



# NACS News

*A Tradition  
of Caring*

December 2021  
Volume 25, Issue 12

Native American Community Services of Erie & Niagara Counties, Inc.

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## December is HIV/AIDS Awareness Month

*submitted by George T. Ghosen, Editor*

December as a month carries a lot of significance. First, December represents endings and beginnings. It's a time to gather together and look ahead at what's to come. As the final month of the year, it's a chance to start fresh and fight for real change. Each December is dedicated to HIV/AIDS Awareness Month. This is a time to support educational campaigns, spread science-based information, and fight for accessible and affordable testing and treatment.

In **1981**, a group of researchers and scientists published a report in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) about cases of an uncommon type of pneumonia in gay men. Whether the researchers of that MMWR study realized it or not - the AIDS crisis had begun.

Since the epidemic started, more than 700,000 people have died from AIDS-related illnesses in the United States. The epidemic has also had a worldwide impact - more than 38 million people had the condition in 2019, reports United

Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). For people who have access to the treatments, HIV/AIDS is no longer a death sentence. In fact, treatments can help people live long, healthy lives.

Treatment for HIV/AIDS has come a long way in the past decades. It is possible to live a relatively normal life with an HIV/AIDS diagnosis, yet the stigma still affects many from different backgrounds. Unlike other types of diseases, HIV/AIDS patients face a hefty social stigma. Much of HIV/AIDS awareness month is about defeating this stigma once and for all. This month is a time to stand with those currently living with an HIV/AIDS diagnosis as well as to remember those who lost their lives along the way.

### **AIDS versus HIV: The facts about how they are related**

AIDS is the most advanced stage of HIV. It typically develops when a person isn't diagnosed or adequately treated for HIV. It takes, on average, 10 or more years for AIDS symptoms to appear after the initial HIV infection.

Poor nutrition, extreme stress, and other medical conditions, such as hepatitis C, can cause an earlier AIDS onset.

Once AIDS develops, the immune system is already severely damaged and unable to protect itself from simple infections, cancers, and other immune diseases. Without treatment, most people living with AIDS will only live for about three years.

### **Alarming Statistics**

World AIDS Day and AIDS Awareness Month are important because they serve to remind us that HIV has not disappeared.

- According to AIDS.gov, one in five of the people infected with HIV do not know they are infected.
- The United States has seen an increase in the total number of HIV positive people.
- More than one million Americans live with HIV.
- Someone new is infected every 9.5 minutes in the United States. That's about 37,600 people per year.

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### **MOVING/CHANGE OF ADDRESS?**

If you are planning on moving or changing your address, please contact NACS so we may update our mailing list. Send an email to Newsletter Editor:

**gghosen@nacswny.org**

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- Approximately 37 million people live with HIV around the world.

### **Where did HIV come from?**

Experts do know where HIV came from. In fact, the initial spread to humans began in the 1800s. HIV originated from a certain type of chimpanzee in Central Africa. The chimpanzees had a version of the virus called simian immunodeficiency virus that began spreading to humans when humans were hunting them, coming into contact with their blood in the process. Once humans became infected, the virus spread through Africa and other parts of the world, then to the United States by the 1970s.

### **Is there a cure for HIV?**

While there is no cure for HIV, it is possible to control the virus with proper medical treatment. As soon as a person starts treatment, they're not only working towards a longer life for themselves, they are also lowering the chances of the HIV spreading to someone else.

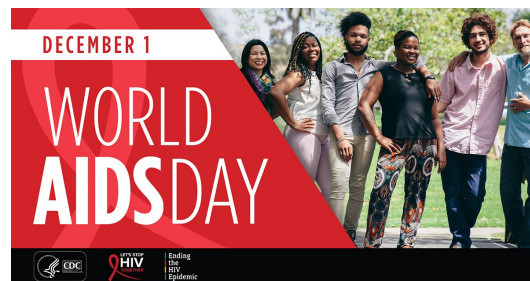
### **Positive News on the Treatment Front**

Thanks to ART (antiretroviral therapy), quality and length of life have dramatically improved for those people who are HIV positive. At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, people did not usually live more than 10 years after contracting HIV. ART has a ripple effect as it prevents the virus from multiplying. The immune cells live longer, thereby allowing the body to fight off non-HIV related illnesses more effectively. Since the number of HIV cells is kept relatively low with ART, it actually helps reduce the rate of transmission. Life expectancy for someone who diligently follows their treatment plan is close to that of someone living without HIV.

