

# THE *a* LINE

*Your Connection to the Alliance for Positive Health*

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## MEET OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### B. Kim Atkins

Dear Friends,

It is wonderful to return to an organization that is dedicated to meeting people where they are at. I was educated as an anthropologist to see the world through the eyes of others, to learn other languages and to respect other cultures. Living for a year in Northern Thailand and then in the Andes mountains of Peru, I have seen poverty, racism, and sexism in many places and forms around the world. I have learned to work with people without judgement. And I have brought this experience and perspective to everything that I do.

Working in NYC in the early 1990s, I joined the Community Family Planning Council (CFPC), a network of 13 clinics founded by community members in some of the poorest neighborhoods. HIV/AIDS was spreading quickly among marginalized populations, revealing that many people were unable to access the care they needed to survive.

As we tested and counseled our patients, primarily women of color, we found we had no place to send them for medical care—so we set up our own HIV primary care program. Our patients needed support and care coordination services to overcome stigma and other access barriers, so we established our own case management program. When we found many patients had mental health needs, we established our own mental health clinic. And as other community organizations built up their own HIV services, we partnered with them to ensure that patients had access and support for everything they needed.

I started by securing the funding for these programs. I learned from researching and building the programs, and quickly became the program administrator. By the time combination therapy became available to change the course of the epidemic in the mid to late 1990s, we had built a comprehensive health, mental health, and care coordination program serving over 1,000 patients living with HIV.

So much of what I have learned and so much of what we see in healthcare today comes from those early days of providing HIV care—housing as fundamental to improving health; good nutrition to bolster the immune system; the effects of social determinants on health; the need for rapid testing and what we now call contact tracing; mental health services to address the trauma caused by uncertainty and unexplainable deaths.

Since those early days of the HIV epidemic in NYC, I helped turn CFPC into a network of Federally Qualified Community Health Centers still serving persons living with HIV, but also providing many more health and related social services as the Community Healthcare Network. I then moved to a Deputy Executive Director position at the AIDS Service Center of Lower Manhattan, a community service provider very much like the Alliance. In 2013, I assumed the role of CEO at Planned Parenthood Mohawk Hudson, where I invested heavily in health and case management services for trans individuals in the

area, as well as PrEP education and services. After helping Planned Parenthood with a merger and transformation of my affiliate with several others, I have been blessed to become the Executive Director of the Alliance for Positive Health, returning to my roots.

As we look to the future at the Alliance, we know we remain committed to our core—our dedication to provide services to those living with HIV and to prevent others from becoming infected. With a non-judgmental, harm reduction approach, we will continue to build programs that reach those populations that remain hard to reach and do not have access to the services they need. We will take the many lessons we have learned from providing HIV prevention and services to provide new prevention and services to those same underserved and disrespected populations that continue to suffer poor health and mental health outcomes.

Finally, in my first few months here at the Alliance, I have been impressed by the resilience of the staff during this current pandemic as they have constantly risen to the challenges of delivering services to our clients at a time when our clients need it the most. The past two years have certainly been a test for all of us, both professionally and personally. We are grateful for your continued support of our mission, our communities, our clients, and our staff.

Sincerely,



B. Kim Atkins  
Executive Director  
Alliance for Positive Health



#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

<b>Kelley Winslow</b> PRESIDENT	<b>John Coppola</b> VICE PRESIDENT	<b>Terri Conrad Regan</b> TREASURER	<b>Lawrence T. Waite, Ph.D.</b> SECRETARY
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## MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS



**Kandis V. Backus**, MS, PharmD, AAHIVP came to NYS to serve as a Medical Scientist for Gilead Sciences. She previously held a faculty position as Assistant Professor of Population Health Sciences at the University of MS Medical Center. She left her faculty role to serve, at a larger capacity, a community living with and exposed to HIV. During her time in MS she served as a preceptor for pharmacy students and residents. Kandis was also a member of the faculty for the Southeast AIDS Education Training Center and the clinical pharmacist for Mississippi's largest Ryan White clinic (~2200 patients). Her clinical responsibilities included caring for the primary care needs of people living with HIV and at risk for contracting HIV. She was grant funded for implementation science projects such as a pharmacist led rapid PrEP initiation program, a telePrEP program, a telePrimaryCare program, and a relinkage to HIV care program in rural MS. She also co- led a support group for transgender women living in the Jackson, MS area, Beautiful Transformation. Kandis obtained her undergraduate degree from Arizona State University. She relocated to MS and spent several years in a research laboratory studying breast cancer. In this lab she tested pre-clinical drugs on animal models and cell lines searching for a treatment for a rare form of breast cancer that disproportionately impacts African Americans and Latinos. It was during that time she obtained her master's degree in biomedical sciences and was accepted into pharmacy school. In 2017 she obtained her Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the University of MS. She completed a residency with Open Arms Healthcare Center and Walgreens. Her residency was focused on cultural competency, HIV treatment and prevention, and qualitative research techniques.



