



THE POINT

Volume 1, Issue 1

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Special points of interest:

- Syringe exchange bill filed in the Texas Legislature
- AHRC is looking for a new van

WELCOME TO AHRC'S NEW NEWSLETTER!

AHRC's board has been brainstorming on ways to stay in touch with our members and supporters, and one result is this newsletter, The Point. We plan to distribute The Point bi-annually to keep our supporters up-to-date on what is going on with AHRC as well as with harm reduction and HIV/Hep C prevention in Austin, Texas, the US and the rest of the world.

The plan is for the newsletter to contain regular columns as well as news and updates. The front page will contain the main story for the issue along with something from one of our clients. Next will be a column from our volunteers and we will also have updates from the board. In the *To Do* section on the last page, we be asking our members to help out when we need help. Interspersed throughout will

be tidbits of trivia we hope you will find informative.

We are hoping The Point will keep those who support AHRC in the loop as we all work together to save lives. Thank you for your support!

BILL FILED IN TEXAS LEGISLATURE TO LEGALIZE NEEDLE EXCHANGE

A bill to legalize needle exchange in Texas was filed in the Texas House of Representatives by Ruth Jones McClendon (D-San Antonio). It's called HB 117. The bill will allow authorities in counties with populations over 300,000 to have the option of authorizing sterile syringe exchange programs. It provides a defense to prosecution under current law if a person uses, possesses, or delivers needles or syringes

through an authorized program. It also requires exchange operators to store the needles and syringes in a proper and secure manner and ensure that only authorized employees or volunteers of the program have access to the needles and syringes. Clients of the authorized programs would only be able to obtain the clean needles and syringes from authorized employees or volunteers.

A bill legalizing needle exchanges passed in the Senate last session by a vote of 23-6. It was filed by Dr. Bob Deuell (R-Greenville), a conservative Republican. The session ended before the bill could be passed in the House, though it appeared there was enough support for it to have passed. ("Bill" pg. 2)



CLIENT COLUMN

I now can keep myself and others safe from diseases. I am so very thankful to the people who so selflessly give their time and helpful advice to people like me.

Huh.

It is estimated that between 0%-30% of people in prison inject drugs while incarcerated.

VOLUNTEER FOCUS

It's very cool when former clients who have used our services visit us and are clean. They are always so thankful that we were here when they needed us and that we continue to provide help to those that still need us. It's a feeling of validation, and it tells me that what we do has a real effect.

Did you know?

Bleach will kill HIV but not Hep C. Bleach kits are an effective way to prevent HIV transmission, but not Hep C transmission.

My experience with [AHRC] has always been about safety and cleanliness, it's not necessarily what you do, but how you do it. Thanks for your time and concern!

-Client

BILL

The strategy this session is for the bill to pass in the House before the Senate picks it up. Dr. Deuell will support and advocate for the bill again in the Senate should it pass the House. It still appears there is enough support in the Senate to pass it again, so if it can pass the House, it appears at this point that it will become law.

We need for supporters of this bill to contact their representative and ask that they support HB 117. If you don't know who your representative is, check out www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us. You can enter your address and find out whose district you're in. Writing a letter is effective, but phone calls have more impact, so call your representative and ask them to

support HB 117 to save lives and HIV and hep C treatment costs. You can go to www.texasaccessproject.org to get more information and to keep up with current news on the bill.

FROM THE TREASURER

Good news! We were awarded a grant from the Comer Foundation.

We have also had a good few months in business sponsorship. We'd like to thank the local businesses that have shared their hard-earned proceeds with us!

If anyone out there thinks a local business that may want

to support AHRC, please email us to let us know who we can contact in the business about giving us their support. Our email address is on the back of The Point.

Despite the good news, things are very tight and we can use your financial support. If you are able, you can donate by going to our website, austinharmreduction.org and

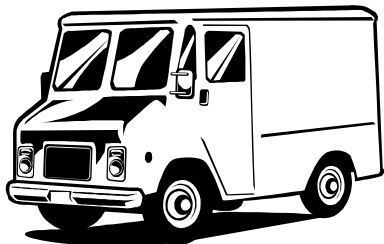


click on "Donate".

