



The AMIDACARE View



in this issue
**Celebrating
Our Heroes**
ABOUT THE FLU
**Holiday
Survival Tips**
**The 2012
Art Calendar**



Dear Amida Care Members,

Welcome to a special WORLD AIDS DAY issue of The Amida Care View. Important information and many interesting articles are available to you. Information is key to making “choices” about what is “right for you.” And, we know that some members prefer to receive information in Spanish. To honor this need, we’ve decided to make this a bilingual publication. Let us know what you think about this inaugural issue by emailing us at publications@amidacareny.org.

“Change” seems to be a theme throughout 2011. We’re nearing 5,000 members and working hard to keep the same high quality service to all. In October, we began paying for and helping you to get medications that help you to be well. So, we added over 2,000 pharmacies to ensure that one is close to you. We’re constantly expanding providers and facilities, so let us know if you have a new provider to recommend. Since August, we’ve been serving members in Staten Island, and we’re working diligently to expand into Queens by early 2012.

Growing and expanding is important -- but our priority is you and your health! In 2011, we created new programs and expanded existing ones to help make sure that you stay healthy by receiving optimum treatments. Our Retention in Care Unit ensures



that you get regular primary care visits, and calls you or your provider if there’s a problem. We provide individualized attention to assist you in staying in care and going to your doctor visits. We’ll make sure that you have transportation to your clinic. And, we’ll even escort you to your appointments if you want. Staff will help you to find solutions to life challenges that can interfere with your health and wellbeing.

Don’t forget to come to one of our monthly LIVE YOUR LIFE events – there are now two per month and in different boroughs. We offer cooking classes, art workshops, dance lessons, meditation, craft making, aromatherapy and much more. Call us at 1-800-556-0689 or visit the website, or check out page 26 for more information.

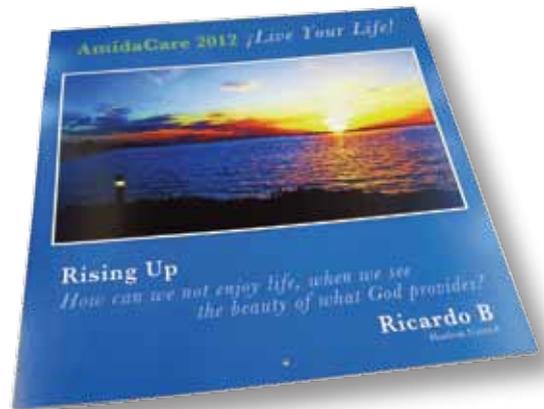
All of these efforts led the National Committee for Quality Assurance, which reports on managed care companies, to recognize your health plan - Amida Care - for delivering high-quality care and responsive services to members. Our Member Advisory Council (MAC) has been an instrumental partner in our successes - thank you to all.

2011 has been full of challenges and accomplishments. 2012 promises to be as exciting. We look forward to serving you in the coming year. Have a wonderful Holiday Season and a 2012 full of peace and health.

Yours truly,
Doug Wirth
 President & CEO

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Amida Care 2012 Art Calendar

Photographic image disclosure:

The photographs used herein are for illustrative purposes only; they do not imply any particular professional credential or health status on the part of any person depicted. Some of the persons depicted are models, who are neither employees nor enrolled members of Amida Care.



A Very Special Birthday!

On October 31, 2011, long time Amida Care member, Jimmy Williams celebrated his 65th birthday. This was both a joyous and a sad event; joyous because it was symbolic of the longevity and quality of life enjoyed by Jimmy and other people living with AIDS (PLWHA) today but also sad because it marked the end of Jimmy's eligibility for Amida Care. At 65 he became eligible for Medicare in addition to Medicaid and was therefore no longer able to be part of the plan.

At the suggestion of his doctor, Mr. Williams joined Amida Care just shortly after the plan became operational in the fall of 2003. He was the 24th person to apply for membership. (To date, over 8,000 people have applied for membership in the plan.) Not only was he one of our first members, but Jimmy was also hired by the Plan to help out in the office. He kept supplies in order, helped us pack and unpack when our office moved; he even brought promotional items out to the many providers and clinics who were still not familiar with the Plan. Jimmy also served as a Peer Marketing Consultant, Member Advisory Council Member, and Board of Directors Member and even starred in many of the videos posted to the Amida Care web site.



To honor this very special member of our Plan we wanted to share some of his inspirational story with you. Jimmy very graciously agreed to be interviewed for this newsletter and we are grateful for his willingness, openness and honesty.

AC: Happy Birthday! What is the best thing about being 65?

JW: I made it! This birthday has been a chance to reflect on my life. I was on another road; one that would have ended my life. I am so lucky to be here. Today I have friends, people that care about me, people that love me and people that I love too.

AC: What would these people say about you?

JW: I don't think there's anyone who could say anything bad about me. I haven't hurt anyone. I think about the example of Martin Luther King – I've tried to be a person who is kind, caring, loving and giving. That's what I'd like people to remember

about me. But life is not over – I've still got things to do to leave my mark!

AC: What are your plans for the future?

JW: I've finally found my passion in life. I love to paint! I started to paint when I joined Amida Care (then called VidaCare) for the very first member calendar art contest. I won for a landscape painting I did of orca whales in the ocean. I painted this after I took a cruise to Nova Scotia, Canada. I did a lot of landscapes at first, but have done lots of other kinds of painting since then. Recently, Harlem United put one of my paintings in their dental offices. It's a picture of a bee with a BIG smile. I used my own hair from my chest and face to give the bee its hairy features. I have three walls in my home covered now with my art and people tell me they are really good. I would like to have an art show some day – maybe at the Schomburg Library in Harlem or an art gallery.



AC: I'm not surprised that the bee has a big smile, because you are always smiling. But I also know that you went through a terrible ordeal a couple of years ago when you lost a leg to an infection. How do you stay so happy and upbeat despite this tragedy?

JW: There was a long time when I couldn't talk about this without crying, but it's gotten easier. I refused to stay sad and angry; it would have made me a bitter person. To dwell on the negative hurt me too much. I needed to turn it around. Today, I look for things to uplift me. I even like to wear bright, cheerful colors!