### **How can I prevent HIV infection?**

Practicing safe sex is the most effective way to prevent HIV. Unless you and your partner are monogamous and have both tested negative for HIV, use condoms and limit sexual contact with multiple partners. Here are some other ways to prevent HIV:

- Avoid sexual practices that could allow HIV-infected fluids, like blood, semen and vaginal secretions, to pass into your body.
- Stop using illegal drugs. If you do use them, never share needles with others and always use a disinfected needle.
- If you think you're at risk of contracting HIV, talk to your healthcare provider about the antiviral medication used to prevent infection.



### **World AIDS Day**

Started in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first-ever global health day. World AIDS Day, observed each year on December 1, is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, show their support for people with HIV, and remember those who have died from an HIV-related illness.

### **Join the National Institutes of Health - World AIDS Day 2021 Virtual Event**

The year 2021 marked 40 years since the first reports of the syndrome of diseases later named AIDS. Since that time, groundbreaking research has helped turn a once-fatal disease, with treatment, into a manageable chronic illness. The National

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HIV/AIDS Strategy for 2022 to 2025 will highlight the important role of research in continued progress toward ending the HIV pandemic and improving the health of people living with or impacted by HIV. These efforts will require robust research collaboration between private, public, and community entities to prevent new HIV infections, accelerate new therapies, and achieve HIV cure. The World AIDS Day event will feature compelling discussions about the next chapter of impactful HIV research, the types of multisectoral and interdisciplinary partnerships necessary for impact, and the important role of community stakeholders.

Join a distinguished group of participants at the NIH World AIDS Day 2021 virtual event for a live discussion on these topics, including a public question and answer (Q&A) session, as we help mark the global World AIDS Day observance in this momentous year. This event will be broadcast on **NIH VideoCast** and is open to the public.

#### VIRTUAL LIVE SESSION

- The Role of Research in the National HIV/AIDS Strategy
- Wednesday, December 1, 2021, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. ET

Go to [National Institute of Health World AIDS Day 2021](https://www.nih.gov/world-aids-day-2021) on the day of the event to watch the live video-cast.

#### Agenda

- Leadership Perspectives
- Panel Discussion and Public Q&A
- Closing Remarks
- Questions - During the World AIDS Day event, viewers are invited to submit questions to the [OARmailbox](mailto:OARmailbox@nih.gov) (Office of AIDS Research). Questions will be addressed by the panel as time permits during the Q&A session following the panel discussion.

#### Resources

- “What Is HIV/AIDS Awareness Month 2021? Date, History + Ideas” by Sam Tetrault, 6/14/21, <https://www.joincake.com/blog/aids-awareness-month/>
- “World AIDS Day – December 1” by Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/library/awareness/wad.html>
- “December is AIDS Awareness Month” by Brevard Health Alliance, <https://brevardhealth.org/december-aids-awareness-month/>
- “Breaking the Stigma: 13 Essential Facts About HIV/AIDS” by ShareCare, [https://www.sharecare.com/health/hiv-aids/article/breaking-stigma-essential-facts-hiv?cbr=GGLE1500879&gclid=EAlalQobChMlma6mh\\_L58wIVgZ-zCh1\\_KQDtEAAYBCAAEgIM-PD\\_BwE](https://www.sharecare.com/health/hiv-aids/article/breaking-stigma-essential-facts-hiv?cbr=GGLE1500879&gclid=EAlalQobChMlma6mh_L58wIVgZ-zCh1_KQDtEAAYBCAAEgIM-PD_BwE)
- “National Institute of Health World AIDS Day 2021” by NIH, <https://www.oar.nih.gov/news-and-events/meetings-events/world-aids-day-2021>

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## World AIDS Day 2021

*submitted by Casey Bednarski, APP*

Each year on December 1<sup>st</sup>, we observe World AIDS Day. On this day we honor and commemorate those who have died from AIDS-related illnesses, and we show support for all those living with HIV. It is estimated that around 38 million people worldwide are living with HIV, and more than 35 million have died from AIDS-related illnesses. These staggering numbers highlight why we began to observe World AIDS Day in 1988, and why we carry this commemoration on each year.

Although many people still view HIV as a deadly disease, the truth is that today’s anti-retroviral treatments allow people with HIV to live long and healthy lives. These medications can help HIV+ individuals achieve a status called U=U, or Undetectable=Untransmittable. This means that if a person with HIV takes their medication daily, they will have such a small amount of the virus in their

body that they can no longer pass HIV on to others. HIV does not have to be a death sentence, and the more we raise awareness and support, the more we can better the lives of those living with HIV.

