

## A sisterhood of women facing HIV together

**BABES Talking** is a monthly publication of BABES Network-YWCA.

The goals of our publication are to share information, publicize events and create a forum for the voices of women living with HIV/AIDS to be heard. We encourage you to make BABES Talking your newsletter by writing a story, submitting artwork or setting up an interview with a staff member.



## Spring Cleaning: Internal and External

Volume 19 Issue 2  
Spring 2011

Dear BABES Community,

By now you've probably heard about the recent funding crisis at BABES. The State Department of Health and HIV Planning Council's decisions to cut all Ryan White funding to BABES result in a 75% decrease in our annual budget for 2011. **Despite the support of the YWCA, our program cannot continue to serve over 400 HIV+ women and affected families members without the generosity of individual donors like you.** I wanted to offer you an opportunity to help ensure that our essential services can continue – to ensure that newly diagnosed women can meet with a peer counselor for support, education and referrals and that BABES can continue to reduce the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. **This is a critical time for BABES – I believe that we can generate enough support before August 2011 to allow us to continue providing HIV+ women and their families with a place to go to for peer support, outreach, education and advocacy.**

I am asking individuals who are able to consider a gift of \$250 as a benchmark of their generosity. Your help is needed now more than ever to make sure that HIV+ women and their families overcome barriers that prevent them from engaging in medical care and taking their medications.

Being sensitive to the financial insecurity that many of us are experiencing, I want to let you know that there are several options for making a gift. A pledge can be paid by check, credit card or in installments (monthly, quarterly or semi-annually). Given the recent threats to services for women and families affected by HIV/AIDS, we hope you will consider giving today. **If you're not in a place to give financially,** I've outlined a few ways to make a difference in the fight for women-centered AIDS Services in the Pacific Northwest on page 3 of this quarter's newsletter. **Thank you** for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Amelia Vader, Program Manager

*\*All articles are personal stories/opinions and were not reviewed by a medical provider nor endorsed by BABES Network-YWCA.*

## In This Issue

- ◆ Spring Cleaning
- ◆ How You Can Make a Difference at BABES
- ◆ BABES Network Core Values
- ◆ A Woman from Zambia—Her Story of HIV
- ◆ Intimacy
- ◆ Save the Date - BABES Summer Retreat
- ◆ April Calendar
- ◆ Coming Soon

## Make A Difference

### Developmental Stages of Youth: HOPE Training

Lisa Love from Seattle Public Schools will be presenting on how to speak to different age groups. This is a module of the HOPE Project speaker training for those interested in speaking.

**Wednesday, April 13 from 12-2pm**

Open to all interested members.

RSVP to Ronda at [ronda@babesnetwork.org](mailto:ronda@babesnetwork.org) or 206.720.5566



### Pasties & Pastries

A Burlesque & Bake Sale Extravaganza to tempt your eyes and taste buds, benefitting BABES

Thanks to our friends, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, for organizing this super event featuring pie by the slice, cupcakes, raffle prizes and lots of entertainment.

**Saturday, April 16th at 8pm**

### The Wildrose

1021 E. Pike St, Seattle WA  
\$5 donation requested  
Contact us for more info.

“Take your meds and don’t miss a dose. Because I am taking my meds every day my t-cells are high and my viral load is undetectable.”

“An HIV/AIDS diagnosis isn’t the end of your life, but the beginning of new friendships and opportunities.”

## Spring Cleaning



Tonya, Sophia and Nicole

**What practical things are the most difficult to do because of your HIV? What advice can you give to those that are dealing with the same struggles?**

Because of complications due to my HIV, my vision has been impaired. I have PML and because of this I can never go back to work or school. If you are struggling with the same things my advice to you is to take one day at a time. Go to BABES for support. Stay clean and sober. Don’t drink or use no matter what. I have been 5 months clean and 3 years sober. Take your meds and don’t miss a dose. Because I am taking my meds every day my t-cells are high and my viral load is undetectable.

**What emotional things are the most difficult to work on because of your HIV? What advice can you give to those that are dealing with the same struggles?**

Being forgetful is one of those most difficult emotional things for me to deal with. I am scatterbrained sometimes and get lost. This is very difficult for me. If you are dealing with the same thing it’s good to get counseling for the emotions you are dealing with.