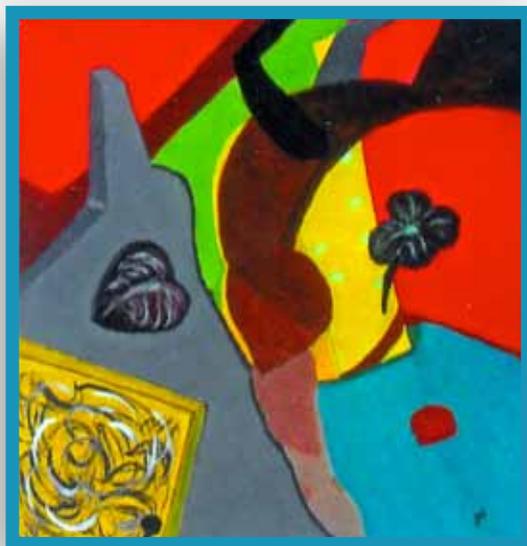
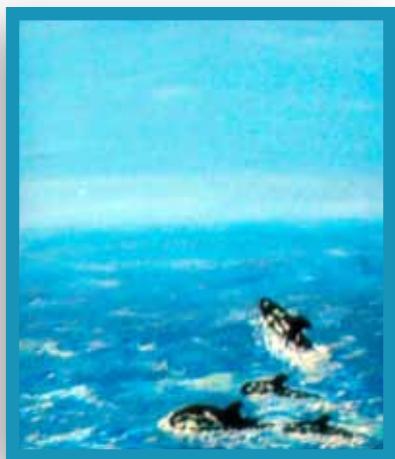
AC: I'm so sad that you won't be an Amida Care member any more. I hope that you will stay in touch with us.

JW: I'm not done advocating for Amida Care. For the past 8 plus years I've been advocating for Amida Care because the Plan has so much to offer.

I would do anything to help the staff of the Plan so they can do the good work they do. I'm also advocating for the Plan to expand its license so it can accept persons over 65. Then I can rejoin! I'm looking forward to that.

AC: *We are too Jimmy. Happy Birthday!*

"I have 3 walls in my home covered now with my art and people tell me they are really good."





Amida Care Member Fall Town Hall Meeting

On October 17, 2011, Amida Care hosted our Fall Member Town Hall meeting at 505 8th Avenue in Midtown Manhattan. Our members made us proud! They were present in a big way. Almost 80 members gathered with our CEO, Medical Director and Executive Staff to listen to the most updated information on Medicaid and Pharmacy Benefits which, as of October 1, is covered by Amida Care. While members sat and enjoyed a hot meal, Doug Wirth, President/CEO of Amida Care, welcomed members assuring them that the coordinated care is intended to achieve even better health outcomes as members, providers, pharmacists and Amida Care staff work more closely together. He also shared information about Member ID Cards and Express Scripts (Amida Care's pharmacy benefit manager). For the benefit of members who were unable to attend the meeting, we have selected some of the most pressing questions.

Member Question: Do I have to change my pharmacy?

Answer: Just about every pharmacy that accepts Medicaid is in our network. If, for any reason, you are using a pharmacy that is not in our network, call us at 1-800-556-0689 and we will work with you to find a pharmacy that is convenient for you. We can also work with your current pharmacy to see if they would want to join our network.

M Q: How can I find out if my pharmacy is part of the network?

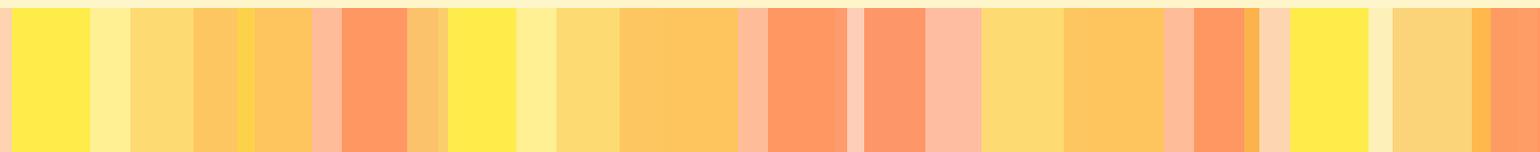
Answer: Call us at 1-800-556-0689 with the name and address of your pharmacy and we will let you know if you can continue receiving your medications there. Also you can use our online pharmacy search at www.amidacareny.org.

M Q: Am I responsible for co-pay?

Answer: Amida Care has eliminated the \$1.00 co-payment on generic and preferred brand drugs, the 50¢ co-payment on Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs and the \$1.00 co-payment on Medical Supplies. Only the \$3.00 co-payment for non-preferred drugs



Note: These photos have been altered to protect our member's confidentiality.





will remain. Remember, you cannot be denied medications because you are unable to pay the copay. If this happens, please do not leave the pharmacy, call us at 1-800-556-0689 and we will talk to your pharmacist.

M Q: How do I obtain a new ID card?

Answer: You should have received one in the mail already but, if not, please call us at **1-800-556-0689** and be sure that we have your correct address! We will process your new card and mail it to you within five working days.

M Q: What happens if my medications are not in the formulary?

Answer: Amida Care's formulary includes all of the medications that were covered by Medicaid. In the unlikely case that your medications are not in the formulary, you will get a 30 day refill the next time you get your prescription refilled between October 1, 2011 and December 31, 2011. A non-preferred medication will need pre-authorization. A drug not covered by the plan will need to be switched to a formulary medication. If your provider feels you should not be switched, they should contact Express Scripts and the medication will be reviewed by our pharmacy team and your provider.

M Q: Can I continue on a medication that is not on the formulary?

Answer: It's our aim that you receive the best treatment possible. You and your doctor (provider) have the right to provide medical information to Amida Care to tell us why you should continue to take the medication that is not in our formulary. Our medical team will review the information to make sure that the non-formulary medication is the best treatment for you. A decision will be made in three business days of receipt of all the information but not more than 14 days.

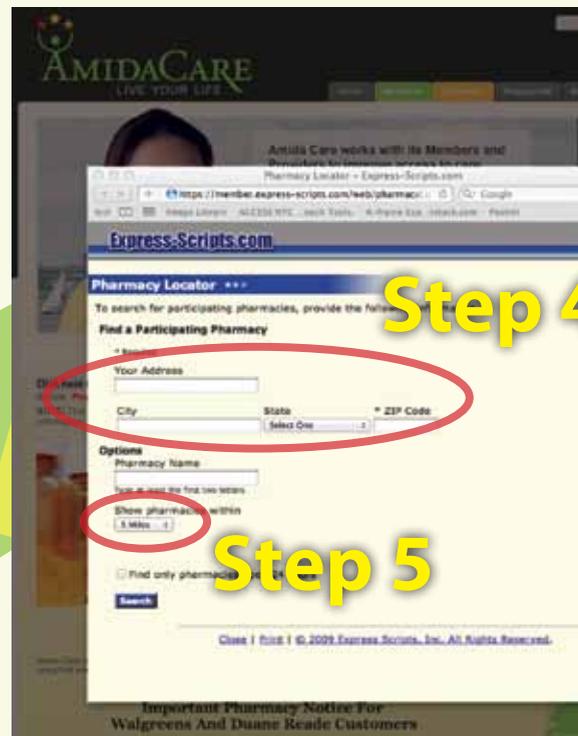
M Q: Does Amida Care cover dental and Cobra Case Management?

