Introducing Erin Forrest
Your New HIV Social Work Case Manager

What kind of life experiences made you passionate about helping others?

I credit my artist, activist, and queer communities with shaping so much of who I am. Throughout my life, I’ve had incredible mentors and collaborators in projects ranging from free clinics to art installations, from self-defense workshops to neighborhood gardens, who have helped me understand the deep connections between individual and social health. Additionally, my life has been touched by the loss of loved ones due to HIV/AIDS, as well as substance use and overdose, and these experiences drew me to public health and harm reduction work early on. I first volunteered with a syringe exchange program in Oakland when I was 19, and their principles of honoring individual autonomy, meeting people “where they’re at” at all levels, and advocating for social justice, have guided my work ever since.

What brought you to work at West County Health Centers?

I moved to the area to attend a school for herbal medicine in Forestville. I am still studying with teachers from the school, offering my own classes, and working toward the creation of a collaborative mobile herb clinic. I grew up on the central California coast, but for most of my adult life, I’ve lived between the Bay Area and northern New Mexico. I studied and practiced art for many years and worked with a community art studio based at the Health Care for the Homeless agency in Albuquerque, where I also did social work/case management and harm reduction. Prior to moving to the Russian River, I worked with a syringe access program in San Francisco providing street-based services and supporting a peer educator program. From the moment I arrived in town, I loved the people and culture at West County Health Centers and wanted to work here. I am so excited to now have this opportunity!

What interests do you have outside of work?

I spend as much time as I can at the ocean with my cattle dog Elodie, and on other adventures with my dog and human friends. I love visiting my family and traveling, but this year I’ve been busy with building a small home on a friend’s property in the West County area. Whenever possible, I make herbal concoctions, write shy poems, and dream up art projects too.
AIDS Drug Assistance Program

What is ADAP?
ADAP is an acronym that stand for AIDS Drug Assistance Program. The funding for ADAP comes from the federal Ryan White Act of 2009 and is administered by the state of California. ADAP helps ensure that people living with HIV and AIDS in California who are uninsured or under-insured have access to medication.

ADAP funds may also be used to purchase health insurance for eligible clients and for services that enhance access to, adherence to, and monitoring of medical treatments.

ADAP will cover premiums through or for these programs:
1. OA-HIPP: The OA-HIPP (Office of AIDS Health Insurance Premium Payment) program is a subsidy program that will pay monthly health insurance premiums and certain out-of-pocket medical costs for ADAP-enrolled clients.
2. Covered California Insurance premiums: This is for medical insurance and dental insurance premiums. The premiums combined cannot be more than $1938.00 per month. If your premium(s) exceed this amount you may choose to have OA-HIPP pay up to this amount and you pay the difference, this is the partial payment agreement. This is for people who do not have any medical insurance. If you have Medicare or if you qualify for Medi-Cal you cannot apply for this program. The next open enrollment period for Covered California is 10/15/19 through 12/15/19.
3. EB-HIPP: Employer based insurance program. If you are paying your premiums through your paycheck, EB-HIPP will pay these premiums for you. Your employer will have to sign a participant agreement to take part in the program. It does not mention HIV anywhere on the agreement form. The only thing mentioned is “PAI”, which stands for Pool Administrators Incorporated. They handle all the insurance payments.
4. OA-HIPP Medicare: MediGap, Medicare Supplement program or Medicare Part C. OA HIPP will now cover these Gap programs. These programs cover the 20% that Medicare does not pay. Medicare Part D monthly premiums can also be paid through this program.
5. PrEP: Pre-exposure prophylaxis. For those at high risk for HIV, PrEP can significantly reduce your risk of HIV infection when taken daily. The PrEP-AP will now cover the cost of Truvada for the insured and the uninsured. You must first be enrolled in the ADAP program.

Please call Chris Hightower, 707-823-3166 Ext. 6428 if you have questions or would like to enroll in any of these programs.

Did you know that a pill a day can protect your partner(s) from getting HIV?

PrEP

For more information, talk to your doctor today.
Getting Started: How to Add Strength Training to Your Routine

If you knew that a certain type of exercise could benefit your heart, improve your balance, strengthen your bones, and help you lose weight, all while making you look and feel better, wouldn’t you want to get started? Well, studies show that strength training can provide all those benefits and more.

Strength training—also known as weight or resistance training—is physical activity designed to improve muscular fitness by exercising a specific muscle or muscle group against external resistance, including free-weights, weight machines, or your own body weight.