This Spring I want to keep working on my sobriety and clean time. I want to take good care of my dog and myself. I am taking my own meds and doing my own laundry. I wasn’t able to do that before. It was all done for me. I have been growing. To everyone reading this, I hope you continue to grow as well.

~Sophia

### A Peer Counselor’s Spring Cleaning

When the phrase “Spring Cleaning” comes to mind the first thing I think of is my home. But when it comes to me living with HIV for 7 years, it means taking care of matters in my life that I may have put off. When I was diagnosed I really didn’t know what kind of life I was going to have or if I was going to have a life at all. The only thing I did know was I had the responsibility to raise my children, so that meant I had to take care of myself the best I could to be able to achieve that task. I didn’t know anything about medications. I didn’t know the commitment it was going to take to go to my doctor appointments and I had no idea that mental health therapy was going to be a Godsend.

I have been very fortunate with my HIV and haven’t experienced many physical ailments, but I have suffered from depression. I have had my fare share of fatigue and it is something that I struggle with today.

After I was diagnosed I didn’t see myself being someone that would use a support group as a form of healing. I don’t know if it was denial or just didn’t want to burden someone else with my problems. It was through “care giving” from my doctor that I was introduced to BABES Network. I can see why coming into a support group can be scary, especially when it’s your first time, when you’re talking about something with a lot of stigma around it. I found that when I was in support group I could talk about being tired all the time and how I wished I could work normal days like everyone else. I could talk about how the meds were giving me physical side effects that I wasn’t used to—if I could just get through a day without 17 stops to the restroom that would be a great achievement. In that support group I was able to actually feel acceptance from others that I didn’t realize I had or even needed.

I haven’t been positive for a long time, but I have been long enough to know that healing is something that is done in steps. If you’re lucky enough to find support, love and the comfort of a good ear you will find yourself actually ‘living’ because you will then know that an HIV/AIDS diagnosis isn’t the end of your life, but the beginning of new friendships and opportunities.

Tonya R.  
BABES Peer Counselor

Dear community member,

The BABES staff and the YWCA are committed to helping the BABES community address these new circumstances to the best of our abilities. We look forward to working with you to create a community in which everyone lives with dignity and respect, including women and families affected by HIV/AIDS.

## How YOU can help:

**MAKE A FINANCIAL GIFT** so that newly diagnosed women will have a place to go for peer support and education. A donation of any size helps BABES continue to provide critical services that help women move forward in their diagnosis. With the loss of federal funding sources, the future of programs like BABES rests on the generosity and compassion of our local communities. **There's no time like today to start giving or renew your support.** Visit [www.babesnetwork.org](http://www.babesnetwork.org) to donate online.

**Help us continue this STATEWIDE NETWORK of support for women living with HIV/AIDS.** If you are a member, exchange phone numbers or email addresses with other BABES members whom you meet at events so you can stay connected. Have you ever considered learning how to facilitate a support group? We will be training more members to become volunteer peer facilitators in the coming months.

**Join ADVOCATES FOR HOPE** to gain public speaking skills and knowledge around HIV/AIDS policies and funding. These trainings may also help you become a volunteer peer mentor and/or HOPE Project speaker.

**WRITE your senator and legislators** about fully funding Ryan White Part D and providing more federal assistance for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP).

**STAY INFORMED.** Sign up for some mailing lists including BABES, AIDS Alliance for Children Youth and Families, U.S. Positive Women's Network.

I hope that BABES' peer support, education, outreach and advocacy has helped you or someone you care about move forward in their HIV diagnosis. More and more, the future of our program will be in your hands. To learn about advocacy activities contact any BABES staff person.

Thank you for being such an important part of our sisterhood.

## Learning to Live to the Fullest

### **What are the areas of your life that you have been putting off because of HIV?**

I have been putting off intimate and personal relationships. I have not been able to be honest with people about my status; not wanting them to know. I have not been able to make plans for school and life. I haven't been looking forward to the future because of not knowing what will happen. I'm always waiting for death to come. I feel as though I have been robbed of the ability to have a normal life at all; not knowing that it was possible and feeling this way to this day.