Answer: Those benefits are considered "carved-out" and will continue to be covered by Medicaid fee for service.

The general consensus was that the members were satisfied with all their questions answered and that they understood the changes with their Medicaid Benefits. As we move forward with all these changes, "we want all our members to know that we have their best interest at heart."

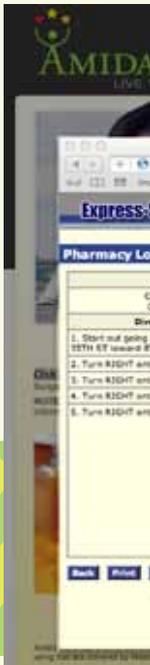
Remember, if you have any questions or concerns, please call 1-800-556-0689, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Happy Holidays!



10 Easy Steps To Find A Pharmacy Near You That Accepts Amida Care's Pharmacy Benefits.

1. Go to our website www.amidacareny.org
2. Click the "Click here" link under the "NEW!!! Pharmacy Network Search" heading.
3. You will be connected to the Express Scripts Pharmacy Locator webpage. Express Scripts is Amida Care's pharmacy benefit manager.
4. Input your address in the box.
5. Select the number of miles from your home that you want to search.
6. You can input the name of your pharmacy if you prefer.
7. Click "Search"
8. A listing of nearby pharmacies that accept Amida Care will appear.
9. Click on a particular pharmacy to get directions from your home.
10. A new window will appear with step by step directions to the selected pharmacy. You can print the directions if you want.



4

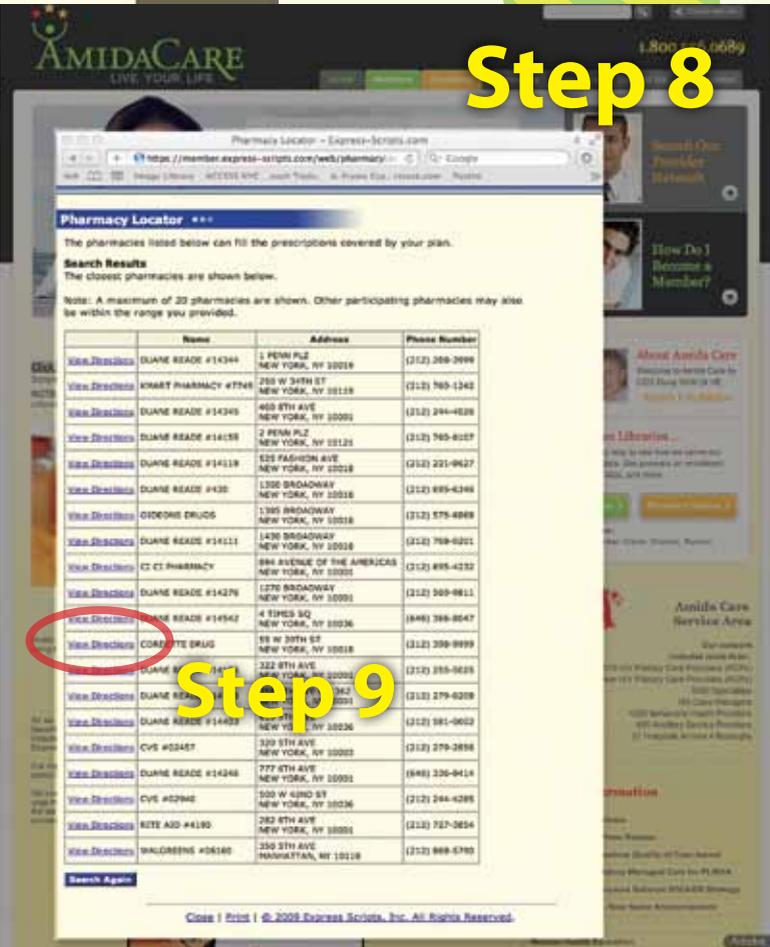


Step 6

Step 7

Step 8

Step 3



Step 9



Step 10

7

New Treatment for Facial Wasting

HIV associated lipodystrophy is a syndrome caused, in part, by the highly active anti-retroviral therapy also known as HAART. This therapy can cause an abnormal redistribution of fat on the belly, face, neck, legs and arms. The syndrome of lipodystrophy also affects triglycerides, insulin levels and increases the risk of developing diabetes and heart attacks.

When the syndrome causes an abnormal accumulation of fat it is known as lipohypertrophy. One of its effects is the accumulation of intra-abdominal visceral fat, also known as organ fat, which is located inside the belly cavity, packed in between organs (stomach, liver, intestines, kidneys, etc.). Another effect of this syndrome is the increase circumference of the neck by the accumulation of fat in back of the neck causing what is known as buffalo hump.

When the effect is a lost of fat, we call it lipoatrophy. It is characterized by the loss of fat in the legs, arms, buttocks and face. As this condition progresses, the bones, veins and face muscles become more prominent, causing patients to look sick, prematurely aged, and in many cases their HIV status is exposed.

Facial lipoatrophy or facial wasting is observed in 13%-38% of patients treated with "HAART" however newer "HAART" regimens have much less risk in causing lipoatrophy. Facial lipoatrophy carries a social stigma, which has negatively affected the quality of life of many people with this condition. Although facial wasting does not pose any health risks, it does have serious consequences on the person's mental health. The condition can become very serious as patients stop taking their treatment so that the condition does not worsen.

Studies have demonstrated that the use of facial fills can improve self-esteem and also help decrease depression symptoms. This procedure can

help patients take their medications and continue with their treatment. This finding is what prompted the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to approve this treatment on March 23, 2010.

There are 2 facial filler treatments, Radiesse (calcium hydroxyapatite) and Sculptra (poly-L-Lactic Acid) both approved by the FDA to correct the loss of facial fat in people living with HIV. In accordance with the CMS decision, this agency will only cover the procedure on patients whose appearance causes significant depression and will only cover these two products approved by the FDA. Until further notice, other implants or fills such as collagen, silicone and fat transplants that have been used to treat lipodystrophy, will not be covered.

