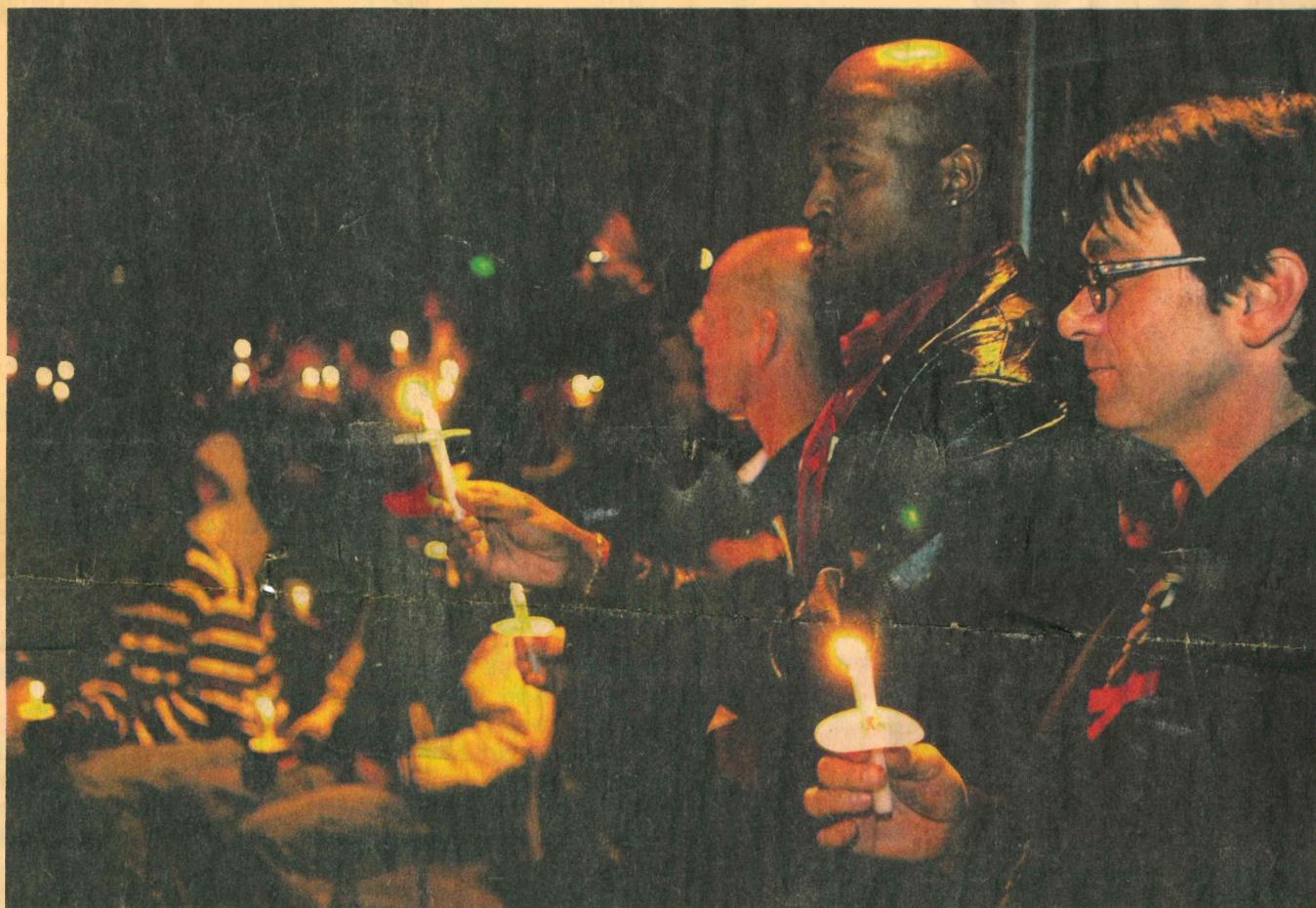


Pledges of abstinence, help on World AIDS Day



Scott Bryant/Savannah Morning News

CANDLELIGHT VIGIL: Attorney Robert Bush of Georgia Legal Services, far right, and Mark Douglas, executive director of the local HIV/AIDS education and prevention center My Brothaz HOME Inc., spoke at and participated in last night's World AIDS Day Vigil at Forsyth Park. About 200 people, including several local elected officials, attended the event sponsored by the Chatham-Effingham AIDS Coalition.