If you’re wondering how you can show solidarity on World AIDS Day, we have some ideas for you. One easy thing you can do is help to educate others. Teach them about HIV and AIDS and help to reduce the stigma that surrounds these diagnoses. You can also raise funds for HIV and AIDS research and support. Check out the World AIDS Day website to order red ribbons, and your funds will go towards this cause. One last thing to do is get tested for HIV! Testing is quick, painless, and sometimes free. All of these actions can help raise awareness for HIV and show support for those living with the virus.



## The BELL Project: December Announcements

### Books to consider for the holiday season

- *The Sweet Smell of Christmas* by: Patricia M. Scarry → This interactive scratch and sniff book takes you and your little one on a journey with little bear as she prepares for Christmas.
- *The Itsy-bitsy Reindeer* by Jeffrey Burton → Your little readers will love this holiday spin on the classic nursery rhyme, the Itsy Bitsy Spider. Itsy bitsy Reindeer spreads holiday cheer as he helps to get Santa's workshop ready for Christmas.
- *Little Blue Trucks Christmas* by Alice Schertle → If your toddler is a fan of cars and trucks this is a book they will enjoy. From the repetitive and rhyming text to making sure every kid gets a gift they deserve for a merry holiday this is one they'll remember.
- *Dear Santa* by: Rod Campbell → You and your toddler will love lifting the flaps to discover the gifts Santa is planning to gift this Christmas.

For a couple more options check out "[10 Must-Have Christmas Books for Toddlers | Childhood 101](#)"



## December is National Impaired Driving Prevention Month



December is National Impaired Driving Prevention Month. Every day, 29 people die in motor vehicle crashes involving a driver who is impaired. This evens out to about 1 person every 50 minutes. This number is staggering. While impaired driving usually accounts for about 1/3 motor vehicle related fatalities, during the holiday season, and particularly December 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, impaired driving accounts for nearly **50 percent of all traffic fatalities**.

**Every impaired driving fatality is 100% preventable.** In fact, since 1985 many impaired driving deaths have been prevented. The fatality rate has decreased from 41% in 1985, to 29% in 2018. Prevention providers across the country have helped facilitate the decrease by providing evidence-based substance misuse prevention programming to youth, to educate about responsible use and dangers of impaired driving. At NACS we offer some youth targeted prevention programs including Too Good for Drugs/Violence, Life Skills, and Positive Action to help give youth the Social Emotional Learning lessons, and the skills they need to make responsible decisions and choose healthy coping strategies.

How can you help fight against impaired driving? Start by being the change and choosing not to use substances and drive. It is not just alcohol that can impair your ability to drive, marijuana, prescription medication, and other illicit drugs can impact your ability to safely operate a vehicle. **If you choose to celebrate with substances this holiday season, designate a driver ahead of time.** Choose to arrive to your destination using a ride share service, such as Uber, so you don't have to worry about getting your car home later and alleviate some of the pressure to drink and drive.

Talk to your children about impaired driving and how to prevent it – the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has some important tips! Don't wait, there is never a bad time to start the conversation with your kids – at the dinner table, grocery store, or especially when they want to borrow a car, or ask to ride with a friend. Reinforce your expectations, make sure they know it is never okay to drive impaired, or with an impaired driver. Help them create an exit plan before they need it. Let them know it is always okay to call you if they are ever in doubt about getting in a vehicle with someone or encourage them to help the driver find a ride share or taxi service. Most importantly, show them you care. Let them know you are talking to them about the dangers, not because you don't trust them, or think they will choose to drive under the influence, but because you care about their safety.

Remember to Gather with a Good Mind this holiday season, and always 😊 Nya:weh.

# Dealing With Holiday Depression?

submitted by George T. Ghosen, Editor

Christmas is the time to say “I love you...” to recall the holiday song by Billy Squier. It denotes a positive attitude towards the season and to the people in your life. Almost all Christmas-themed songs have the same type of message (unless you’re a punk-rocker or metalhead). There seems to be an overabundance of joy and good will towards men (and women). These songs imply that everyone should feel these things no matter what. But what if we don’t?

The twelve days of Christmas are filled with joy, merriment, and good old Christmas cheer. It’s the season of love, peace, and happiness. It’s the one time of the year when we get off work, spend time with our families, dash for some last-minute shopping, eat and drink, go to parties and family get-togethers, enjoy gifts, and celebrate a perfect Christmas. But many of us may be experiencing holiday depression.

The holiday season for most people is a fun time of the year filled with parties, celebrations, and social gatherings with family and friends. For many people, it is a time filled with sadness, self-reflection, loneliness, and anxiety.