Amida Care covers both treatments for facial wasting. For more information see our dermal filler announcement (see page 9.)

before



after



*Based on Zona Rosa Magazine's article
"La Lipodistrofia Asociada Al VIH" by Dr. Omar Torres.
Summer 2010, Num 4.*

Our New Dermal Filler Program

Amida Care is proud to announce its dermal filler program to treat facial lipoatrophy or facial "wasting." Amida Care is aware of the emotional/psychological impact that facial lipoatrophy can cause. Currently, the FDA approves two dermal fillers, Radiesse and Sculptra, for the treatment of HIV associated facial lipoatrophy. The dermal filler requires pre-authorization and is based on medical necessity. Members must be evaluated by a psychiatrist and/or psychotherapist who determine that the facial lipoatrophy has caused an emotional or psychiatric condition in the patient. Sculptra or Radiesse must be given by a medical provider certified in administering the dermal filler.

*For more information regarding the Dermal Filler Program please call **646-786-1800**.*



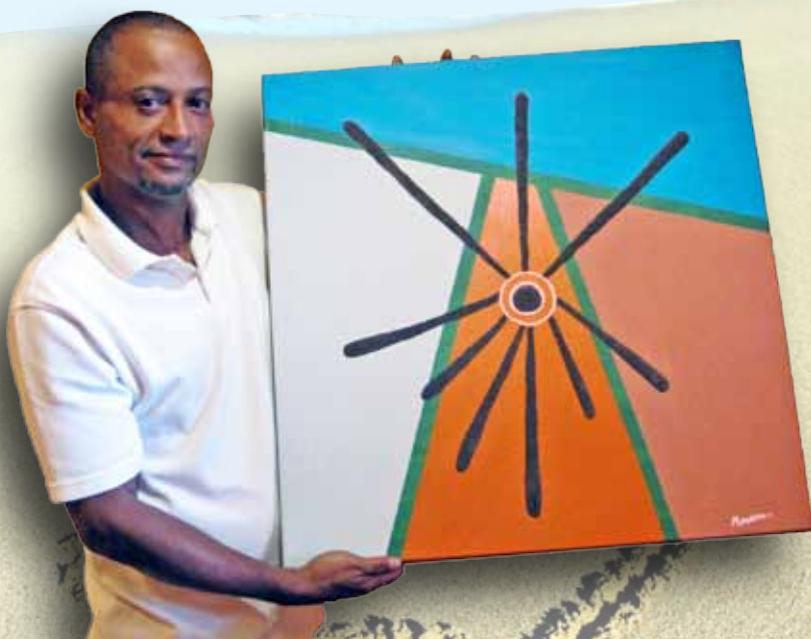
Eddie Mendoza is a Puerto Rican artist and artisan born in 1964. He was raised in the town of Aguada, located on the west coast of Puerto Rico. In 1990, after finishing high school, Eddie moved to New York with his partner, with whom he had nurtured a long distance relationship for many years. Ironically, the relationship ended a month after living together, but Eddie decided to stay and make a life for himself in the big apple.

Since he was very young, Eddie was interested in art and craftsmanship. In 2004, after retiring for health reasons related to HIV, he started to attend Village Care, where he created handmade crafts with shells and clay (Sculpey). Eddie used these materials to transform everyday objects, like discarded vases and bottles, into pieces of art. Eddie sees art and creative possibilities in everything. One of his pleasures is to transform something of no value to others into something new that did not exist before. He likes to create these beautiful objects that celebrate human creativity and our power to transform things.

In 2007 he started attending the art therapy group at El Faro located at 179 East 116th Street, New York NY 10029, and part of Harlem United. Hilda Meza, their art therapist, encouraged him to start painting to express his ideas in this medium. Eddie noted that this was an easy medium for him to use and that it lent itself to experimentation. In 2009, while he searched for materials to finish a project, he found a bag full of sand. This reminded him of a painter from his hometown (Aguada) that he had met during his youth. In one of his frequent visits to the beach, he found the painter playing with sand, or at least that was what he thought was happening. Intrigued, he asked what she was doing and she responded that she was painting with sand. This experience stayed in his mind and many years later this memory prompted him to experiment and this is how he started to paint with sand.

Eddie Mendoza

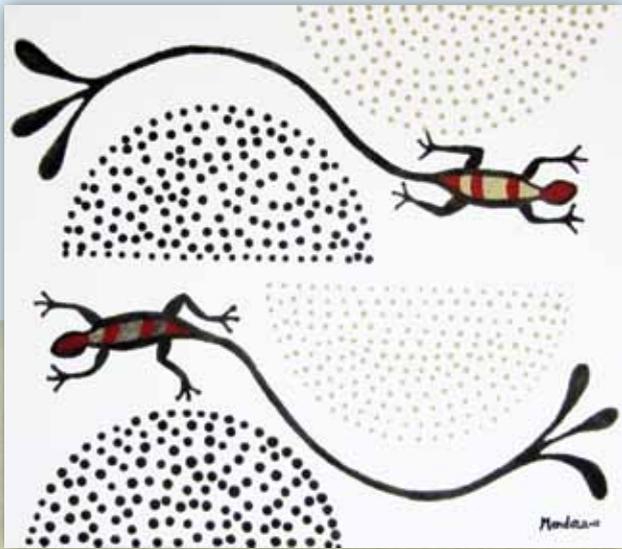
Art on Sand



His first painting with sand was a clown, which was well received by his friends and colleagues at the program. Eddie told us that it took him about one year to master the technique of painting with this medium. This artistic expression requires a good graphic concept and a good brush to meticulously control the glue that adheres the sand to the canvas. Now Eddie uses sand of various colors to create lines, shades, forms and reliefs--all which are elements in his artistic compositions. His dream is to make works of art with sand from all over the world. During his visits to Puerto Rico he brings sand from different beaches because of the natural color and texture variations. Let us clarify that Eddie uses natural colored sand; he does not add color to it.

Painting and crafting have played an important role in Eddie's emotional health strategy. For a long time he used medication to treat anxiety, depression and bipolar disorder. Now he places his attention and energy in his artistic work and is a very prolific artist creating dozens of new pieces every year. His focus on art has helped him to manage (with medical supervision) his emotional health with less medication.