BY THE NUMBERS: About **40 million people** worldwide are infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Some **3 million** of them are expected to die of AIDS this year. In the United States, more than **1 million** Americans are believed to be living with HIV/AIDS. In 2003, an estimated **18,000** people died from AIDS.

INSIDE: Thousands marched in anti-AIDS rallies Thursday in India's plagued northeast, while China rolled out a campaign targeting millions of migrant workers to mark World AIDS Day. In Indonesia, the head of UNAIDS criticized the country's leaders for not taking a more active role in combating the disease before it becomes a major epidemic. **6A**

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October 18, 2017

Ms. Patricia Collier
12350 Mercy Blvd, Apt 372
Savannah, GA 31419

Dear Ms. Collier:

The purpose of this letter is to confirm the work that was done on your behalf by Mr. Adam Walters, the Pro Bono attorney to whom your case was assigned a Pro Bono attorney to assist in your TPO hearing. However, due to the hurricane, the attorney was unable to attend the rescheduled hearing. Therefore, both you and the AP agreed to a mutual order signed by the Judge. *That attorney has reported to us that your case has been completed. The work that was done for you was to obtain attorney representation at the TPO hearing.* *assigned*

The attorney handled your case on a Pro Bono or non-compensated basis. This is because the attorney takes seriously the responsibility all attorneys have to make sure legal services are available to those unable to afford them. Without the attorney's assistance, we would not have been able to provide you with this service. While you may have already done so, it is important to thank the attorney for the work done.

This completes the work Georgia Legal Services agreed to do on your behalf and I will be closing your file in this office at this time. Georgia Legal Services Program destroys files seven (7) years after the date of closure.

Enclosed is a Client Satisfaction Survey which I hope you will take a moment to complete and mail back to this office in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Your answers will assist us in serving you better in the future. If you have any questions or concerns in the future, I hope you will not hesitate to contact this office.

Sincerely,

Ruth Ann Dutton
Pro Bono and Outreach Coordinator

Enclosures: (2)
RAD:bjd



Keynote Speech: World AIDS Day 1995

by: Robert Bush

Three years ago, I spoke here about my buddy Henry who had recently died of AIDS. I described him as curmudgeonly. AIDS had made him perpetually pissed and often unreasonable.

Months later, after my friend Barry died and my friend Brent was in serious decline, I was curmudgeonly. I'd argue with my bank teller, the phone company, store clerks with the slightest provocation.

I even accused an IRS examiner of being impolite.

I was probably the best attorney that I have ever been during those few months.

I see a lot of you out there who have experiences with AIDS. Whether you are HIV positive, someone you know is HIV positive, or you work in an HIV-related field, you probably have experienced the isolating anger that I speak of.

Nothing seems sensible. You can't make sense of the suffering and no one seems as concerned as you.

AIDS isolates you. It strands you.

It forces you out onto the philosophical ledge where your choices seem as desperate as "give up" or "not give up."

You toy around the tattered edges of reason trying to make sense of the scenario it presents to you.

And it's a dispiriting scenario.

I have seen AIDS take away birth families, leaving society to deal with the orphaned young whose lives will be shaped in the crucible of loss and insecurity.

I have seen those children trying to evade the question of how their mother is doing by answering "Fine," even though she has already passed.

I have seen a heartbroken mother bathing her adult son with weary arms after days of no sleep.

I've attended funerals where absent parents passed up the chance to make a final peace with their child.

I've seen the pained expression of a mother as she steals a concerned glance at her pre-teen daughter who is not yet symptomatic.

Make no mistake about it, AIDS is a story of suffering.