LOOKING FOR A NEW VAN

We provide our services by taking a van out in the streets of Austin where we can distribute prevention supplies. The van has now been in service for nearly 10 years and it is getting tired. Maintenance costs are increasing and we're a little bit afraid that one day the van will die and our services won't be available to our clients. We can't let that happen.

all of the cost. We will probably start a fund-raising campaign soon.

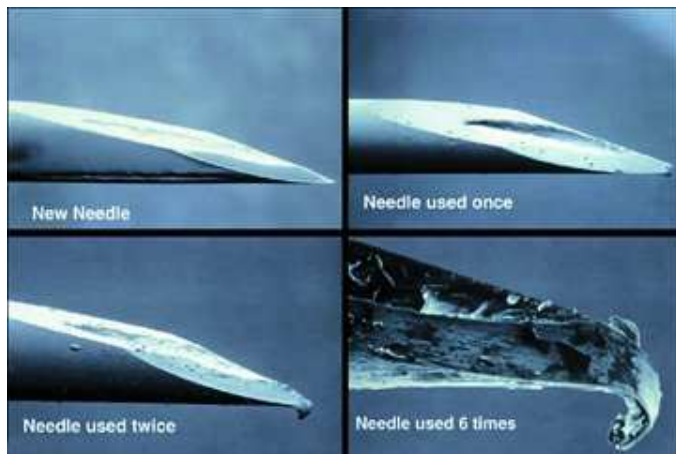


one or sell one to us at a good price, please email us and let us know! Another way to help is to donate some cash if we conduct a fundraising campaign.

Of course, there may be other angles on getting a new van we haven't thought about, so if you have a great idea on how to secure a van, let us know!

We project that a new van will cost around \$60,000. Right now, we're looking into getting grants to help pay for this, but there's a good possibility that grants won't cover

We can use your help! We'd love to find a used but still good-working van. If you know of any companies around town that use delivery trucks that may be willing to donate



"I look at it from the Christian viewpoint, what would Jesus do? We need to show compassion and try to help. [Addicts] are God's children, too."

Sen. Bob Denell

ALCOHOL HARM REDUCTION

Homeless shelters traditionally ban the use of alcohol on their premises. This policy came into question after a couple of homeless alcoholics died in Toronto. Seaton's House in Toronto became the first homeless shelter in Canada to manage alcohol usage among its residences.

There have been two major studies on the effectiveness of "wet shelters". One showed

that emergency room and police encounters of residences were reduced by half. Another study concerning the Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) in Seattle was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) in April, 2009. This study showed that taxpayers saved \$4 million in the first year of operation, nearly \$2,500 per month per person. Not only did the program

save money, with a stable housing situation, alcohol usage for people in the shelter decreased.

This is another series of studies showing that abstinence-only policies aren't as effective at improving people's health while reducing costs as is employing a spectrum of policies to reduce harm, including abstinence.

Austin Harm Reduction
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We're on the web!
AustinHarmReduction.org

The Austin Harm Reduction Coalition (AHRC) is a non-profit volunteer based organization that works to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C among injection drug users. We provide HIV & Hep C testing, drug treatment referrals, medical care, and resources to prevent disease transmission such as condoms, alcohol pads, and supplies for safe injection. We do our work from a mobile van, reaching directly into the communities most affected by HIV and Hep C in Austin, Texas.

Our services are vital, but the obstacles are many.

Needle exchange is the only method of prevention proven to be effective among active drug injectors. Yet, syringe possession and distribution is illegal in Texas. AHRC advocates the legalization of needle exchange, the sole effective means of stemming the tide of HIV and Hep C among active drug users. The work of the AHRC over the past 15 years has made a difference: in 2008, reported cases of HIV/AIDS decreased in Austin, the only city amongst the top four major metropolitan areas in Texas that reported a decrease.

Our services are vital, but our cost is small.

We do our work on a very small budget. All our monies go directly to services and supplies. We do not even pay to maintain an office.

We ask you to join us.

We are looking for people who wish to support our services either through financial support or by contributing time as a volunteer. We are also looking for people who would like to buy one of our ultra cool t-shirts or tank tops (please see our online store).

ToDo



Call your legislator to support HB 117



Help us get a new van



Help us locate business sponsors