



Positive Women

# Positive News



February 2009

# **Women's Retreat**

**29 May—1 June 2009**



## **BOOK NOW**

**For registration form  
Free phone 0800 769 848 or  
email [positivewomen@xtra.co.nz](mailto:positivewomen@xtra.co.nz)**

# Coordinators Update

*Tena Koutou Katoa, Jambo, Hello, Talofa lava, Taloha ní, Halo olaketa, Bula vinaka, Kam wa maí, La orana, Fakaalofa, lahi atu, Malo lelei, Nabat, Zdravo, Cíao, Sha-lom, Saludo, Bonjour, Aman, Servus, Konnichi wa, Buenos Días, Nyob zoo, Torova, Namaste, Ci yi bak, Salaama.*

A happy New Year to you all...hopefully you managed to get some time to rest and relax over the holiday period.

I guess you will have noticed that you are not being greeted by the usual 'Words from the Editor'. Unfortunately as a direct result of the economic recession we have had to make cut backs and this has meant we had to disestablish the position of Administration Assistant. Jane Roskrige left at the end of December and on behalf of everyone at Positive Women Inc. we thank her for the great work she did on the newsletter and wish her well for the future.

The end of 2008 was a difficult time for Positive Women Inc. with three of our funding applications coming in well below the amount we requested. We are thankful to the funding agencies who phoned us personally to explain that it was not that we had done anything wrong but that due to the current economic climate they were not in a position to assist us with as much funding as in previous years or as much as we had asked for.

Positive Women Inc. will need to 'batten down the hatches' over 2009 and hopefully we will be able to ride out the storm along with many others who are experiencing similar situations.

Never the less...we still have quite a programme for 2009.

So while there might be some testing times ahead, it will be business as usual for Positive Women Inc., and we look forward to sharing the year with you.

Kind regards Jane

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Thank you very much to the following companies for sponsoring Positive News



# Fund for HIV + children and teens to go to Australian camps ...

The Torrens Fund was set up by Positive Women Inc. last year in an attempt to raise funds so that children and teens in New Zealand living with HIV might be able to attend the special kids and teens camps held each year in Australia.

Funds raised through the World AIDS Day Positively Glamorous Fashion Show and also some of the money we received from the Queen of the Whole Universe pageant were used to kick start this fund and we are excited to say that we have enough money to send three, possible four, children or teens to the Australia camps in 2009.



## Who can go?.....

For children or teens to be eligible to attend the camps they must be:

- 18 years of age or under
- HIV positive and be aware of their HIV status
- Be living in New Zealand but do not need to be a New Zealand citizen

Parents are not able to attend the camps so funding is for child or teen only.

Positive Women Inc. will provide an escort if children are too young to travel by themselves.

Positive Women Inc. will endeavour to cover all costs associated with getting kids and teens to and from the camps.

Applications will be accepted on a first come first served basis as long as eligibility criteria is met for 2009. After that, priority will be given to those who have not previously attended a camp.

Positive Women Inc. aims to continue raising funds for the Torrens Fund so hopefully we will be able to send more kids and teens to the camps as funds allow.

For more information about the Positive Women Inc. Torrens Fund and the camps please contact the office at Positive Women Inc.

**Registration closes 30 June 2009**



The camps are an initiative of the paediatric HIV service at the Sydney Children's Hospital.

The aims of the camps are to;

- Help reduce the isolation experience by children/teens living with HIV
- Provide a recreational and therapeutic environment where children can share experiences with others in a similar position
- Provide a space where new ways of coping with the virus can be learned
- Provide a space to teach children/teens new skills, increasing confidence and providing support and foster peer networks

There is no equivalent service in New Zealand (yet)...however this is something we hope will happen in the future and are working on. In the meantime, Australia has been running these camps very successfully for many years and as a result have a wealth of knowledge and expertise and we are very appreciative they have agreed that we might send children and teens from New Zealand to benefit from attending these amazing camps.

Positive Women Inc. also runs a Family Hui every two years for those who are not able to make it to the Australian camps.

The next Family Hui will be in November 2010. All family members are able to come to this event regardless of HIV status.