It is not a morality play for bonehead ministers to manipulate to secure the approval of their congregation.

It's not a test balloon sent up to educate and instruct as to what really matters in life.

It is a real-life, day-to-day occurrence that tears down lives, systems, and families.

That deconstruction is what all of us here tonight share. That anger.

That struggle with hopelessness.

And, ultimately, we share the realization that we are connected by that suffering.

And the next step is realizing that, regardless of the suffering, we are interconnected. We all have a stake in the well-being of each other.

As a society, we resist assimilation. We look for differences, not with the desire to accept and integrate them, but with fear and distrust of them. We chain ourselves to responses dictated by stereotypical beliefs because we fail to make efforts

to understand others:

If they're HIV positive and male, they're gay; if they're female, then they're promiscuous or a drug user. If they are a drug user then they are BAD.

Many in our ranks seem to carry the suspicion that people deserve their suffering. They fail to realize that, sometimes, really bad things happen to good people.

Until we recognize how our privilege has shaped us, we will not be able to understand those who didn't have it. We should stop taking total credit for ourselves as if we scripted every successful moment of our lives and realize that we were fortunate to have circumstances and individuals that steered us toward that success.

Let's place credit where credit is due, and then try just as hard to understand the shaping forces in other's lives.

Then we'll understand how shame and suppression resulting from the tyranny of unexamined opinion contribute to the spread of HIV. If we refuse to educate ourselves about others' situations, if we allow ourselves to remain participants in the weighty judgmentalism of the uninformed majority, then we are as much a part of the spread of HIV as the direct behavior which transmits it.

Which means that we can do something about it.

And here is where I had the most trouble with this speech.

My topic is "AIDS and the Family," and yet I've hardly mentioned the word "family."

But I refused to insult you with some trite comparison of society as one large, family.

I'm not going to ask you to hold hands, and I am not going to try to pressure you to think of the person next to you in warm, fuzzy terms as your "brother" or "sister."

Because it's not like that.

We are a family. Every one of you and I are a family. But the word "family" takes on a different meaning when it's defined by the virtues that it represents.

We are a family that has been forged in the crucible of loss and we realize what remains after the loss. We share a sobering but realistic view of what life is about and there's not much room in that perception for Hallmark-trite expressions of strangers bonding.

AIDS hasn't engendered in me--nor in anyone else I know--an indiscriminate love of people whom I wouldn't have loved before.

It hasn't enlarged my Christmas card list.

It has, however, opened my eyes to the true nature of love and commitment. It has burned away the affectations that prevent many relationships from being truly honest.

You learn that you cannot truly show love to someone without acceptance. That judgment truly is better left to the Higher Power, and that we as a community need to focus on simply responding to the needs of the persons with whom we share this community.

Our family.

And, to quote a recently adopted son of Savannah: Family is as family does.

We will shoulder our losses together, and our family will grow

with the losses.

And when you see someone reaching out from that same stupor of anger, hurt, and loneliness, embrace them with your acceptance.

Blanket them with your understanding. Show them love without judgment.

Because if there's one thing we have learned from this disease, it's that, like family, we can support each other.

I have been a caregiver to persons with AIDS for some time now. It all started when I called Brandi at Phoenix Project to volunteer to provide certain legal services to HIV+ individuals. But my initiation really kicked in last Christmas day, when I was at Phoenix Place. I had volunteered to cook my traditional turkey chili for the guys--which, actually wasn't traditional, but I could cook it in one pot, so it seemed a good idea. Anyway, that's the day I met Henry. He had come to Phoenix Place from South Carolina. He didn't know anybody there, he wasn't even certain that he wanted to be there, but there was nowhere else for him to go. His family would not accept him into any of their households. Henry and I hit it off; we became buddies. Not long after I began spending time with Henry, I realized that I'd had no real idea what it meant to assume the responsibility of assisting someone disabled by AIDS. It wasn't more burdensome than I'd expected, just more unpredictable. There were surprise hospital stays during which I sat w/Henry, and trips to the PO to get his food stamps. There was the time we went to CLary's for breakfast and we didn't realize that H still had on his bedroom slippers--which is either one better or one worse than the time we went to Kroger and he had only one bedroom slipper on. As the disease slowly robbed Henry of his lucidity he desperately attempted to grip more tightly to reality and he became more irascible. Henry was very handsome. He'd pursued a career in modelling and he had very strong ideas about how people should dress. He also made it very clear that he had very strong ideas about how I should dress. He also had very strong opinions on my driving skills, my intermittent punctuality,