This is how Eddie summarizes his life strategy: "In my art, I can't use sand like other mediums such as painting or paper. One has to learn how to manage sand, this is how I have also learned to manage my life. I have learned to relax, to be organized and to adjust myself to my environment. Today I try to understand, accept others and myself."



Celebrating Our Heroes

The AIDS epidemic galvanized our society like no other medical and social issue has in modern times. It changed the way hospitals treat patients and their families, the way treatments are developed and tested, and how local and national governments respond to crisis. Perhaps most importantly, AIDS galvanized communities to demand inclusion and partnership in the development of appropriate responses to health crisis. None of these advances would have happened without the direct contributions of many community leaders. Here we celebrate the lives and accomplishments of 7 of our heroes. We are thankful to all of them and we miss them!

Dennis de Leon (1948-2009)

Dennis de Leon was one of the founders of the Latino Commission on AIDS, a tireless advocate for social justice and one of the first openly HIV-positive and gay Latino leaders in the country. He was a pioneer and a visionary, and in his lifetime he sought to curb and eliminate health disparities among marginalized communities.



As a lawyer, and later a non-profit executive, Dennis believed in bridging cultural differences to effect progressive social change. He pushed lawmakers to consider community-based approaches to public health, and stressed increased accountability and responsiveness on the part of government agencies.

As the Chair/Commissioner for the New York City Commission on Human Rights, Dennis enforced human rights laws that protected people of color and members of the LGBT community.

Throughout his career he maintained a vibrant concern for all people of color, mentoring many new leaders, especially within those communities ravaged by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and created safe space for community education and organizing to flourish and develop.

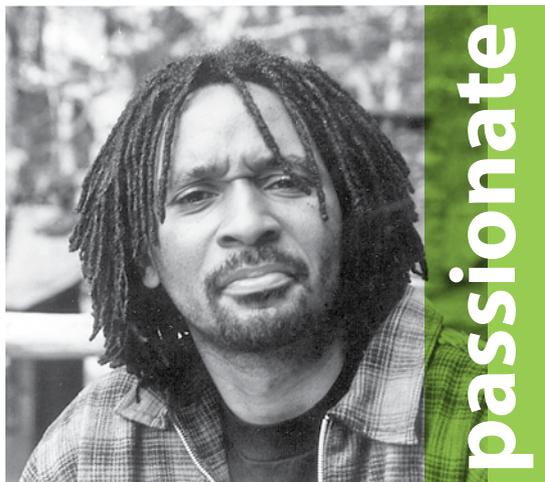
Dennis was an inspiring national leader that united and galvanized a diverse group of Latino communities to present a unified front to loudly demand more funding and better services for Latinos, not just across the state, but also the country.

Keith Cylar (1959-2004)

Keith was an inspirational AIDS activist, entrepreneur and rebel with a cause, who guided Housing Works—as its cofounder/co-president—as it grew from a small group dedicated to housing homeless New Yorkers with AIDS into one of the largest AIDS service and advocacy organizations in the nation.

Housing Works is a minority-lead, community-based, not-for-profit organization that provides advocacy, housing, medical care, mental health services, case management, and support services for homeless men, women and children living with HIV/AIDS.

A social worker by trade, Keith was an early member of ACT UP—out of which Housing Works was born—and didn't hesitate to take to the streets or confront public officials to obtain better services for people with HIV.



To friends, Keith was more than a fierce pioneering activist. He was a loving merrymaker, gentle and bold at the same time.

Keith was a powerful voice for all PWA/HIV, but he also inspired and mobilized hundreds to engage in advocacy and direct action on their own behalf. For his efforts, in 2005, the New York City Council unanimously passed the Keith Cylar Act, an act that ensures accountability and protection for tens of thousands of indigent New York City residents living with AIDS.

Michael Callen (1955 - 1993)

Michael Callen began his career as a successful composer and singer. In 1982, he was diagnosed with AIDS (then known as Gay-Related Immune Deficiency) and quickly became a leader in the response to the growing epidemic. He was a significant architect of the response to the AIDS crisis in the United States, including outlining the tenets

of safer sex, which he developed in collaboration with Richard Berkowitz and Dr. Joseph Sonnabend.

Michael fiercely believed that people living with HIV/AIDS needed to be active and vocal participants in all aspects of the government and society's answer to the epidemic. A movement we now know as self-empowerment. He became a founding member of the People with AIDS Coalition (PWAC), the first organization to spring from the AIDS self-empowerment movement, and co-founded ACRIA, bringing an activist approach to the study of new treatments for HIV and AIDS.

A very committed educator, Michael was the first editor of *Newsline*, one of the first magazines for and by PWA/HIV. *Newsline* was published by PWAC. In 1990, Michael chronicled the stories of long-term survivors in his book *Surviving AIDS*. With Peter Allen, he composed "Love Don't Need a Reason," and he also founded the Flirtations, an a capella singing group. Michael continued his work in the community and in music until his death at age 38. The Callen-Lorde Community Health Center was partially named after him.



Celebrating Our Heroes

Nicholas A. Rango (1944-1993)

Dr. Nick Rango was appointed director of the AIDS Institute of New York State in 1987. The AIDS Institute is the lead state agency for HIV prevention and care services. During his tenure, the AIDS Institute quadrupled its budget to \$120 million and expanded into a wide array of programs.



He publicly acknowledged his homosexuality and that he had AIDS. Recognizing the changes in the epidemic, Nick advocated and created services to people other than gay men who were increasingly affected by AIDS, including heterosexuals, women and babies. New programs were begun for teenagers, minorities, prisoners and drug users.

Nick initiated AIDS medical care standards, expanded the definition of AIDS entitling more HIV+ people to receive care, fostered the creation of special nursing homes and residences, increased the reimbursements to doctors and clinics to encourage them to treat AIDS patients. He also believed in and advocated for giving clean needles to drug users to curb infection, a measure resisted by many state and local officials.

Nicholas was a very passionate, vocal and committed leader—many times working from his sickbed—who

advocated for policy and program changes to make sure that the city's response to the epidemic was well funded, organized, comprehensive and inclusive—a model for many health departments in the USA.

Philip Reed (1949-2008)

Philip Reed was the first openly gay black member of the City Council, as well as its first openly HIV+ member. He became positive to HIV in 1981, at the beginning of the epidemic, which propelled him to become an HIV advocate. For many years, he served on the HIV Planning Council, which advises New York City on the disbursement of federal funds received under the Ryan White AIDS Care Act. He made sure that adequate funding was available for Medicaid and new HIV medications and nutritional supplements.