# Pregnancy; when one partner is HIV+ and the other is not.....



## The Swiss Statement

i-base publication; Guide to HIV, pregnancy and women's health January 2009

The "Swiss Statement" was issued in January 2008 by the Swiss Federal Commission on AIDS Related Issues. An expert group of doctors and researchers.

This group was concerned about the legal situation to HIV-positive people in Switzerland and for serodifferent couples (i.e. where the woman is HIV+ and the man is HIV negative or visa versa) who wanted to have a baby.

They were worried about the accuracy of public and private information about the risk of HIV transmission for people on antiretroviral treatment.

One of the reasons that they issued the statement was to give doctors guidance on how best to help serodiscordant couples wishing to conceive a child. Many couples are unable or unwilling to use sperm washing or other methods of assisted reproduction to get pregnant and need to be able to make informed decisions about the level of risk involved with having sex when using antiretrovirals.

The statement described the transmission risk for someone on stable antiretroviral therapy to be "negligible" and "similar to risks of daily life". i.e. Like being run over by a bus....

The statement makes it very clear that the description of someone who is at a very low risk of transmitting HIV only applies to someone who:

- Is in a *monogamous* relationship
- Has had an undetectable viral load for *at least* 6 months
- Has *excellent adherence*...that is, takes their medication as prescribed
- Has *no other STI's* for example, herpes or any other sexually transmitted disease

The Swiss doctors calculated that conceiving naturally under these circumstances would be unlikely to lead to HIV infection being transmitted to the HIV negative partner.



**The Swiss statement is not recommending that condoms should be abandoned forever—just that the risks during limited conception attempts were so small compared to the importance for many couples to have children**

You can find more information on the Swiss Statement at [www.aids.ch/e/fragen/pdf/swissguidelinesART.pdf](http://www.aids.ch/e/fragen/pdf/swissguidelinesART.pdf)



## Earlier use of antiretroviral therapy could reduce the risk of other illnesses

Treatment guidelines in Europe and the US are now recommending that HIV treatment should be started when a person's CD4 cell count is around 350. Previous guidelines recommended starting treatment when a person's CD4 count was around 200.

These were changed when studies showed that people who started treatment at higher CD4 cell counts had much better long-term improvements in their immune system. Furthermore, results from the SMART treatment interruption study showed that a low CD4 cell count increased the risk of serious non HIV-related illness, such as some cancers as well as heart, kidney and liver disease.

But could treatment guidelines soon be

recommending starting treatment at an even higher CD4 cell count? There is evidence from the UK that people with a CD4 cell count of 350 have more HIV-related illnesses than people with a CD4 cell count of 500.

Results from a number of studies show HIV may have an important role in some serious non HIV-related illnesses. This British research presentation suggested the earlier use of antiretroviral therapy could reduce the risk of these illnesses, and recommended looking at whether HIV treatment should be started earlier in people with CD4 counts above 500.

**In New Zealand the current guidelines are for people to start antiretroviral treatment at a CD4 cell count of 300.**

*Update from the 15th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CRO), Boston UAD February 2008*

# HIV no longer bar to granting of US visa for short visits

Michael Cater—[www.aidsmap.com](http://www.aidsmap.com)

Being HIV positive will no longer be a bar to the granting of a visa to visit the USA, according to new rules issued by the US Department of Homeland Security. US consular officials will now have the authority to grant visas for short visits to otherwise eligible HIV positive people without having to obtain a special 'waiver'. However a visa must still be obtained and must be obtained before travel to the US.

The new rule was announced in September 2008. It applies to people with HIV who wish to visit the US for up to 30 days. This is a transitional arrangement only as new law changes are imminent in 2009.

HIV positive people who wish to make short visits to the US will need to apply to their local US consulate. A visa will be granted if they meet all the normal conditions for the granting of a US visa. A granted visa will not mention HIV. But US consular officials will have to be satisfied that HIV positive visa applicants will not engage in activities in the US that will pose a threat to public health. So don't be surprised if you are asked what might be considered 'some personal' questions.

We will keep you updated as and when things change on this front.