## What causes holiday blues?

Sadness is a truly personal feeling. What makes one person feel sad may not affect another person. Typical sources of holiday sadness include:

- Stress
- Fatigue
- Unrealistic expectations
- Over-commercialization

- Financial stress
- The inability to be with one’s family and friends

Balancing the demands of shopping, parties, family obligations, and house guests may contribute to feelings of being overwhelmed and increased tension. People who do not view themselves as depressed may develop stress responses, such as:

- Headaches
- Excessive drinking
- Over-eating
- Insomnia

Others may experience post-holiday sadness after New Year’s Day. This can result from built-up expectations and disappointments from the previous year, coupled with stress and fatigue

## Causes of Stress and Depression During Christmas

### 1. Absence of a beloved person

★ The absence of a beloved person during the holidays creates feelings of loneliness and regret. Additionally, people who feel loneliness and depression when they see other people having a good time, then the situation is getting worse.

### 2. Family misunderstandings

★ Conflicts and stressed relations in several cases come to the surface this time of the year. Usually people want to gather the whole family together for Christmas, but everyone has plans and sometimes there is conflict because

people prefer to spend the holidays in their own home.

- ★ Although family gatherings are wonderful there are also people who need to take advantage of holidays and get some time for themselves or for their close family only. In addition, many families have «roles» for each member (e.g. the «small child») that relate to how this person was in the past and not how it is now. This may cause more anxiety, stress and less pleasure.
- ★ There is also the possibility that people have high expectations these days from other people. People might expect perfect conditions with expensive gifts and positive response by all. This is not usually the case and this increases the chances to feel disappointed and the risk of sadness and depression are increased.

### 3. The economic difficulties

- ★ Many families, for various reasons face financial difficulties, especially nowadays that the economy is under recession. The holidays add an extra burden to their already tight budget. It is likely that there is no available money to buy gifts, presents or clothes for Christmas. As a result some people even use more money than they can actually afford and this worsens their financial situation even more.
- ★ During holidays there are many parties, celebrations and gatherings that require the spending for food and drink. This creates the need to put the hands deep in the

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pocket, both for gifts and to pay for the restaurants and bars.

- ★ The temptations such as food, the cocktails, purchases and gifts are high and leads many people to feel stress for the consequences of their actions (gain more weight, headache, depression, overdrafts). These effects remain after the end of the holidays and cause even more stress and depression.

#### 4. Physical tiredness

- ★ One of the main reasons that the holidays bring with them intense stress is that suddenly there are many requirements and people have to do many things in a short period of time. Even when the activities are basically pleasant and enjoyable, they are a change from the daily routine that people are used to. This situation is pushing the person to do more things than it can normally do.
- ★ Shopping, the need for finding gifts, participation in various social events and obligations, the preparation of Christmas dishes and other sweets all create stress and fatigue.
- ★ And let us not forget the disappointment created when gaining that extra kg while in fact you are trying to lose weight.

#### 5. Loneliness

- ★ For many people especially the elderly, the loneliness is a real issue during the holidays. They may not have someone to sit with them in the dinner table; they may not even have a festive table or even people to speak. Many old people also have no friends, either because

they are ill or because they are no longer alive.

- ★ But younger people who rely only to friends, can be found alone and without invitation during the holidays. These situations create perfect candidates for depression.

#### 6. Seasonal Emotional Disturbance

- ★ A real psychological problem, which coincides with the period of holidays but unfortunately is not so easily recognized, is the seasonal emotional disorder. This disorder occurs when autumn gives way to winter. As daylight is reduced and people spend more time inside, they are affected by a form of depression that is known as a seasonal emotional disorder.
- ★ Although it is a mild form of depression it is annoying and affects the person who is suffering from it. It creates a source of anxiety and worry at a time when the general expectation is that everybody should be happy.
- ★ We must understand and accept that in life things are not perfect and beautiful as in television shows and films. Often life is unpredictable and we should focus on things that make us happy and we should always be thinking positive for the future.

#### **19 tips for coping with holiday stress and depression:**

1. Make realistic expectations for the holiday season.
2. Set realistic goals for yourself.
3. Pace yourself. Do not take on more responsibilities

than you can handle.