He also did work with the Harvey Milk High School, a public school administered by the Hetrick-Martin Institute, serving LGBT and questioning youth.

Although HIV/AIDS was an important cause for Phil, he championed asthma prevention legislation; responding to the needs of his district which had some of the highest rates of the disease in the state. Moderate and low income housing for New Yorkers was priority to him and he passionately

advocated for the city to stimulate the development of affordable housing. He also spoke passionately against the random searches of black men known as racial profiling and served on the public safety committee overseeing the police, where he helped draft the Blueprint for Reform to improve police training and recruitment.

Willis Green Jr. (1948 – 1998)

bold

Willis Green was a professional social worker and a nationally known advocate for people with AIDS. In 1994, after working for the city's government, he took charge of a small neighborhood organization in Harlem and transformed it into the largest AIDS-care provider above 96th Street. Today, we know that organization as Harlem United.

Willis was a firm believer that providing social and medical services in a coordinated and holistic manner—under one roof—would facilitate the delivery of services that would allow African-Americans and Latinos living with HIV/AIDS thrive. Under his guidance, Harlem United gave Harlem its first adult daytime treatment center financed by New York State. It provides preventive, diagnostic and medical services.

Willis increased the agency's outreach, education and prevention programs, and diversified its services. He recognized the power and influence of the churches in Harlem, and was successful in getting their leadership on board to allow HIV/AIDS education to be shared with their congregations.

He also advocated for communities of color to develop their own prevention and education programs, and Harlem United became a national leader in the design and execution of culturally sensitive and relevant campaigns.

He was a fighter that defended the right of people of color to have access to quality services and care.

Yolanda Serrano (1948-1993)

fearless

Yolanda Serrano shocked the government authorities in 1988 when she defied a New York State law banning the unauthorized use of needles and syringes. She distributed clean needles and syringes to drug addicts who were infecting themselves with the virus that causes AIDS through the sharing of contaminated needles.

Her advocacy put pressure that led to a pilot needle-exchange program by the New York City Department of Health. Mayor David N. Dinkins stopped the program shortly after taking office in 1990, because he thought that the program might encourage drug use and send the wrong message to young people.

Undeterred by Mayor Dinkins decision, Serrano's nonprofit organization, ADAPT, or the Association for Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment, continued to defy state law by giving out clean needles to addicts, and the police rarely interfered. She and volunteers from Act Up and the Gay Men's Health Crisis visited alleys and abandoned buildings frequented by drug users, seeking to educate addicts and get them to exchange their used needles for clean ones.

For 10 years she worked as a substance abuse specialist at Long Island College Hospital, where she saw the initial devastation of the AIDS epidemic in the early 1980's. Her concern about drug abuse grew from that experience.

Got **Amida Care?**

Get Meds **FREE**

To help you
Quit



✓ **Nicotine Medications**

✓ **Chantix**

✓ **Zyban**

Are Alcohol And/Or Drugs Making Your Life Unmanageable?

AMIDA CARE CAN HELP!

Your Amida Care benefits include treatment for chemical dependency. Call us today to find out what services are available to you.

Amida Care Behavioral Health
1-866-752-5443 or
1-646-786-8650



**You deserve to be
healthy and happy!**

5 things to know about HIV testing

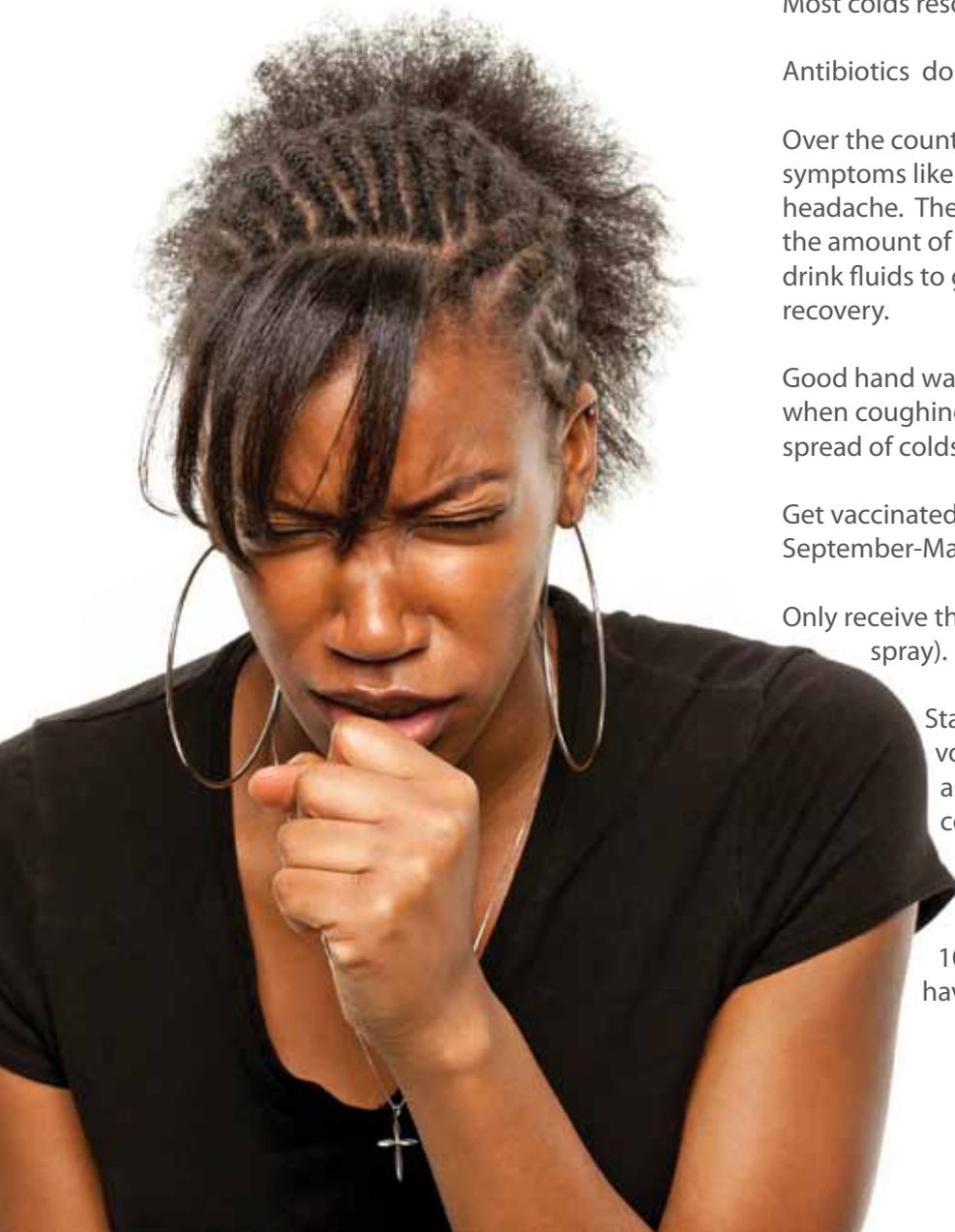
HIV testing laws were changed last year. These changes were made to make HIV testing easier and get more people tested. Many NYC residents do not know their HIV status. Here are 5 things to know about HIV testing in New York:

- 1** All people between 13 and 64 years old need to be offered an HIV test by their doctor. This test can be done at a doctor's visit, an emergency room or in the hospital.
- 2** Patients can give verbal consent to do a rapid HIV test.
- 3** Patients must provide written consent for HIV test if the results will not be ready within an hour.
- 4** Written consent can be part of a general consent for regular medical care.
- 5** Any New York City resident can get a free HIV test at one of the Health Department's STD or TB clinics. For a complete list of locations throughout the city, call 311 or visit www.nyc.gov/health/hivtesting.

Early diagnosis of HIV improves health outcomes. **If you or someone you know doesn't know their status please get tested.**

10 Things We Should Know About The Flu!

As cold weather approaches and we find ourselves indoors more, we tend to get sick more often. Here are 10 things to know about colds and the flu:



Colds and the flu are caused by viruses.

You can get a cold or the flu by touching someone or something that has a cold virus on it and then touching yourself. You may also inhale the droplets of virus when someone coughs or sneezes.

Most colds resolve within 7-12 days.

Antibiotics do not help with colds or the flu.

Over the counter medications will help with symptoms like runny nose, cough, sore throat and headache. These medications will not decrease the amount of time you are sick. Get rest and drink fluids to give your body the best chance for recovery.

Good hand washing and covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing help decrease the spread of colds/flu.

Get vaccinated every year for the flu (between September-March.)

Only receive the flu shot and not flu mist (intranasal spray). The flu shot cannot give you the "flu."

Stay home if you have fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cough, sore throat as viruses are spread easily in close contact with others.

Call or visit your health care provider if you have fevers over 101.5, have difficulty breathing or have wheezing, or develop facial pain.

You Have The Right To Be Treated With Dignity And Respect



Does someone close to you ...

- Push or hit you?
- Humiliate you in public?
- Control your money?
- Tell you who to see, what to wear, what to do?
- Threaten to hurt you?
- Force you to have sex?
- Keep you from seeing friends and family?
- Threaten to report you to immigration officials?
- Threaten to take your children?

You might be in an
abusive relationship.

Help is available to Amida Care members.

Talk to your primary care provider or
case manager about what is going on.
You can change things and there are
people here to help you.

Emergencies, call 9-1-1

**NYC Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-621-HOPE (4673)**

**Amida Care Domestic Violence Coordinator:
Nicole Mylan @ 1-646-786-1800**

**Member Services
1-800-556-0689**



Most of the art comes from art therapy programs within our sponsor's ADHC sites. These groups are lead by an Art Director/Therapist trained to teach/guide individuals who want to expand their horizons artistically through drawing, painting, sculpture, photography and/or any media offered by the site. Each year, Amida Care offers a Live Your Life event focused on art therapy so that all members have access to an art therapist and facilitator.

The 2012 Art Calendar is Here!

Once a year we prepare for one of our most exciting events, the Amida Care Calendar Art Contest. Members of Amida Care and clients attending AIDS Adult Day Health Care programs (ADHC) are eligible to submit their artwork. This year we received over 160 entries from members and ADHC clients. Our office was bursting with beautiful art!

On October 20th, our Member Advisory Council (MAC) came together to review and select the winning art to be included in our gorgeous calendar 2012. Here are some photos of the occasion.





The art for our calendar is selected by the Amida Care Member Advisory Council (MAC) which is comprised of sixteen members. Their role is to judge the art in a fair and impartial manner. The judging is done in a three round process as follows:

- 1st round: all MAC members select art that best represents life, healing and/or our mission.
- 2nd round: selection of art pieces with the most votes; and
- 3rd round: selection of fourteen art pieces that earned the most votes. The top two images with the most votes will represent the front and back calendar covers; the remaining twelve images will represent January through December.



The calendar raises awareness about the Plan and its membership, and includes important tips and reminders about health promotion and preventative strategies. Also, it allows our members to tell part of their story of moving forward to health and healing, and through their artistic abilities, share their experience with others.

You can get your 2012 calendar at your ADHC site, your doctor's office or clinic. Also, you can call Member Services at 1-800-556-0689 and request a copy.

Please visit our website for a listing of ADHC programs: www.amidacareny.org/adhc.htm

Holiday “Survival Tips”

The holidays can wear you out. This is especially true for people living with HIV/AIDS. Not only do you have to worry about the usual stressors of your health and medications and finances, but you are often asked to take on many other responsibilities such as activities and celebrations.

The following are a few suggestions for eating better, managing fatigue and stress, maintaining an exercise program and remembering the spiritual reasons for the season.

1 **Eating Better:** Proper nutrition over the holidays is always a challenge. It is not so much that the food is not nutritious but that there is too much of it. For years, people with HIV/AIDS didn't worry about the weight gain. In fact we actually encouraged it. However, we know better now. We know that many people living with HIV/AIDS can gain too much weight as well as the wrong kind of weight – fat.

It is also known that thanks to the medications, many people with HIV/AIDS are developing secondary complications such as high cholesterol, high triglycerides, high blood sugar (due to insulin resistance), as well as high blood pressure, kidney complications and liver disease. This does not mean that you are not allowed to go to parties and dinners and eat and have a good time. It means you should try very hard to limit your fat and sugar intake as well as limit your portion sizes.

2 **Avoiding Fatigue:** Is it even possible to avoid fatigue? In people with HIV/AIDS the answer to that question is going to range from yes for some people to never for others, with most being someplace in between. The best advice I can give you is to eat right, exercise, get plenty of rest and to monitor your fatigue and energy level and then do what is necessary to keep yourself healthy and happy. It might be helpful if you plan ahead so that you can limit your exertions and avoid getting too tired. You may have to plan to excuse yourself from a party early so that you can go home and get to bed.