### **How can you do some "Spring Cleaning" this year?**

By learning more about facing the issues involved with my HIV and how it truly affects my life and how to rebuild from there. Learning what my possibilities are with school and relationships. Trying to find confidence and the ability to live life to its fullest.

### **What practical things are the most difficult to do because of your HIV?**

Having a family. I have been fortunate and have done a lot of things even with the death sentence I received 20 years ago. I was able to ride the wave; doing whatever came by without even thinking about it. But, going through the motions and planning life in general has been difficult.

### **What advice can you give to those that are dealing with the same struggles?**

Learning that it's not a death sentence and that there is life after HIV. You can live a whole and productive life. You don't have to cut yourself short in your dreams.

### **What emotional things are the most difficult to work on because of your HIV?**

Isolation, self-hatred and self-blame that caused me to separate from society as a whole and give up.

### **What advice can you give to those that are dealing with the same struggles?**

Get all of the information that you can so you are able to understand that life is not over. Surround yourself with others that can help you and love you.

~Kimberly S.

A donation of any size helps BABES continue to provide critical services that help women move forward in their diagnosis.

"Learning that it's not a death sentence and that there is life after HIV. You can live a whole and productive life. You don't have to cut yourself short in your dreams."

## A Woman from Zambia—Her story of HIV

I first heard about the disease called AIDS in 1986. I was living in Lusaka, Zambia. To me, it was a disease that would never come my way. My husband and I met at work when I was only 21 years old. It was when we had 3 sons in 1996 that my husband developed oral thrush. By that time we had considerable knowledge about HIV/AIDS. When he told me that the doctor he was seeing at the biggest hospital in the country had requested him to do an HIV test I was not surprised. The day he got the results he did not disclose to me until the next morning. The positive result did not surprise me.

The following day we both went to a different center that was run the American government to have an HIV test. Before the blood samples were taken we were counseled and asked why we wanted to do the test. As we awaited for our results a meal was even provided. After a few hours we were called into a room by a male lab technician. He first disclosed my husband's results. It was positive for the second time. Then followed my result; I tested positive for HIV, too. I did not show any emotion the first two days. Then reality sunk in. As far as I was concerned I had been faithful to my husband in the course of our marriage. I had always thought he was faithful as well. Reality sunk in—he had cheated on me. I developed a lot of anger towards him. After he got better I refused to have any sexual contact with him for 4-5 months. The counselor advised us to use protection each time we had sexual contact. I vowed to myself that we would always adhere to this. My anger and resentment was overcome. I always made sure I could physically see the condom before and after any sexual contact. I asked him why he had been so selfish to do such a thing to the whole family and that he never loved anyone but himself. I even asked him where he had contracted HIV from. As many times as I asked him, he did not say until his death.

With reality dawning on me every day I asked God "why me" of all the population of the whole nation? I had been faithful in my marriage. I remember the next 3-4 weeks as I was on the bus to work shedding tears. I always made sure no one saw me though. The HIV result was a turning point for me to get closer to God. I was very active in my church and kept myself busy with this kind of life. My husband's HIV progressed really quickly. He had an opportunistic infection from time to time. Our older son started asking questions why his dad was sick. At this time there were no ARV's available for us. If they were around it was only in private health centers and very expensive. Each time my son asked it was difficult to explain, but I would just say that his dad was not well. I remember every time he asked I would go to the bathroom to cry. I asked my husband several times to tell the boys, but he always refused. Then one day 2 weeks before he passed on I told the boys. Our oldest son was home from boarding school. My boys were 16, 13 and 10 years old. The oldest had a lot of questions. Who was responsible? How? God, was I at pains explaining everything to him.

Because of his illness, my husband was unable to work at times and his earnings were low. I couldn't work for 2-3 months when the HIV attacked my husband's brain and I had to take care of him. He simply behaved like a crazy person. During this time his friends took advantage of him and all of our family savings were used up. My husband passed on July 9, 2001. The boys were devastated and surprisingly (some people would wonder why) I loved him too and was equally heartbroken.

