questions openly.

"This is the third one I've done," owner Vette Pressey said. "I find there is a strong need for it."

Pressey is among the growing number of non-infected peo-

ple who want to spread awareness and information about prevention.

"I don't care about the stereotypes," she said. "People think if they get involved that people will think they have AIDS. I have three children I have to worry about, and I want to protect them. I know I'm negative, and I want to keep it that way."

Pressey's shop is on the condom drop-off circuit, as well.

"I don't think at this point

condoms should be sold," she said. These days, she said, condoms are critical for the sexually active.

Delaware ranks third in the nation of per capita AIDS/HIV cases, Hawkins said.

Monday night, he used a game to illustrate the spread of AIDS.

Participants were given four sheets of paper, each a different color. After writing their names on each sheet, they circulated through the room, exchanging them until everybody had four different names.

The colors represented

hugs, shared drinking containers, shared needles and unprotected sex. Hugs and shared drinking containers are innocuous, but shared needles and unprotected sex increase the chances for the virus to invade the body.

The exchange was a sobering moment; everyone in the room seemed to understand its impact.

As for the popular questions, here are the answers: If you get tested, so should your partner.

There is no documented case of the virus spreading through saliva.

As for kissing, there are no documented cases of someone contracting the disease this way, Hawkins said.

To host a Do The Right Thing educational party, contact Hawkins at 652-6776 or hawkins@aidsdelaware.org. What you learn may just save a life, particularly your own.

► Berlinda Bruce's column appears Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Call her at 324-2782; write her at Box 15505, Wilmington, DE 19850; or send e-mail to bbruce@delawareonline.com. For previous columns, or to comment on today's column, go to www.delawareonline.com.

Do The Right Thing 4LIFE

IMPACT

Since 2000

- 48 Barbershops and beauty salons participating
- HIV testing numbers, 6,872
- Distribute over 500,000 condoms to barbershops and beauty salons
- Identified 47 new HIV positive individuals
- Assisted 180 HIV positive people to re-engage into HIV medical care.

Leveraging Barbers and Stylist

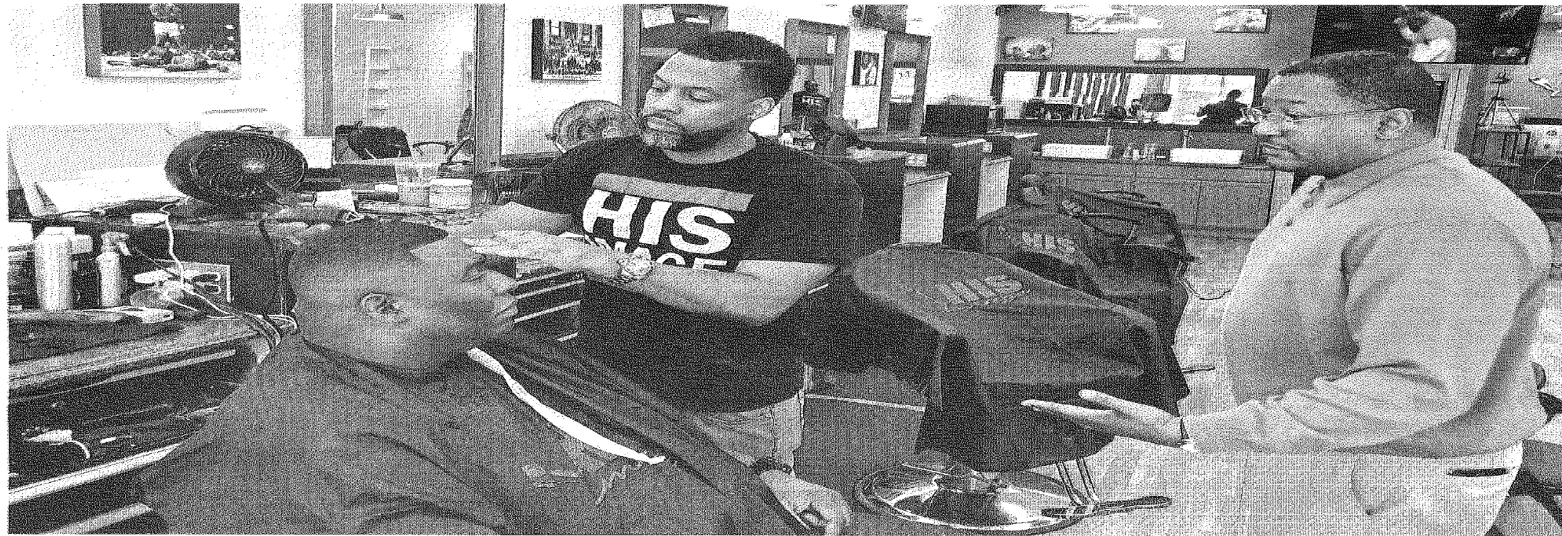
- Provide education
- Allow the conversation to flow
- Offer assistance and support
- Allow for engagement on their level

Do The Right Thing 4LIFE

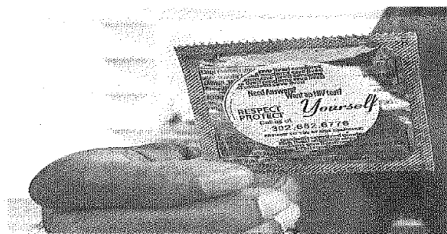
Program Sustainability

- Collaboration is KEY!!!!!!
- Seek innovative funding sources
- Creativity

Health



COME FOR A CUT, STAY FOR THE HEALTH ADVICE



Medical groups embrace power of Delaware barbershops, salons to help their clients

Meredith Newman
Delaware News Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

In between talking sports and weekend plans, Derrick Reed's client confessed a secret. A few weeks ago, a former fling accused the man of giving her a sexually transmitted disease. He told his barber he wasn't sure what to do. "We got to get that checked out right now," replied Reed, owner of His Image Barber Lounge in Wilmington. "And we have condoms, too."

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ABOVE LEFT: About once a month, Frank Hawkins, of AIDS Delaware, drops off condoms to 32 barbershops and beauty salons in Wilmington. He's found these businesses have a pulse on the African American community and can inform their clients about healthy behaviors. **AT TOP:** Frank Hawkins (right) talks to Ivan Thomas and Derrick Reed about his work with AIDS Delaware. The organization works with local barbershops to get the word out about HIV prevention. PHOTOS BY MEREDITH NEWMAN, NEWS JOURNAL

Scene from the movie Friday



References

- <https://effectiveinterventions.cdc.gov/en/hiv-negative-persons/group-2/popular-opinion-leader>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/research/interventionresearch/rep/packages/pol.html>

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