



# ***NYS AIRS NOTES***

---

*New York State Alliance of Information and Referral Systems*  
*"Bringing People and Services Together"*

**December 2008**

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Once again we are coming to the end of one year and the start of another. At such transitions one is tempted to reflect on has passed and what is to come. This year such reflection is difficult.

I suppose the starting point would be to thank all of you who joined AIRS in the past year. As a result NYS AIRS had over 60 members our largest membership ever. I hope that all of you were able to utilize the benefits of membership and hope that you will continue as a member of your professional membership association of I&R providers. In addition, I ask you not to keep AIRS a secret. If you know of an agency or individual or agency that could benefit by being a member by all means let them know...share the wealth.

We held our 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Training and Education Conference at the Desmond in Albany in October. The event was well attended. There was one small problem though. Somehow we ended up with more workshops than we originally allocated time for. As there were so many valuable topics the conference committee opted to cut down on the time allowed for breaks so we could fit them all in. It meant that people had to rush around a bit but the feedback from conference evaluation forms (yes, we do read them) indicted the rushing was a small price to pay for the quality of the workshops. At this time I would like to thank our presenters for providing a valuable training experience for our members and guests. I would also like to offer a big thank you to those who donated to the friends of NYS AIRS Silent Auction. We raised a record amount of money as a result of your largess and may be able to expand our scholarship opportunities in the coming year. And while we are doing thank you's, on behalf of our membership and the conference attendees I would like to offer a big THANKS to the conference committee. They did all the planning, organizing and heavy lifting. While I was in Texas helping out their 2-1-1 following Hurricane Ike I was awed by the number of emails flying back and forth through the internet ether organizing this valuable event. THANKS gang!

Speaking of Hurricane Ike, I would like to offer thanks to those of you who responded to the call to assist the folks in Texas following the storm as well as your agencies who let you go. Such responses prove the value of a viable 2-1-1. They also prove that I&R is not a willy-nilly patchwork of individual agencies but a true system that spans the entire country. The work was long and hard but rewarding in that we were able to assist those affected by the disaster. In addition, I would be remiss if I did not thank the folks in Texas who asked for our assistance. Besides having a well organized system to work with they welcomed us with open arms and made sure we were well taken care of. I am still trying to lose the weight I gained.

Another highpoint of 2008 was the growth of NYS 2-1-1. Presently 2-1-1 services are provided to 14,524,437 people, or 75% of the state's population. As a partner with United Way of New York State, the NYS AIRS Board and its membership should be proud of this accomplishment. Much hard work has been expended and there are still greater efforts to be made. Which brings us to...

The beginning of 2008 seemed innocuous enough. We did our Happy New Years and went on about our business. Little did we know what the future would hold...\$4.00+ gas, the decline of the housing market, the current fiscal crisis, increased unemployment. The need for I&R services, as well as 2-1-1 has never been greater. I don't think that there is a single one of you who is not working harder with fewer resources to assist so many in need. In the middle of all this turmoil the requested 2-1-1 funding in the state budget was cut from \$6 million to \$500,000. This amount has been subsequently cut even further. Granted such cuts are the result of difficult fiscal times. Today as I am reviewing, yet again, this missive I have received the news regarding Governor Patterson's Executive Budget for 2009-2010. It is apparent the reduced spending will impact all NYS citizens many of whom are directly impacted by the current fiscal crisis. In such times the I&R community is best equipped to rise to the occasion and deliver the assistance their consumers need. Unfortunately the news for 2-1-1 is very discouraging:

- No new funding for 2009-10.
- Three re-appropriations:
  - \$472,000 from 1st year (2006-07) capital funds
  - \$1.8 million in 2nd year (2007-08 funds).
  - \$250,000 of the 3rd year funds (which were last at \$470,000 with our contract yet to be acted on). This is a 50% reduction from the original appropriation.

In addition the budget is proposing a 50% cut on all legislative adds from the current budget (2008-09).

As an industry what are we going to do? One thing is to respond to the needs of those contacting us to the best of our ability. This is something we always do. Another thing is to make sure our stakeholders understand what we do and the services we provide. If each one of us took some time from our hectic days to reach out to and educate our elected representatives about our important role we may be able to effect an awareness that may restore some of the funds needed to sustain 2-1-1 in New York. Contacting them through E-mail is good. A letter is better. Best of all is to make an appointment to meet them or their representative and make the case for continued and expanded funding for 2-1-1. In doing so we not only become the voice of I&R in New York but the voice that addresses the needs of its citizens. If we can become a united voice speaking in unison there is a good chance we can secure the necessary funding. If you have questions about how to proceed feel free to contact me at [jplonski@covenanthouse.org](mailto:jplonski@covenanthouse.org) and keep an eye on the NYS AIRS listserv for new developments.

