


Photography as a tool to help consumers achieve life goals

**Waterbury Hospital
Infectious Disease Clinic**


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Ryan White All Titles Meeting
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INTRODUCTION

- People living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) may not have the opportunity to identify interests, skills, and resources to live productive meaningful lives.
- Some have turned to substance abuse, experienced depression or anxiety, feeling powerless and hopeless.
- Now that HIV has become a chronic illness, many people have chosen to learn and develop positive life skills in order to overcome the burden of the disease.



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Purpose:
Using photography as a tool:

- To engage, motivate, and provide a positive atmosphere for the PLWHA at the Waterbury Hospital Infectious Disease Clinic (WHIC)
- To help them experience a learning process and a sense of fulfillment in the accomplishment of specific projects
- To take pride in the positive outcomes of the projects.

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Project Rationale:

- A PLWHA for 10 years on day said to me: "with AIDS I am not going to die but I need to get a life" yet did not have the skills to move in this direction.
- Along with 5 other PLWHA emerged the idea to create a photography group that will help them develop life skills and feelings of competence.

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Project Description:

- Participants had a introductory session addressing the project contract
- 5 digital cameras were obtained from the hospital
- the automatic features allowed the people to take quality pictures from the start which increased motivation and self esteem.
- Photoshop elements was used as a computer editing program.
- The quality surpassed expectations and the group was off and shooting.
- The first assignment was to take any pictures they wanted; family, neighbors, scenic views.

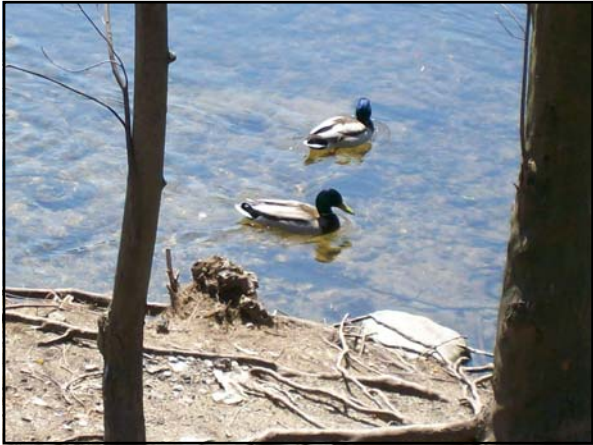
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Project Activities/Accomplishments:

- Day trip to Boston- Freedom Trail
- Donated Pictures to Hospital Fund Raiser Silent Auction (\$150)
- WHIC Christmas Card
- 3 Exhibits in the Hospital (\$800)
- The Hospital Administration met with the group and endorsed the project by publishing it in 2 hospital newsletter and magazine
- Group portraits for the hospital golf tournament
- 3 People had pictures selected for National Disability Arts Exhibit
- Pictures exhibited for a month at *Barnes & Noble*
- 3 Participants took photography classes at Naugatuck Valley Community College

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Pictures from participants emphasizing various composition techniques.







































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Outcomes:

1. Psychosocial Outcomes: Life Skills learned

- Positive Attitude
- Desire/Ambition
- Persistence
- Specialized knowledge
- Creativity
- Imagination
- Purpose/Goals
- Self-Discipline
- Achieving Excellence
- Teamwork
- Volunteering

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Outcomes:

2. Clinical Outcomes (12 months):

All 5 participants :

- are 100% compliant with HAART
- are Substance Abuse free
- showed 7 to 25 % improvement in their GAF score (Global Assessment of Function)
- had an increase in CD4 count and 4/5 an undetectable viral load

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Summary:

- The photography program provides direction for a meaningful, productive life to PLWHA
- Photography becomes the vehicle for people to gain life skills
- A consumer initiated project can become self supported and can achieve positive outcomes if planned and implemented appropriately

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Future plans:


- Wilby High School: As part of the WHHC Mentoring Program at Wilby High School one class will be participating in a photography project with the assistance of our consumers.
- Volunteer project: In order to expand their world past their own issues, volunteering at a local nursing home and the family homeless shelter are being explored.
- Photography Book: The best photographs from each person will be selected including a short narrative that expresses the meaning of the photograph.
- Note Cards: Quotations will be selected and added to photos on note cards, printed and made available for sale as fundraisers for program expenses.

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- Juana Clark: Director, Grants & Operations
- Waterbury Hospital Executive Management Team

Video Testimonies by Participants



Pam's Testimony

The Photography Program has helped me:

- Increase my self-esteem
- To get involved with other people
- To grow out my shyness toward others instead of sitting home doing nothing
- To participate in different group projects
- Gave me confidence to be able to do something with my life
- To get involved with activities
- To make something of myself
