

Alice Foley Sept. 2008

[The following is a synopsis of Alice Foley's tape. At the time of the interview Alice's health was failing and it was difficult to create an audible interview.]

In 1978 a young man in town was treated for chronic diarrhea, losing lots of weight, It was what we now know as wasting. He died.

Someone asked me to go see another young man who was sick. I never saw anything like it. He was covered with Kaposi's lesions.

I talked with Dr. Alberts. We were seeing a new kind of disease.....

Outer Cape Health was not prepared for this at the end of the 70s, beginning of the 80s.

Clients got referred to the Deaconess.

Jerry Groupman came down here and gave a presentation. The impact was tremendous....

It was like a science fiction movie....still not idea how it was transmitted other than patients had similar risk factors.

A young guy who was the bartender at the 'A-House' had Kaposi's sarcoma so bad his legs were twice their size. We had to carry him out of his house. Those days we had to scrape up the money to rent a car... He went to the Deaconess, never came back. We had been wrapping his legs with wet rags as instructed. I knew it wasn't doing any good. We didn't know what to do.

So we met to form a group in 82 or 83; myself, David, Black Scottie (Bill Scott), Preston (Babbitt), Allan Wagg and Mike Wright. We worked out of the trunk of my car. We began the buddy system, stayed with people as they needed help. We sent Frankie (Girolamo) and George (Libone) to get nurse's aides training.

The town did not recognize there was a problem. I was afraid to tell them because they would want names. I was concerned about confidentiality....

The police asked for names of people that had "that disease". It got serious enough for state officials to come down for a meeting with the town because the rescue squad refused to pick up people. The other town nurse, Judy Dutra, had kids and she too was afraid. So I did this part of the work.

The state put out a request for proposals. We were a rag tag group and managed to put a proposal together. We were surprised when we got the money.

I had written in the grant that it would be a free standing org not part of the town. We wanted to be able to do whatever we felt was needed.

Pasquale (Natale) came up with the idea of the auction. FAWC helped out....

I remember thinking, now they can't hurt us. We had a gang. From there it took off.

We were free to help clients with whatever needs; a massage, new tires.....

As volunteers got more training and got more comfortable and less afraid, they were more helpful to the clients. We were fabulous. I thought of every program we could run

to make money. We had dinners. We needed a car and Pat Schultz got a van from a dealer for free.

I got a call from Dick Coggins (?), he was alone and dying. We all piled into the van and went to Boston to be with him. He didn't die alone.

In 1980 to 93 I worked as town nurse. In 93 I worked for the ASG full time. I never thought I would see a disease like this, such a hateful disease.

Ross upstairs was a florist in NYC. He loved beauty and colors. He lost his eyesight. Mean and ugly disease.

The first patient I had a gown and gloves as Outer Cape Health had ordered. I couldn't do it. I would carry lemon juice with me and test my hands to see if I had cuts. I couldn't imagine how someone would feel being touched with a gloved hand.....

One of the things that helped me was I was twice the age of the clients....The sorrow of these young men. I cried with many who said they didn't want to die.

The town manager wanted me to keep a file box with addresses of clients. I didn't see the purpose and wouldn't do it....Chief of Police got involved. I had to get a lawyer to get the town off my back. I had to step out of my role as the town nurse. They couldn't force me to do anything.

From the first grant we had 2 staff and an office on the 3rd floor of the Grace Gouveia Building... I wrote a grant so we could buy the office where the ASG is now.

That is when we started to make and deliver lunches to the home bound. Everyone in the group was very loving and everyone's ideas were discussed.

Frankie (Girolamo) got on a plane to accompany a client home to Philadelphia and then flew back. It was an extraordinary time and we did extraordinary things.

Restaurants would call me to ask about workers who had AIDS. I gave info but wouldn't let them off the hook. Got those kinds of calls.

Donna (Joseph) would make afghans and bring them in by the dozens. We'd leave them out for clients to take.

Damien's mother would bake cakes and stews. We'd leave them in the kitchen for all to eat.

We only had a couple of women. Damien had it hard. She had everything including ovarian cancer.

One of my babies was Peter. He was such a beautiful baby. I cried when he died.

His mother and father were cold people.....

Alice talks about what happened in the end for her.