

**HEALTHWIRE**

# PROTECTING TEENS FROM HIV/AIDS

**PART I**

As Jessie explains growing up, in and out of foster care, one can't help but be impressed by the optimism and warmth that colors her voice even as she mentions her Mother's death from AIDS, two years ago, as a result of drug use.

Jessie made the best out of very difficult circumstances. The foster care system led her to a small, suburban upstate town where she built a life much like any other bright, beautiful teenager. She became a high school cheerleader, dates the captain of the football team, and went straight to college after graduation.

She was shocked as any young woman would have been when she was diagnosed with the HIV virus at age 20.

Yet Jessie has turned even this experience into a gift of sorts by using her intellect and exuberant personality to educate other teens about the dangers of HIV and AIDS. She knows the importance of education

because she was infected through heterosexual sex, at about age 17, and she remembers that no one in the foster care system, at school, or at home told her to protect herself

with a condom.

To date, Jessie's work in programs for teens has lead her from Westchester, N.Y. to Washington, D.C., where she presented an award to President

Clinton, last month, to thank him for his declaration of National Pediatric AIDS Week.

Jessie understands what many parents, especially African American, Latino, Native

American and Asian American parents, need to learn — that she is only one of a dramatically increasing number of young people who are contracting HIV between the ages of 13 and 19.

As of 1993, 1,415 American teens had been diagnosed with AIDS. White teens, who are the majority of the American teen population, made up 42% of the cases. African American teens, who are only 15% of the teen population, were 37% of the cases (AIDS became the leading cause of death for African Americans 25-44). Latino teens, (See *Healthwire*, Page 21)

## HEALTH

### THE HEALTHCARE COALITION FOR NEVADA

\* Established in September 1993, the Healthcare Coalition For Nevada is a statewide coalition which represents more than 200,000 voters throughout Nevada.

\* The Healthcare Coalition For Nevada represents a diverse group, made up of business, democrats/republicans, educators, healthcare providers, hotel-casino employees and employers, independents, insurance brokers, labor, legislators, seniors, tax-payer

groups and more.

\* The group strongly supports the notion that all Americans should be given the opportunity to choose from a broad selection of high-quality, affordable health plans.

\* The Healthcare Coalition For Nevada believes that the status quo is unacceptable. It's mission strongly supports comprehensive healthcare system reform consisting of the following elements:  
 • **You Can't lose your**

**insurance.**

Insurance reform which requires guaranteed issue, renewal, and portability with no underwriting based on health or employment status.

• **Making insurance affordable and accessible to all.**

The ability to create voluntary purchasing co-operatives which allow individuals and small employers to purchase health plans at prices similar to large employers.

• **Allowing government to use managed care organizations for Medicaid.**

Mainstream and expand the

Medicaid population. Allow consumers to purchase private coverage through consolidation and simplification. Contain costs by allowing private enterprise to compete by offering high quality, lower cost healthcare packages.

• **Effective reform of medical malpractice laws.**

• **Free market system vs. government bureaucracy.**

Encourage a market-driven health delivery system which encompasses administrative simplicity, fairness and fiscal responsibility.

• The coalition is against a healthcare reform plan which includes global budgets,

government imposed price controls and mandatory or regulatory alliances.

\* The coalition opposes the Clinton Healthcare Plan for reasons including:

• **Healthcare rationing:** Price controls will underfund hospitals; services may be discontinued or limited.

• **Lost jobs/Wage freezes:** According to the International Mass Retail Association, the President's payroll tax will put 1.9 million small business jobs at risk. Price controls will threaten healthcare jobs and limit wage increases.

(See *Healthcare*, Page 21)

### CONGRESS PRESSURED BY AIDS WATCH '93 ACTIVISTS

AIDSWatch '94 could not have come at a better time. Pressure on members of Congress is of critical importance as the AIDS communities face formidable challenges in AIDS funding.

AIDSWatch '94 brought over 200 people from 14 organizations to Washington to do just that - influence and educate their members about specific concerns of people living with HIV/AIDS and pressure them to increase funding for all AIDS programs. Additionally, this year's AIDSWatch targeted key members on health care reform issues vital to people living with HIV/AIDS.

A particularly poignant point during a lobby visit at Senator Phil Gramm's (R-TX) office was a question posed to a staffer by a 12-year-old Texan with AIDS. The staffer, trying to defend the record of the senator and argue his good intentions, was asked by the young man, "What are

you waiting for?"

As part of AIDSWatch '94, a newly organized coalition of HIV-positive young people presented a manifesto to National AIDS Policy Coordinator Kristine Gebbie documenting specific concerns to young people. The document cites exclusion of HIV-positive young people in prevention planning, lack of a national outreach message targeted to young people, medical professionals unskilled in dealing with young people and the stigmatization and isolation

HIV-positive young people face as their major concerns followed by a long list of goals to be met by the coalition.



AIDSWatch participants from New Jersey Marion Banzhaf, Michelle Badger and Riki Jacobs.



**VEGAS INSTANT PAGE**

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