You may have to limit the number of parties and functions you go to. You could ask the host if there is a place you could lay down for a little while if necessary. Limiting or avoiding alcohol, cigarettes, and other recreational drugs will also help you to manage your fatigue. You may want to avoid gatherings that are incredibly stressful for you. It can also be helpful to learn how to say “no.” When you have HIV/AIDS, it is very easy to overextend yourself, physically as well as financially. It is not selfish to say “no,” but rather an act of self-preservation.



3 Exercise: Exercise is one of the first activities sacrificed during the holidays, whether or not you have HIV/AIDS. Why is that? Well for one thing many people see exercise as being kind of an extra. If they have time then they will exercise. In reality, for most Americans, it should really be viewed as a necessity, especially if you have any medical conditions such as HIV/AIDS. It becomes even more important if you have medication-related issues such as high cholesterol, high triglycerides, high blood sugar, and lipodystrophy/lipoatrophy.

For most people exercise should be just as important as eating, sleeping and brushing your teeth. Be patient with yourself and do not get frustrated. Do not overextend yourself. Most important of all is to remember that doing something is better than doing nothing at all. You are better off doing a short workout then missing it completely.

4 Stress Management: Stress is a major problem over the holidays as well. It is also a puzzle as to why this time of year causes so much stress and mental anguish when it should be a time of fun and joy and togetherness. Well, okay, maybe it's not really such a puzzle. There are often too many bad memories of holidays past, there are people we don't want to be around, and the holidays are expensive. They are expensive for everyone but if you are on a fixed income or most of your disposable income goes to pay medical bills or for medications, then the cost of the holidays can become stressful.

When you have HIV/AIDS, it is important to try to keep the stress out of your life at all times but especially over the holidays. Stress has a tendency to weaken your immune system and make you more susceptible to injury and illness. It is possible to limit your activities. If you feel you have to go to various functions, whether they are work-related or with family or friends, then find a way to control how much time you have to spend there. One way to help with the financial stresses is to get creative



and make some cards and gifts for your friends and family. It can be as simple as baking some treats to getting out your needle and thread and making ornaments or some other kind of decoration. Some crafts and homemade gift ideas take some planning ahead so that you actually have time to make them.

5 Remember the Spiritual: It does not matter what your religious beliefs (or non-beliefs) are. Find a way to explore the reasons we as a society have been celebrating the winter holidays and why these holidays are important to you. Living with HIV/AIDS often brings many people back to their spiritual roots. Only you can decide what you feel and believe. Take the time to meditate on the season and what it means to you as you continue to live with HIV/AIDS.

The holidays will bring loads of food, fun, fatigue, stress and the lack of exercise. How you choose to deal with each of these issues will play a role in how you enjoy the holidays. It is important to eat right, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and manage your stress level to make the most of your holidays and come out healthier than ever. Make the most of the holidays and enjoy yourself, your family, your friends and your co-workers. Remember the best revenge on HIV/AIDS is living not only a good long time, but living a good healthy time.

*Taken from: The 30-Day Mad Dash of December,
By Glenn R. Preston From Body Positive
Source: <http://www.thebody.com/content/art31124.html>*

Q&A with Amida



Q I used to get the testing strips for my blood glucose (blood sugar) monitor at the pharmacy with my Medicaid card. How can I get them now?

A The Amida Care pharmacy benefit includes certain medical supplies such as blood glucose monitors and testing strips, dressing supplies (bandages), nebulizers and humidifiers. Please remember that you will need a prescription from your provider in order to have these supplies covered. The prescription should include the diagnosis code that explains why the medical supply or equipment was ordered.

Q How can I get a 90 day supply of my medications?

A The retail pharmacies will provide up to a 30 day supply of medications. If you are taking maintenance drugs, you may be able to obtain a 90 day supply by utilizing Express Scripts mail order pharmacy option. You can enroll in Mail order by calling: (877) 512-3545. Please note: HIV meds and controlled substances such as narcotics (pain medicine) cannot be filled via mail order.

Q Does Amida Care cover compression stockings? (also called support hose or surgical stockings)

A Due to recent Medicaid changes, Amida Care will cover these only for the following two conditions:

- Open venous stasis ulcers – these are open wounds caused by poor functioning of the veins in the leg
- Severe varicosities (enlarged veins) and edema (swelling) during pregnancy only. Please be sure that your provider includes the diagnosis code on your prescription if you have either of these conditions.





Q I still don't have my new ID card. What should I do?

A Despite our best efforts to get all members their new cards, some are still being returned to us as "undeliverable" by the postal service, even though you've verified the address. Please call us if you don't have a card and we can arrange to have it ready for you to pick up at one of our offices or at your provider's office. Remember you can still get your medications at the pharmacy by providing the following information for Amida Care's coverage by Express Scripts.

- **RxBin 003858**
- **RxPCN A4**
- **RxGRP KJFA**

The pharmacist will need to confirm that you're a member of Amida Care.

Q Does Amida Care cover custom orthotics (shoe inserts) or orthopedic shoes?

A Due to recent Medicaid changes, Amida Care will pay for these only for the following conditions:

- Children under 21 years of age to correct, adjust for or prevent physical deformity or loss of movement in a diseased or injured part of the ankle or foot, or to support a weak or deformed structure of the ankle or foot.
- Shoes attached to a leg brace.
- As part of a comprehensive diabetic treatment plan to treat amputation, or pre-ulcerative calluses, or peripheral neuropathy (nerve damage).

If you have any questions or need our assistance at any time, please call us at 1-800-556-0689 or send us an email at member-services@amidacareny.org



Amida Care Member Life Celebration Party!

Friday, January 20, 2012

6:00pm – 9:00pm

1199 SEIU Hall

310 West 43rd Street, NYC 10036

**Be on the lookout for our announcement with
complete details for this exciting evening of fun and celebration.**

Save The Dates

February

Aromatherapy - February 16 and 23, 2012

Location: TBA

March

Praise and Dance - March 14 and 21, 2012

Location: TBA

April

Medicine Necklace - April 19 and 26, 2012

Location: TBA

May

Juicing For Life - May 17 and 24, 2012

Location: TBA

June

Fire on the Dance Floor - Salsa Dancing Classes

June 21 and 28, 2012

Location: TBA

July

Jazz it is! An evening of Smooth Jazz,

Live Performers

July 19 and 26, 2012

Location: TBA

**Remember to visit our website www.amidacareny.org
for up-to-date information on the next Live Your Life Event**