4. Make a list and prioritize the important activities. This can help make holiday tasks more manageable.
5. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do.
6. Do not put all your energy into just one day (i.e., Thanksgiving Day, New Year's Eve). The holiday cheer can be spread from one holiday event to the next.
7. Live and enjoy the present.
8. Look to the future with optimism.
9. Don't set yourself up for disappointment and sadness by comparing today with the good old days of the past.
10. If you are lonely, try volunteering some time to help others.
11. Find holiday activities that are free, such as looking at holiday decorations, going window shopping without buying, and watching the winter weather, whether it's a snowflake or a raindrop.
12. Limit your drinking, since excessive drinking will only increase your feelings of depression.
13. Try something new. Celebrate the holidays in a new way.
14. Spend time with supportive and caring people.
15. Reach out and make new friends.
16. Make time to contact a long-lost friend or relative and spread some holiday cheer.
17. Make time for yourself!
18. Let others share the responsibilities of holiday tasks.
19. Keep track of your holiday spending. Overspending can lead to depression

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when the bills arrive after the holidays are over. Extra bills with little budget to pay them can lead to further stress and depression.

A good counselor can help you learn to set “holiday boundaries” while you are coping with holiday depression. “Holiday boundaries” include things like limiting the number of holiday party invitations you and your family accept, scaling down Christmas to a level that feels more reasonable to everyone, asking for help in the Christmas preparations, and perhaps dealing a little differently with the specific tasks that tend to depress you more. If wrapping presents creates a huge sadness in you because it triggers and emotion or a memory, then perhaps you can get a significant other, an older child, or another relative to help you so that you don’t have to wrap nearly as many. Sometimes just doing it with

someone is enough to help keep your depression away.

A Christmas depression is usually more than just a simple case of the holiday blues, and it really should be treated with more respect than that. It is better to go to a counselor and have them tell you that you just have the “blues” and it will pass than to sit on a serious depression and slowly watch your world around you disassemble. A holiday depression requires attention, especially one that develops annually. While it may seem logical to believe that because it happens every year that it will just keep leaving every year isn’t logic that should be counted on when help is so readily available.

#### Resources:

- “14 Ways To Cope With Anxiety And Depression On Christmas” by The Minds Journal,

<https://themindsjournal.com/cope-with-anxiety-and-depression-on-christmas/>

- “Holiday Depression and Stress” by WebMD, 9/27/20, <https://www.webmd.com/depression/holiday-depression-stress>
- “6 causes of Christmas stress and depression” by Manage Your Life Now, 2020 <https://www.manageyourlifenow.com/6-causes-of-christmas-stress-and-depression/>
- “Does Christmas Get You Down?” by Professor’s House, <https://www.professorshouse.com/christmas-depression/>



*On a lighter note...*

The Board, Staff and Volunteers of Native American Community Services would like to wish our community, friends, families and constituency,

*A Happy & Safe Holiday Season!  
and a Healthy, Brighter, Covid-Free New Year!!!*





## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

*"Every accomplishment starts with  
the decision to try."  
- John F Kennedy -*

### Services we provide:

- ⇒ Case management/career counseling
- ⇒ Job search and placement assistance
- ⇒ Assistance in identifying employment barriers
- ⇒ Occupational skills training/skills upgrade
- ⇒ Interview preparation
- ⇒ Resume writing assistance
- ⇒ Educational resources and information
- ⇒ Resources for entrepreneurs
- ⇒ Referrals and Linkages to other services
- ⇒ Status card/Tribal documentation assistance

### **Funding Available to Eligible Native Americans for:**

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- \* On-the-job Training
- \* Tuition/Books/Educational Support
- \* Work Clothes/Tools
- \* Training/Certification Programs
- \* Other Supportive Services

For more information and/or  
to make an appointment, contact:  
Native American Community Services

1005 Grant St.

Buffalo, N.Y. 14207

Colleen Casali

716-874-2797

Ext. 314

**We have offices in Buffalo,  
Niagara Falls & Lockport**

*A Tradition of Caring*

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*Funded by the US Department of Labor*

Native American Community Services

# FOOD PANTRY

1005 Grant St  
Buffalo NY, 14207

Hours: 10:00AM-1:00PM  
Tuesdays & Wednesdays



**We are committed to providing nutritious food for our community, especially in times of crisis.**

**If you or your family are eligible based on the following criteria, please visit us during our food pantry hours.**

**You are eligible for food assistance if you live in zipcodes [14207](#) or [14216](#), and if you meet one of the following criteria:**

Household Size	Annual Income
1	\$25,520
2	\$34,480
3	\$43,440
4	\$52,400
5	\$61,360
6	\$70,320
7	\$79,280
8	\$88,240
Each Additional	\$8,960

- **Your family income lies within these guidelines, including if you have recently become unemployed.**
- **You or someone in your household participates in SNAP, WIC, TANF, Unemployment, Disability, SSI, or Free/Reduced lunch program.**
- **You are experiencing food insecurity and/or having trouble making ends meet.**

**Native American Community Services  
of Erie & Niagara Counties, Inc.  
1005 Grant Street  
Buffalo, New York, 14207**

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