and my inability to remember what he thought he'd said the minute before. I was caretaking a curmudgeon. But, you know, I wouldn't trade my time with Henry for anything. During those times when he wasn't scared out of his mind because of his disease he was extraordinarily sensitive and sweet. He wanted somehow to repay me for the time I spent with him. He gave me the cookies which his sisters had sent him; he insisted on paying for breakfast when he could. And he always wanted to make sure that things were going well for me in my relationship and in my work.

Henry was my introduction into community volunteerism. As a community we need to embrace and accept those who have been infected by the HIV virus, but we are branding them with a stigma that guarantees their exclusion. The state Dept of Human Resources has recently passed a regulation requiring doctors and medical personnel who test patients for the HIV virus to report to the state the names of those individuals who test positive. This measure will not succeed in stemming the spread of the HIV virus because it overlooks a very basic and daunting obstacle: the stigma to which those who test positive are subjected.

You can see this stigma mirrored in the community. One of my good friends went to apply for disability on the basis of his HIV status, and after the social worker completed his application she gave him her pen to sign it, and then, once he'd finished, she fastidiously reached over, picked up the pen and threw it into the trash can.

On a local news program recently, a preacher said he was outraged that schools ^omy begin teaching safe sex over _A

abstinence; Jesus just wouldn't approve. But every 60 seconds in the US, a teenage girl gets pregnant; every 30 seconds a teenager contracts a sexually transmitted disease. Jesus, didn't PREACH to the terminally ill and the excluded, he MINISTERED to them. He rolled up his sleeves and tended to the needs of such individuals and he said "Go and do likewise!" How many meals do you think that preacher has cooked for Phoenix House? How much money has he contributed to assist AIDS-infected individuals? Do you think that he's ever intentionally touched or held someone who is HIV+? Our children need to grow up in a community where people are enlightened about AIDS. Especially our spiritual leaders. Our children MUST grow up with the practical knowledge of how to save their own lives during those periods that they are questioning their own moral certainty.

What are the results of this lack of education about AIDS? Many AIDS patients don't seek medical treatment until well in the late stages of the disease because of fear of discrimination and mistreatment. Often, HIV-infected individuals live in denial until some dire health problem forces them to reveal their status by seeking treatment. I see this in my legal practice. Though my clients come to me to seek legal assistance, I find myself recommending psychiatric counselling--usually to individuals who should have sought it long ago--as well as plugging clients into treatment information networks and support groups.

We must realize that we cannot be a community if we don't integrate what we consider unpleasant aspects of our society. Anyone who is or has been a caretaker for an AIDS patient realizes

that we all are implicated in this saga. I have seen what it means to have to depend upon the support and sensitivity of strangers. That position is one that none of us would choose. But we all are potentially subject to it.

Once you have been a caregiver to a friend or acquaintance with AIDS you recognize that AIDS debilitates society as surely as it debilitates the individuals who suffer from it. I find myself angry at people who are ignorant about AIDS, and then I realize that I used to be as ignorant. I used to share the same fears about infection through casual contact, I used to think that it would never touch my world. But my friends Henry, and Janet, and Tom, and others have educated me. Now the disease has a face for me. And only now do I understand that fears and prejudices have caused our community to break down. We are denying our grace to people who suffer from this disease because we are scared or because we feel our own moral senses threatened. Community is about compassion and it is about support. So what can we do? Volunteerism is a way to educate yourself about AIDS. You can answer the AIDS Hotline; you can drive someone to the doctor; you can volunteer for the buddy program; you can hold a baby with AIDS. Or you can simply get the facts so that you know that your own opinions about HIV and AIDS issues are informed. There are tasks which can be accomplished and fit around any family or work schedule.

