

# **Immediate Press release**

## **1<sup>st</sup> December World AIDS Day 2007**

### **Local Charity Staffordshire Buddies says** **“HIV: TALKING ALLOWED”**

The HIV Direct Services Manager for Staffordshire Buddies, the county-wide Charity providing support for those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS can confirm that in the last quarter the Charity has had 23 new referrals, almost double that for the same period in 2006.

Since it was established over 14 years ago, Staffordshire Buddies has supported a diverse range of people working throughout the County, the Charity has evolved to meet the needs of all service users – men, women and children – whatever their age, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, immigration status or religious belief.

Whilst treatment for HIV/AIDS is much more effective than in the past, there is still no cure, and the treatment itself can have unpleasant side effects. Also, as HIV is transmitted sexually and through drug use, those living with the infection are often subject to moral judgements by the general public. They are considered to have brought it upon themselves and often do not receive the understanding and support extended to those with other life-threatening illnesses.

It is hardly surprising then that the majority of service users at Staffordshire Buddies do not wish to go public about their status, but Maurice Greenham, who contracted HIV in 1984, has lived openly as an HIV positive gay man since his AIDS diagnosis ten years later.

Maurice understands perfectly well why most people who are HIV positive do not wish to disclose their status. He initially adopted the same attitude, in order to survive in an era when HIV often provoked hysterical, irrational public reactions. However, many years later Maurice was lucky to receive a positive response when he disclosed his status and this has given him the confidence to continue talking publicly about living with HIV and being actively involved in the work of Staffordshire Buddies. **This WAD 1<sup>st</sup> December Maurice will be involved in “Talking Allowed”**

**“HIV: Talking Allowed” is the theme Staffordshire Buddies has adopted for WAD 2007.**

Over the last few decades, HIV has gradually fallen off the agenda, and the general level of understanding about the virus is lower now than it was in the early 90s. The Charity believes that talking aloud about the HIV virus, knowing the facts about transmission and prevention, will help to dispel ignorance, eradicate fear and combat prejudice. Where talking is not allowed, prejudices may thrive, ignorance flourish, and risk-taking behaviour increase.

**Staffordshire Buddies will be supporting the following events taking place throughout the County on WORLD AIDS DAY, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2007:**

- **Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November, 9am till 9pm. Staffordshire Buddies display in the Potteries Shopping Centre, Hanley. Red ribbons and WAD literature being handed out.**
- **Friday 30<sup>th</sup> November, 7.30pm, Service at Lichfield Cathedral on the eve of Worlds AIDS Day  
“Facing the Challenge” Communities and Churches Responding to HIV/AIDS.**
- **Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> December, 9am till 4.30pm. Staffordshire Buddies display in the Potteries Shopping Centre, Hanley. Red ribbons and WAD literature being handed out.**
- **Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> December, 5.30pm, World AIDS Day Vigil in Fountain Square Hanley.**
- **Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> December, 7.45pm. Staffordshire Buddies and New Vic Borderlines WAD Production at the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle. An evening of entertainment, readings and performances.**
- **Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 6.30pm. World AIDS Day Service at St Peters Church, Stoke**
- **Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1pm. World AIDS Day Service at Keele Chaple, Keele University.**
- **Friday 30<sup>th</sup> Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> December (TBC) street collections will take place around Burton upon Trent and Lichfield town centre.**

**For more information and free downloads of WAD material visit [www.staffordshirebuddies.co.uk](http://www.staffordshirebuddies.co.uk)**

## **Important notes for the editor.**

**Please will you feature the events taking place in your local area. We are available to do interviews: live or recorded; provide further information or quotes where needed with prior notice. Please contact Sarah Beech (01782 201257) in the first instance.**