Over the years, by the grace the God, we have accepted what has happened. My sons are what keep me going. We just take one day at a time. In 2006, I found out my CD4 count was 84. While my health was still okay and I had no opportunistic infections; I knew I needed to get on medication. Today with meds, my CD4 is 383! I since moved to the States and my sons are 26, 22 and almost 20 years old. Every time I talk to my second born, he reminds me to take my medications because he cares so much. I am thankful for my health, medications and having God as my anchor. Because of them I will live to see my grandchildren!

~Anne

### Intimacy

**What are the areas of your life that you have been putting off because of HIV? How can you do some "Spring Cleaning" this year?**

Enjoying the possibility of intimacy and entertaining the thought that it is possible.

**What practical things are the most difficult to do because of your HIV? What advice can you give to those that are dealing with the same struggles?**

To be loved by my ex-husband. My advice is to get hugs as often as possible.

**What emotional things are the most difficult to work on because of your HIV? What advice can you give to those that are dealing with the same struggles?**

Feeling guilty for being stupid—stop the negative thoughts and replace them with positive thoughts like, "I'm here now. What can I do to contribute?"

~Anonymous

"I am thankful for my health, medications and having God as my anchor. Because of them I will live to see my grandchildren!"

"Enjoying the possibility of intimacy and entertaining the thought that it is possible."



BABES Network-YWCA is a **sisterhood of women facing HIV together**. BABES reduces isolation, promotes self-empowerment, enhances quality of life and serves the needs of women facing HIV and their families through peer support, advocacy, education and outreach.

Phone: 206.720.5566

Toll Free: 1.888.292.1912

Fax: 206.720.5901

1118 Fifth Avenue, Seattle WA 98101

Email: [the\\_staff@babesnetwork.org](mailto:the_staff@babesnetwork.org)

Event cell: 206.229.2257

### **BABES Office hours**

Tue-Thur: 11 am-5 pm

Fri: 11 am-4 pm

### **BABES Network-YWCA Services**

- **Peer counseling**  
\*One-on-one support from another HIV+ woman.
- **Support groups**  
\*Weekly support groups for HIV+ women, complete with meals and childcare, as well as a Co-Ed group for HIV+ women and men.
- **Events and Retreats**  
\*Fun social gatherings that provide an opportunity for HIV+ women and their families to network with each other.
- **Educational Forums**  
\*Informative educational groups focusing on HIV treatment adherence and other important health issues.
- **BABES Talking newsletter**  
\*Bi-Monthly, English/Spanish bilingual newsletter available worldwide.
- **Advocacy**  
\*HIV+ women teaching each other how to success fully negotiate government and healthcare systems, while also training community agencies to better serve the complex needs of women.
- **HOPE Project**  
\*Trains and schedules HIV+ women and men to tell their stories to local community groups to reduce stigma and raise awareness of HIV/AIDS
- **Mental Health Therapy**  
\*Available weekly to HIV + women in King County who meet income eligibility

## **Save the Date!**



### **BABES Annual Retreat July 8-10<sup>th</sup>**

There is a \$50 fee per person and scholarships are available.

**Be sure to call us to request application. Contact us at 206.720.5566 or [the\\_staff@babesnetwork.org](mailto:the_staff@babesnetwork.org) for more information.**

\* Applications will be sent out May 13th

\* Applications due June 15th

\* Retreat notification June 22nd



empowered by the ywca

# APRIL 2011

**BABES Network-YWCA** is located at:  
 1118 Fifth Avenue, 1st Floor Seattle, WA 98101  
 Phone: 206.720.5566 Toll-free: 888.292.1912  
 Event Cell: 206.229.2257 Fax: 206.720.5901

[www.babesnetwork.org](http://www.babesnetwork.org)