## *Comment from the Coordinator*

*My personal experience of obtaining a US visa, even before this law change, was that the people at the US consulate in Auckland were very helpful and obliging.*

# Feedback and Complaints.....

While Positive Women Inc. tries at all times to meet the needs and expectations of it's members, there are undoubtedly times when some people may not be happy with our services or maybe you have a complaint about the behaviour of another member or maybe you just want to contact us with some feedback on something, or share some ideas or thoughts you may have .

We are always happy to hear from you. and we encourage you to do so.

## Feedback

For any feedback you might like to communicate or discuss with us please feel free to contact the National Coordinator by phoning (09) 309 1858 or 0800 769 848 which is a free phone number and will not cost you anything. Alternatively send us an email at [positivewomen@xtra.co.nz](mailto:positivewomen@xtra.co.nz). There is also the option of sending an email through the website or you can even send us a letter to;

1/3 Poynton Terrace, Newton.  
Auckland 1010.

## Formal Complaint

Should anyone wish to make a formal complaint ,and to ensure we follow correct procedure, all formal or official complaints need to be in writing and sent to head office at Positive Women Inc. where they will be addressed by the National Coordinator after consultation with the Board of Positive Women Inc. and a formal response will be made to the complaint.

Should anyone not feel comfortable discussing a complaint with the National Coordinator, complaints can be address directly to the Board by email at [boardpw@gmail.com](mailto:boardpw@gmail.com) . All complaints and feedback are taken seriously and will be given urgent attention .

Should you have any queries about these procedures please do not hesitate to contact us for clarification.

## A tribute.....

Positive Women Inc. would like to acknowledge the passing of Aaron McDonald on the 16th of January 2009

Aaron was co editor of the New Zealand AIDS Foundation quarterly magazine, Collective Thinking. He was also a board member for POZ PLUS .

A wonderful man who will be very sadly missed

Thank you Aaron for your amazing contribution to this world .....



## Couples Retreat.....

Being in a relationship where one or both partners are HIV+ has many challenges....and many rewards.

Positive Women Inc. are looking to hold a weekend Retreat for HIV + women and their partners in November 2009 in the South Island.

The aim of the Retreat will be to provide an environment for couples affected by HIV to come together to share experiences and to attend workshops providing useful and relevant information for couples living with HIV.

While this Retreat is something we have wanted to do for a number of years, we have so far struggled to obtain funding to run such an event.

In order to make a more convincing funding application we would like to get some feedback from you to hear what benefits such an event would have for you and your partner.

- Would you and your partner attend such an event?
- What sort of activities and workshops would you be interested in?
- Why would this be of interest to you and your partner?
- What would be the benefit to you and your partner?

Your feedback on this will be used (without names) when we make funding applications, to highlight to funders how important an event such as this would be.

We can tell them, but it will be much more convincing if it come from you. Plus while some women have expressed an interest in such an event we just want to get a feel for 'how many' people what this.

Send us an email with your thoughts to [positivewomen@xtra.co.nz](mailto:positivewomen@xtra.co.nz)

Proceeds to  
**HIV/AIDS**  
 Charities

**8pm Saturday**  
**27 June 09**

St James Theatre  
 Wellington

Book at Ticketek  
[www.ticketek.co.nz](http://www.ticketek.co.nz)  
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QWU\* exhibition, Jimmy's Cafe,  
 St James Theatre, Wellington  
 22-27 June 2009

**QWU**  
 Queen of the Whole Universe  
 A VERY QUEER BEAUTY PAGEANT

## Queen of the Whole Universe hits Wellington.....

For the first time ever this stunningly entertaining and fun filled pageant will be in Wellington. Be sure to book your tickets so that you don't miss out....it's an amazing night and proceeds from the evening will be donated to support people living with HIV such as Positive Women Inc., Body Positive and the New Zealand AIDS Foundation. Positive Women Inc. received \$11000 from the last pageant which was held in Auckland in November 2008. \$2000 of which went towards the Torrens Fund and the remainder is to be used to cover the costs for the 2010 Family Hui.



## New Zealand HIV Antenatal Screening Programme.....

You may be aware that the New Zealand Government has been involved in initiating an HIV antenatal screening programme which offers HIV testing to all women who are pregnant when they visit their health practitioner for the first time when they become pregnant.