The benefits of strength training include increased metabolism, reduced risk of injury, increased bone density, suppleness of tendons and joints and stronger muscles for everything — from everyday life to all recreational activities. When strength training, aim to exercise each muscle group at least two times per week, with a minimum of two days of rest between workouts.

If you’re looking to add strength or resistance training to your routine, you have a lot of options. You definitely don’t need a gym membership or expensive weight machines. You can build strength using your body weight, rubber tubing, dumbbells or strength training machines. Unless you are an athlete with specialized needs, any of the above will do the trick. Squats, push-ups, planks, or other movements that require you to use your own body weight as resistance are very effective and can be done at home with minimal equipment required.

Ask your medical provider what type of strength training is best to meet your needs and abilities, or check out the American Council on Exercise’s Fitness Library: https://www.acefitness.org/education-and-resources/lifestyle/exercise-library/.

Who doesn’t want to look better, feel better, and live a longer, healthier life? Get started now with a complete workout program that includes strength training.

Baked Chicken Meatballs

INGREDIENTS:
1 large egg
1 lb. ground chicken, I like 93% lean
1/2 C. whole wheat panko breadcrumbs
1/3 C. finely grated Parmesan
1 T. extra-virgin olive oil
1 t. dried oregano
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 yellow onion, finely chopped
1/4 t. kosher salt
1/4 t. red pepper flakes
2 T. tomato paste, divided
3 T. flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

2 1/2 C. fresh spinach, lightly packed

FOR SERVING:
Tomato sauce
Cooked whole wheat pasta, zucchini, or other vegetable noodles
Buns, for sandwiches
Toothpicks, to serve as an appetizer

1. Place a rack in the upper third of the oven and preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Lightly coat a 9x13-inch baking dish or rimmed baking sheet with nonstick spray, or line with parchment paper.

2. Beat the egg in the bottom of a large bowl. Add the chicken, breadcrumbs, Parmesan, oregano, garlic powder, onion powder, salt, red pepper flakes, parsley, and 1 tablespoon tomato paste.

3. Finely chop the spinach so that it is in small bits, then add it to the bowl. With a fork or your hands, mix until well combined, being careful not to compact the meat. Shape the mixture into 12 meatballs and arrange in the prepared baking dish so that they do not touch. (Or make small meatballs for Italian wedding soup.)

4. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil and 1 tablespoon tomato paste. It won’t be perfectly smooth but will bake up just fine. Brush over the top of the meatballs.

5. Bake the meatballs in the upper third of the oven for 18 to 22 minutes, until cooked through. Serve hot with pasta, zucchini noodles, inside a hoagie bun, or any way you choose!

Nutrition News with Nina Redman

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Patient to Patient: 
Cancer Screening for people with HIV

Now that we have better HIV treatments, patients like you and I are living longer and healthier lives. However, as we live longer, we face a higher risk of developing cancers, particularly anal cancer.

In a recent study of over 25,000 patients\(^1\), it was found that HIV+ men who have sex with men (MSM) had 80 times more new cases of anal cancer than HIV- people. Another study demonstrated that HIV+ people (men and women) are 19 times more likely to be diagnosed with anal cancer, 3 times as likely to be diagnosed with liver cancer, 2 times as likely to be diagnosed with lung cancer, about 2 times more likely to be diagnosed with oral cavity/pharynx cancer, and about 8 times more likely to be diagnosed with Hodgkin’s lymphoma compared with the general population\(^2\). HIV+ cisgender women and transmen with a cervix also face a higher incidence of cervical cancer.

These are not just abstract statistics; we are seeing new cases of cancers, especially anal cancer, among our HIV+ patients in West County today.

I lost my partner due to anal cancer in 1998, and I’ve had pre-cancerous anal lesions removed over the last 15 years.

Anal and prostate cancers can be detected early with a simple in-office exam. WCHC is focusing on HIV+ Cancer Screening. The screening will be tailored for each patient’s risk for specific cancers.

Please make an appointment for a HIV+ Cancer Screening if any of these apply to you:

- Do you have anal itching, bleeding or lumps/bumps that aren’t related to hemorrhoids?
- Do you sometimes feel pain when you have a bowel movement?
- Has your HIV infection ever been poorly controlled (less than 200 T-cells) for a long time or developed into AIDS?
- Are you over 60 years of age?
- Do you have a history of smoking or are currently a smoker?
- Have you ever been a heavy alcohol drinker?
- Have you ever had a liver infection?

HIV+ Cancer Screenings require no advance preparation and can be completed quickly. WCHC HIV Care Teams look forward to providing you an exam—call to set up an appointment soon!

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Mark Short is a HIV+ patient and is West County Health Centers Ryan White Patient Advocate.