Email: [the\\_staff@babesnetwork.org](mailto:the_staff@babesnetwork.org)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3	4 <b>BABES Office Closed</b>	5 Everett Support Group/Dinner 6:30-8pm @Evergreen AIDS Foundation	6 Smoking Cessation Group 12-2pm @ <b>BABES</b>	7 Educational Support Group/Lunch 12-2pm @ <b>BABES</b>	8	9
10	11 <b>BABES Office Closed</b>	12	13 Advocates for HOPE 12-2pm @ <b>BABES</b> RSVP Smoking Cessation Group 12-2pm @ <b>BABES</b> Co-ed Heterosexual Support Group/Dinner 6:30-8pm @ Multifaith	14 <b>BABES Office Closed</b>	15	16
17	18 <b>BABES Office Closed</b>	19	20 Smoking Cessation Group 12-2pm @ <b>BABES</b>	21 Educational Support Group/Lunch 12-2pm @ <b>BABES</b>	22	23 Grupo de apoyo para Latinas 11 am-1pm @ <b>BABES</b>
24	25 <b>BABES Office Closed</b>	26	27 Smoking Cessation Group 12-2pm @ <b>BABES</b>	28 Educational Support Group/Lunch 12-2pm @ <b>BABES</b>	29	30 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Don't forget about our Everett Support Group/Dinner on Tuesday, May 3rd, 6:30-8pm @ YWCA Everett</div>

# Coming Soon.....

Please RSVP by calling us at 206.720.5566 1.888.282.1912 (toll free)

Thursday Groups Generously Supported By:



**BABES Staff/  
Personal**

Brenda Higgins  
Peer Counselor  
*Consejera*

Kelly Hill

HOPE Project Coordinator/Peer  
Counselor  
*Coordinadora de el proyecto 'HOPE'/  
Consejera*

Ronda Kimm

Advocacy Coordinator  
*Coordinadora de abogacia*

Nicole Price

Lead Peer Counselor/  
Event Coordinator  
*Consejera/Coordinadora de eventos*

Tonya Rasberry

Peer Counselor/  
Office Coordinator  
*Consejera/Coordinadora de Oficina*

Amelia Vader

Program Manager  
*Encargada de programas*

Angela Zukowski

Bilingual Peer Counselor  
*Consejera Bilingüe*

Advisory Committee/  
Comité Consultivo

Amy Benjamin

Pat Migliore

Rosemary Ryan

Julie Sarkissian

Translators/Traductores

Ana Maria Xet-Mull

Norma Candia

Volunteers/Voluntarios

Caroline Brown

Steph Hartford

Kelly Lynch

Dora Mahan

Pat Migliore

Jackie Leone Pleasant

Vicki Lomnicky

## BABES Educational Support Group/Lunch

*For HIV positive women*

**Every Thursday**

12-2 pm

@ BABES

## Everett Support Group

*For HIV positive women*

**Tuesday, April 5th**

6:30-8pm

@ Evergreen AIDS Foundation

## Co-Ed Heterosexual Support Group/Dinner for

**HIV+ Women and Men**

*Negative partners welcome*

**Wednesday, April 13th**

6:30-8 pm

@ Multifaith Works

(115 16th Avenue, Seattle)

## Smoking Cessation

Every Wednesday

12-2pm

@ BABES

## Advocates for HOPE

RVSP

**Wednesday, April 13th**

12pm-2pm \*please note time change

@BABES

## Latina Support Group

**Saturday, April 23rd**

11am-1pm

@ BABES

## BABES Talking

made possible by

support from:



WOMEN'S FUNDING ALLIANCE

**eliminating racism  
empowering women**

Seattle | King | Snohomish

**ywca**

**Ms. Foundation for Women**  
*Building women's collective power to ignite change*

## Los grupos de apoyo educacional de BABES

Este mes, tema educativo es: Recuperación

para mujeres VIH +

**los jueves**

12-2pm

@ BABES

## Grupo de Apoyo en Everett

*Para mujeres VIH positivo*

**Martes 5 de abril**

6:30-8pm

en Evergreen AIDS Foundation

## Grupo de apoyo para mujeres y

**hombres heterosexuales VIH+**

*Y sus socios negativos*

**Miércoles 13 de abril**

6:30-8 pm

@ Multifaith Works

(115 16th Ave, Seattle)

## Apoya a BABES

**Miércoles 13 de abril.**

12-2pm

@ BABES

RSVP

## Grupo de apoyo para Latinas

**Sábado 23 de abril**

11am-1pm

@ BABES

Funding has been made available as a result of grant awards from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, and Public Health – Seattle & King County.