I know that this has been a rather long letter but before I end. One thank you I forgot was to all of you for the work you do. The dedication and professionalism you display in providing your services is to be commended. So do yourself a favor take a moment to pat yourself on the back for the great job you do (also for reading this far). Also keep in mind that in time such as these the work we do can be quite demanding. Recognizing that, make sure that you allow yourselves

time to do something good for yourself...you deserve it. May you and yours have a wonderful holiday season as well as a fantastic New Year.

*John Plonski*

NYS AIRS President  
Database Coordinator  
Covenant House International

### **NYS AIRS ANNUAL TRAINING & EDUCATION CONFERENCE SUCCESS**

*The Voice of I&R* annual training and education conference took place October 15-17 amidst beautiful fall foliage in Albany NY. Some 50 information and referral professionals from 4 states gathered at the Desmond Inn for two days of first-rate workshops and presentations. NYS AIRS was pleased to welcome participants from AIRS chapters in New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania this year. Fifteen different workshops covered a range of I&R topics from telecommunications to effective training programs to grant resources/strategies. The Conference received overwhelmingly positive responses from attendees with 85% of evaluation respondents replying the program met or exceeded their expectations, they gained new skills and appreciated the opportunity to network with peers. Two attendees volunteered to help with the planning of next year's conference – if you, too would like to join the Conference Committee, please email Board Member Betty Eberhardt at [eeberhardt@unitedwayli.org](mailto:eeberhardt@unitedwayli.org).

At the Gala Dinner, Elizabeth Best from the Child Development Support Corporation in Brooklyn was awarded the scholarship of conference plus hotel costs. According to Elizabeth, "The Conference offered me the opportunity to learn new, innovative ways to assist consumers in need and allowed me to meet new people and network with other I&R professionals." The annual NYS AIRS Scholarship is open to any current individual or agency member who demonstrates a commitment to the advancement of the professionalism of the I&R field.

A high point of the Gala Dinner was the annual NYS AIRS Scholarship Silent Auction, hosted by Board Member Ana Winans, which included terrific donations of regional wines, chocolate delights, aromatherapy, jewelry and the auction highlight – a Brett Farve jersey (go, Jets). With Ana using her best persuasion skills to drive up the bids, the Auction raised a record \$525 for next year's Conference Scholarship Fund. Many thanks to our generous donors and "winners".

The 2008 Conference was a financial success and it provided outstanding learning and networking opportunities. NYS AIRS extends thanks to our vendor sponsors Vision Link, SunCoast Custom Programming, RTM Designs and EWDC.

### **2-1-1 NY UPDATE**

As of November 2008, 2-1-1 services are available to **14,524,437 or 75%** of New York State residents. Three regions, Susquehanna River, North Country and Long Island, are planning to launch by the Spring bringing 2-1-1 service to 93% of New York State residents by May 2009.

2-1-1's in New York recently participated in an AIRS survey responding to a request from HUD to provide details about the impact of the economic crisis on their calls and callers. For those New Yorkers who contacted a 2-1-1 regarding Basic Needs information, an overwhelming 80% of those callers requested Housing/Shelter information, 11% needed Food resources, 4% required Material Goods, 3% Temporary Financial Aid and 2% Transportation. This national

survey has positioned 2-1-1 as a reliable, credible, source of information for HUD and of course other federal agencies. The complete HUD survey was sent out on the AIRS listserv; if you did not see the survey or are not signed on to the listserv, you can receive a copy by emailing [clivemjones@gmail.com](mailto:clivemjones@gmail.com).

### **AIRS MEMBERSHIP—TIME TO RENEW**

AIRS membership renewal is currently underway. Did you know that the 62-member NYS AIRS Chapter is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest AIRS affiliate in the country? With the dual membership process, you join both national AIRS and state affiliate NYS AIRS through one easy payment. Membership in NYS AIRS supports the professional development of our field and provides tremendous opportunities to network with I&R peers across the country via the NYS AIRS and AIRS listservs. Members also receive discounts on training, certification testing and publications.

There are four membership levels – Premium (\$750), Enhanced (\$500), Standard (\$250/350) and Basic (\$50). The AIRS website [www.airs.org](http://www.airs.org) offers a worksheet to help you calculate your overall cost savings at each membership level. These are exciting times for the information and referral field in New York State, so don't miss out on the opportunity to partner with NYS AIRS. We welcome your membership and the opportunity to serve your needs.