I asked my friend Janet who has AIDS what it was that she most wanted me to say today. She said to ask you to be willing to listen to people who have AIDS, and to show them love and

acceptance. Another friend told me that he would want me to speak to individuals who already are HIV+ or who have AIDS and to tell them that they have nothing that they should be ashamed of, that they shouldn't be embarrassed for having the disease. Neither of my friends mentioned anything about the provision of health services or political issues. Their overriding concern was to ask their community for simple acceptance.

And we can't assume that that acceptance will be forthcoming. On September 2, I was called out to hospice because Henry was not doing well. I expected to arrive, visit w/Henry and to wait w/ his family. When I got there, there was only a priest in the room with him. After assuring himself that I would sit w/Henry, the priest left. Henry could no longer speak except through an isolated tear or two running down his nose and onto his sheets. His eyes were locked open and he couldn't blink. His lungs were filling with fluid and with every labored breath they gurgled like water in a drainpipe. I sat beside him, holding his hand, talking to him about the times that we had spent together. Lamely trying to reassure him, I told him things would be alright. Finally, after hours of pained breathing and choked attempts to speak, Henry's body jerked twice very slightly and he was dead. And I was the only person with him. Just me. No family, no other friends. Maybe they were uneducated about AIDS to the point where they were frightened or ashamed. The point is they weren't there.

I see the faces of many of you out there who have had similar experiences. Some of you have lost numerous friends and loved ones. And I, like you probably do, try daily to understand the

significance of all this and I try to fit my experiences with AIDS into some ordered form of meaning or understanding. I feel as if I am in the middle of the stream of life, and, I don't like it, very often. It can be overwhelming. I feel that I have seen life at its cruelest and people at their worst. But I have also seen people at their best. And, at times, I am absolutely in awe of what this disease has revealed to me through my friends who are suffering from it and through the people I work with in addressing it.

By embracing those in our community who are HIV+ we can begin to benefit from their unique perspective. My friend Tom who has AIDS speaks of the disease this way: At some point those who have AIDS realize that it is a double-edged sword; the sword that kills them also reveals to them the beauty and mystery of life. You learn to appreciate and enjoy each day and it gives you the chance to revel in life. This realization of the preciousness of life convinces you more that we should fight to preserve it.

LOOK TO THE PEOPLE BESIDE YOU, WHOEVER THEY ARE--

TAKE THEIR HANDS

RAISE THEM

This is all it takes. Thank you.

VOICES

opinions

POINT OF VIEW



ROBERT BUSH

Home, sweet home

Today is the one-year anniversary of the purchase of my home.

One year ago today, I rushed home from my attorney's office and toasted wine with my neighbors, Joe and Millie, and Scott, my best friend from law school who happened to be visiting at the time.

We snapped instant photos and ate leftover Christmas candy.

The closing had gone smoothly, despite the seller's insistence on including everything from the bathroom towel hooks to the backyard topsoil in the bargaining.

I was able to hang on to the topsoil.

The days leading up to the closing were tumultuous.

Nothing, NOTHING can prepare you for the arduous and bureaucratic process of buying a home.

NOTHING, I tell you!

I made so many phone calls to former employers, credit agencies, insurance providers, and my loan officer that my phone bill was nearly as high as my impending mortgage payment. For two months, I lived a double life. I labored during the daylight hours to satisfy the demands of my potential lender, and by night, I caught up with my job.

Now, these lender demands were not ordinary. And there were DEMANDS, not requests.

My loan officer, Lena, knew that until my loan was approved, I was at her mercy.

So she abused her position: "Robert! Robert! We need your third-grade dental records in five minutes!"

"Five minutes?!"

"Four and a half now. And we need a certified copy, not just a Xerox."

Someone on her end snickered.

"Oh, and it has to be stamped with a seal by the receptionist in your dentist's office, BUT it must be the receptionist who worked there when you received the services."