This programme has been carried out in stages with different area health boards picking up the screening programme over a three year period.

The Aim of the screening programme is to identify women who are HIV+ so that they can be given appropriate treatment to reduce the transmission of HIV from the mother to the baby. With early intervention this risk can be reduced from around 33% to under 1%. And in fact, in New Zealand so far, where women have been known to be HIV+ and have taken antiretroviral medications, and the baby has been given AZT for the first 4-6 weeks of their life...there have been no recorded cases of mother to child transmission of HIV which highlights the importance of this programme.

Positive Women Inc. has been involved with this programme from the beginning being a member on the National Antenatal HIV Screening Implementation Advisory Group (NAHSIAG).

More recently, as the programmes have reached other regions of the country we have also been asked to provide representation on the regional HIV Antenatal Screening Programme Steering Groups.

In light of this we have asked various women around the country to assist in this capacity and so far three women have accepted positions on these steering groups.

Positive would like to express a sincere thank you to these women who have offered their time and voice on behalf of positive women, to ensure that our voices are being heard.

A huge thank you to:  
Svadha in Canterbury  
Jan in South Canterbury  
Genevieve in Wairarapa

# Female Condoms and Dental Dams.....

While not yet hugely publicised, the female condom and dental dams have been on the market for quite some time .

## The Female condom

The female condom is a strong, soft, transparent polyurethane or nitrile sheath inserted in the vagina before sexual intercourse. It offers a variety of pleasurable options compared to the male condom and protects against both pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections including HIV by forming a barrier between the penis and the vagina, cervix and external genitalia.

The female condom is stronger than latex, odourless, causes no allergic reactions, and unlike latex, may be used with both oil-based and water-based lubes. It can be inserted prior to intercourse. Is not dependent on the male erection, and does not require immediate withdrawal after ejaculation.



With correct and consistent use, the female condom is as effective as other barrier methods and has no known side effects or risks. Better yet, women control it and often find it feels good to rub the outer ring on the clitoris, or to feel the inner ring inside them. And many men who've tried it find it more comfortable than male condoms. For more sexy tips check out [www.thepleasureproject.org](http://www.thepleasureproject.org)

## Dental Dams



A dental dam is a thin latex sheet used during oral sex. A barrier is created between the mouth and genital/anal area which increases hygiene and reduces the risk of infection. Dental dams are rapidly becoming a popular safe sex tool that is enjoyed by both men and women alike. Dental Dams SHOULD NOT be used as an alternative to a condom. Dental Dams come in mixed flavoured packs include Strawberry, Mint, Banana, Blueberry, Vanilla and Chocolate. Each dam is individually wrapped with clear instruction on how to use

The non-latex Dental Dam is a sheet of ultra-thin polyurethane for use during oral sex to reduce the risk of infection. Each dam is individually wrapped with clear instructions on how to use.

The female condom and dental dams are available in New Zealand, otherwise they can be purchased online at [www.passion8.com](http://www.passion8.com) or [www.postalcondoms.co.uk](http://www.postalcondoms.co.uk)



## Positive Support Meetings



Positive Women Inc. is to run a weekly peer support group for women and their partners in March 2009. The support group will be held once a week from 7pm till 9pm and will run for a period of four weeks.

We require a minimum of 6 people to run the group. If successful and if there is a demand, we hope to run another group in July.



## Straight Arrows Dinners

Last Thursday evening of the month

This social gathering is held on the last Thursday of each month from 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm in the central city. The Straight Arrows dinner is a chance for heterosexual HIV + people to come together for social support over a meal.

## Volunteers Wanted

To help with the HIV+ Women's Retreat  
Need to be based in Auckland

## Contact

**Positive Women Inc.**

1/3 Poynton Terrace, Newton, Auckland 1010

Email: [positivewomen@xtra.co.nz](mailto:positivewomen@xtra.co.nz), Web: [www.positivewomen.org.nz](http://www.positivewomen.org.nz)

Phone: (09) 309 1858,

Free phone: 0800 769 848

**For more information on any of the above**

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acknowledge the following Sponsors**



**J R McKenzie Trust**