### **AIRS CONFERENCE CALL FOR PRESENTERS**

The 2009 AIRS Conference scheduled for May 31-June 3 in Reno, Nevada has posted a “Call for Presenters” willing to share their expertise with I&R colleagues. A proposal application is posted on the AIRS website [www.airs.org](http://www.airs.org) and the deadline for submission is January 31, 2009. If you have questions, please email [clivemjones@gmail.org](mailto:clivemjones@gmail.org).

### **SPOTLIGHT**

#### **World AIDS Day 2008 - “Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise.”**

December 1, 2008 marked the 20th anniversary of World AIDS Day, an international day of observance to honor those who have died from AIDS, as well as increase awareness of the disease in hopes of fighting the spread of HIV. In 1988 health ministers from around the world met and agreed on the concept of the day as an opportunity for all to come together to demonstrate the importance of AIDS and show solidarity for the cause.

For almost 25 years New York State has led the nation in recognizing the HIV epidemic as a public health emergency. New York State has the highest rates of HIV infections in the country with both significant rural and urban epidemics. The latest NYS Dept. of Health data indicates more than 88,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in New York City and more than 27,000 in the rest of the state. Excluding NY City, upstate New York would rank fifth among all states in cumulative AIDS cases. Long Island has the highest number of HIV/AIDS cases of any suburb in the country. Despite HIV prevention interventions, the numbers of people becoming HIV-positive locally continues to rise. AIDS remains a communicable and preventable disease, if people are given the tools and the knowledge to keep themselves safe and HIV negative.

#### *HIV and AIDS Cases by Ryan White Region as of December 2006*

<b>Albany</b>	13,886	<b>Nassau/Suffolk</b>	5,676
<b>Binghamton</b>	408	<b>New York City Boroughs</b>	88,739
<b>Buffalo</b>	3,181	<b>Rochester</b>	2,952

Lower Hudson	4,736	Syracuse	3,131
Mid Hudson	3,675		
<i>NY State Total</i>	<i>116,384</i>		

Since 1988, the face and response to AIDS has greatly changed. While many of these changes are positive, this anniversary offers an opportunity to highlight how much more still needs to be done. For the latest data report from the New York State Dept. of Health, visit [http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids/statistics/annual/2006/2006-12\\_annual\\_surveillance\\_report.pdf](http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids/statistics/annual/2006/2006-12_annual_surveillance_report.pdf).

## UPCOMING CERTIFICATION TESTING DATES

In 2009, NYS AIRS will be offering opportunities for Information and Referral professionals to become certified by successfully completing the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems (AIRS) examination.

You may register shortly for the next NYS AIRS-sponsored certification test being planned for April 17, 2009 at the NYS AIRS Annual Meeting, which will be held in Albany, NY. We will schedule another certification test for our July 17 NYS AIRS Board Meeting in New York City. **Registration must be arranged directly with AIRS at least 30 days prior to the test (see below).** AIRS will send NYS AIRS a list of the registrants and only those on the list may take the test.

Certified Resource Specialist (CRS), Certified Information and Referral Specialist (CIRS), Certified Information and Referral Specialist - Aging (CIRS-A) are professional credentials awarded internationally by AIRS to individuals who complete the certification program and pass the examination for Information & Referral Specialists. It is an acknowledgment of demonstrated competence in the field of Information & Referral.

### Costs:

- The basic cost of a Certification application for AIRS members is \$75 at the basic level, \$72 for standard level members, \$68 for enhanced members and \$65 for premium members OR \$225 for non-members.
- An examination re-take is \$40 for AIRS members and \$75 for non-members. And recertification is \$40 for AIRS members and \$175 for non-members.

The Certification Application Form is for all applicants whether they are new, retaking the exam or recertifying and is available at [www.airs.org](http://www.airs.org). Completed applications, supporting documentation and payment **must arrive at the AIRS office at least 30 days prior to the test date.**

## GULF AREA STILL IN NEED

According to Erin Sammons, United Way of America's Director of Crisis Preparedness, Response and Recovery, the needs following the landfall of hurricanes Gustav and Ike are as large as Texas itself. As communities throughout the Gulf Coast and beyond recover from these devastating storms help is needed for thousands of people still struggling to survive. Many people outside of the Gulf Coast do not realize how desperate the conditions are and the challenges that remain for thousands of people. Monetary donations may still be sent to

- United Way 2008 Hurricane Season Recovery Fund  
<http://www.liveunited.org/recoveryfund>
- Louisiana Association of United Ways

<http://www.launitedway.org/hurricanedonate.html>

- United Ways of Texas  
<http://www.uwtexas.org/donate>

In addition, community organizations/groups may wish to send supplies to the disaster region. A list of needed supplies and addresses to send the supplies are:

Clean Kits (Buckets, mops, bleach, rubber gloves, hand towels, sponges, heavy-duty trash bags, laundry detergent and various cleaning agents)

Personal Care Kits (Toothbrushes, toothpaste, dental floss, shampoo, conditioner, soap, shaving cream, razors, aftershave, combs, and skin care products)

Repair Tools (shovels, rakes, hammers, saws, nails, drills, extension cords, ladders, safety glasses, wet-dry vacuums, work gloves, masks, pump sprayers, and heavy-duty ropes)

Baby Supplies (Baby wash and lotion, diapers, diaper rash cream, wipes, and formula)

Send items to:

Warehouse: 1950 North MLK Drive Orange, TX 77630  
Contact: Major John Queener Cell: (409) 883-4232

Warehouse: 3901 IH 10 E Orange, TX 77630  
Contact: Janie Johnson Cell: (409) 883-2322

Warehouse: 215 East Pinhook Road, Lafayette, LA 70501  
Contact: Sarah Berthelot Cell: (337) 654-5780, Work: (337) 706-1221

Warehouse: Emergency Interiors, 324 Union Street, Opelousas, LA 70570  
Contact: Ray Mitchell Cell: (337) 331-5554

Warehouse: 1717 Tehoupitoulous Street, New Orleans, LA 70130-1818  
Contact: Nicole Saulmier- Timmons Cell: (504) 827-6802, Work: (504) 957-9774

## OF INTEREST

### HOPE 2009 -- THE NYC STREET SURVEY

On Monday, January 26, 2009, the NYC Department of Homeless Services will conduct the Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE). We need thousands of volunteers to canvass parks, subways, and other public spaces to count the number of people living unsheltered. Anyone 18 years-old or older who shares our commitment to helping the homeless of New York City is encouraged to volunteer. We will provide you with all the training you will need on the night of the survey. Just one night of your time will help us collect vital information that is used by outreach teams to help homeless people leave the streets for a better life.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER TO VOLUNTEER go to [www.nyc.gov/dhs](http://www.nyc.gov/dhs) or call 311.

## MEMBER NEWS



NYS AIRS sends best wishes and congratulations to Board Member Shye Louis on the birth of her Rachael Olivia Loney who arrived 6 days late on November 11. Mom, Rachel & dad Tom are fine and relieved the wait is finally over!

## EVENTS

### NYS AIRS QUARTERLY BOARD MEETINGS

All NYS AIRS members welcome to participate.

Friday, January 16, Conference Call meeting

- Conference Dial-in Number: (712) 432-0800  
Participant Access Code: 601054#

Friday, April 17, in Albany (location TBA) – NYS AIRS Annual Meeting & Election

Friday, July 17, Covenant House, New York City

### I&R TRAININGS SCHEDULED IN NY CITY

United Way of New York City is pleased to announce "Answers that Help", a series of free trainings for staff of not-for-profit agencies. These trainings will provide practical skills and knowledge related to providing information and referral services. They will be of benefit to any staff who talks to clients about where to get help. Topics include "Building Blocks of I&R," "Beyond Building Blocks of I&R," "Suicide Intervention for I&R," "Crisis Intervention for I&R," "Resource 101," and "Dealing with Difficult and Chronic Callers." Other topics may be added, and the series will be running from January through June. For the schedule, please visit <https://www.uwnyc.com/311/>.

### SAVE THE DATE

#### 2009 AIRS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

31st I&R Training and Education Conference in America's "biggest little city," Reno, Nevada, May 31 – June 3, 2009, at the luxurious, Silver Legacy Resort & Casino. This annual AIRS Conference is a must-attend event for I&R professionals, new and old hands alike.

**Congratulations to NYS AIRS President, John Plonski, for coming up the winning theme for this year's conference, "Mining for I&R Excellence".** A full Conference schedule will be available at [www.airs.org](http://www.airs.org) by March 2009.

**NYS AIRS NOTES** is issued in April, August and December. To submit articles or events for consideration, contact [eeberhardt@unitedwayli.org](mailto:eeberhardt@unitedwayli.org). For current news and events between issues, please check the NYS AIRS website at [www.nysairs.org](http://www.nysairs.org).

NYS AIRS Notes is best viewed in "print layout" format. Please note: Only the primary contact person listed on the NYS AIRS membership application will receive this newsletter. If you are an agency member, please feel free to distribute copies to your coworkers

NYS AIRS Communications Committee:

Elizabeth Eberhardt, United Way of Long Island  
Cathleen Kelly, Mental Health Association of New York City  
Shye Louis, 2-1-1/Life Line  
Karen Butler Easter, Reachout of St. Lawrence County

Michael Cush, VISIONS  
Ted Miroulis, Paetec Communications