"But I..." I tried to stammer a response.

The people on the other end were giggling now.

"Lena, I'm with a client, and..."

"...left-handed."

"What?"

"The stamp has to be a left-handed stamp!"

Giggles tore into the end of her demand and she lost her composure and dropped the receiver.

Apparently, my agitation was not well-disguised, because when I looked over at my client she was inching toward the doorway.

"No, please! It's not you..." I pleaded. "I mean, I'm not dangerous. To you! To anybody, I mean! It's just that..."

Damn! I could hear belly laughs as Lena fumbled for the dropped receiver.

Of course, I had to deliver on these demands, but I burned several bridges during the process of the purchase. Regardless of how friendly you are with the secretaries of old employers or with the personnel of your bank, they will go only so far to prepare and send — and often, resend — loan documents.

But look what I have to show for it.

A home.

MY home.

A large, wooden structure with outdated plumbing and electricity, that leaks heat and air and which will require a paint job soon.

The American dream.

Robert Bush is a Savannah attorney. His column appears each week in *EDGE*.

VOX POPULI

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

I would like to suggest that Small World columnist John Hamilton Palmer add a bit more arrogance to his byline by changing his name to either John Hamilton Palmer IV or John Hamilton Palmer-Smythe. Thank you.

I just want to tell Brian O'Brien that it's James Garner, not James Gardner. Thank you.

Robert Bush — I'm against gun control, but that's not particularly why I'm calling. Before you voice opinions about things, learn a little bit more. Learn to show two sides to every story. Instead of talking about isolated incidents of morons with firearms in their hands, talk about the folks who have persuaded attackers and intruders in their homes with firearms. My parents and my sister were at home one evening late and a gentlemen helped himself to one of the butcher knives in our kitchen and went up to my sister's room. My mother, very effectively, persuaded this attacker with the use of a .38, registered and legal. You should look into more facts before you spew this liberal crap.

Is Robert Bush really that naive or stupid to believe that increased gun control laws are going to do anything to slow criminal acts or violent acts? I mean, let's get real.

God supposedly gave us all brains and the giant motor companies all make vehicles with turn signals. We seem to have an overabundance of idiots around here who use neither. Thank you.

I'm delighted that someone finally blew the whistle on public prayer in Savannah. Southerners have been brainwashed by religion for all too long. It's one of the things that have made them lag behind the rest of the country. Religion should be a strictly private matter.

This is a message to all those guys out there who take advantage of situations like New Year's Eve, where people are crowded in together so tightly they can barely move, to grab some unsuspecting girl's behind when they know there's no way she could possibly determine who did it. I just want to say: How dare you invade my personal space! To me, that's sexual harassment of the worst kind because you know there's nothing she can do about it. Well, you'd better be careful who you touch, guys, because the next time it happens to me, the first guy I see behind me is getting slapped in the face. I would advise all the other girls to do the same. It amazes me what a bunch of pathetic excuses for human beings will do for a cheap thrill. Oh, and one other thing — just because someone girl looks too good to be true, it doesn't necessarily mean that they're a drag queen. Thank you.

Robert Bush, in your Point of View, you need to comment about the police officer shooting the man with a knife. If you've never faced someone with a knife, don't be so judgmental.

Hi! I really like *EDGE*, except for one thing that really gets my goat. I'm reading an article and suddenly I have to jump to another page to finish the article. Can't you please print the entire article on one page? Thanks!

Got something you want to get off your chest?

Call 652-0370

24 hours a day and follow the instructions. We'll print your message in this space each week, edited just a little to make sure we don't get sued.

QUESTION: If you were mayor of Savannah and had absolute rule to do anything, what is the one thing you would change and why?



T.C. Pipkin
Savannah

"Positive goal orientation for the people through physical exercise. And a bike path to the beach (Tybee)."



Kate Rooks
Savannah

"I would do something for animals because it's the nice thing to do."



Tiffany Harris
Savannah

"Stop the damn carriage rides. I'm tired of being stuck behind a horse's ass."