**Sharon J. Butler** currently serves as SVP of Human Resources for Magellan RX Management. In this role she oversees all people and organizational strategies including organization design and development, talent management, and learning strategies. Sharon has an ultimate belief that people are powerful especially when united in voice and force to solve complex human and societal needs, like the health and safety of each other—especially those marginalized by chronic health issues like HIV and AIDS. Prior to her career in human resources, Sharon was employed in public service as an employee of New York state in agencies focused on higher education, addiction, and educational finance. Sharon recently returned to the Albany area after spending 10 years in Virginia. While in Virginia Sharon focused on support for marginalized individuals as a volunteer in faith-based initiatives like Sac Hunger—a project focused on feeding homeless and displaced individuals. Sharon is very excited to support and serve the employees and benefactors of the Alliance for Positive Health.



**Keira O'Brien** is the VP, Chief Operating Officer of Government Markets at Magellan Rx Management, a Magellan Health organization. In her current role she has oversight of support functions for the pharmacy operations of Medicaid Fee for Service, State Pharmaceutical Assistance Programs and AIDS Drug Assistance Programs. Keira has a background in financial management with extensive experience working on government pharmacy programs, directly for the government and for local non-profit organizations. Her most recent board experience was Treasurer and then General Member of the Board of Trustees for the Susan Odell Taylor School. As a former employee of the Alliance when it was the AIDS Council of NENY, her service to the organization is coming full circle.



**Carl Rorie Alexandrov**, BA, LMSW joined CDPHP in 2009 as Manager of Behavioral Health Services and currently serves as Vice President of Behavioral Health Operations. In this role, Carl directly oversees the behavioral health call center, assists with implementing and managing utilization management and quality initiatives, and integrates behavioral health with other medical services. Prior to joining CDPHP, Carl was a clinical manager for UnitedHealth Group and directly supervised the clinical team completing utilization review and quality management for behavioral health benefits. Other roles include serving as a Clinical Manager at ValueOptions (now Beacon Health Options) and St. Peter's Behavioral Health. Carl is a member of the National Association of Social Workers and is licensed in social work by the New York State Department of Education. Carl earned a master's degree in social work and a B.A. in communications from The University at Albany.



*“ I have been a client of the Alliance for Positive Health for many years now. When I first started receiving services from the Alliance for Positive Health it was more in the matter of support with some daily routines that I could not manage on my own. For the past three years, I have been granted a monthly stipend to help me pay my monthly rent. This has kept me in my current apartment and saved me from being homeless. There is no way that I could fully express my gratitude for this service.*

*I have had the pleasure of dealing with multiple people from the Alliance for Positive Health who have aided me from month to month to ensure that my living conditions stay safe and secure. At the beginning, my case manager went out of his way to make sure that I could stay in my current apartment and that all of my needs were being met. My new case manager is highly professional and consistently keeps in touch with me to make sure that my living conditions stay stable. Her monthly visits are a joy and always make me feel like I can call her if I need her assistance. My experience with the Alliance for Positive Health has only been positive and I have only gratitude for everyone who has helped me over the years.”*

- Anthony C.

*“ 2022 marks 36 years since I had my HIV diagnosis. I’ve been a client of the agency since 2012. The Ryan White foundation allowed me to go to 12 step recovery meetings which is a very vital resource for someone with addiction. I have found all of my case managers to be very friendly and compassionate I have done the Food4Life program and learned about fresh vegetables and nutrition. The program helped me to shop healthier and I’ve learned to look at the food labels to monitor. I’m grateful and humbled by your agency and I’m glad that they were able to transition from just a focus on AIDS to include other chronic illnesses as well. This means you are able to reach and help more people. I’ve learned that I don’t live with AIDS, AIDS lives with me. Once I graduate from case management I am looking to be a volunteer to assist with outreach.”*

- James M.

*“ I had just lost my mom and I was worried that my addicted and broken daughter who had just returned home for help would run away in the night. I spent hours over the next days on the phone with different facilities all over the country but, finally, I reached out to the Alliance for Positive Health.*

*A staff member took the time needed to inform me of the options at different facilities and guided me on cost. Most importantly, he helped us navigate the most current COVID-19 restrictions. He conducted intake calls with my daughter to get an assessment of her mental health and history and took care of all of the coordination with the Addiction Treatment Center. Overall, it took a week to get my daughter into a facility and I cannot say enough positive things about the support we received from the Alliance.*

*My daughter ended up staying at the treatment center for 90 days before she came home. Readjusting to home was a challenge, but after one slip she has been clean and sober for just over 14 months. Now she sponsors others in the Narcotics Anonymous program. I couldn’t be more proud of my daughter for what she has accomplished and overcome! Together we owe a HUGE thank you to the Alliance.”*

- Michelle D.

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Traditional and Roth IRA owners (or beneficiaries after the death of the owner) who are age 72 or older may make qualified charitable distributions of up to \$100,000 per year directly from their IRAs to an eligible organization without incurring any adverse federal income tax consequences. The distribution counts toward meeting any Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) but is not included in calculating the individual taxpayer’s limitation on charitable deductions in the year the donation was made.

The IRA QCD provision can help to bolster your legacy while reducing your taxable estate. While you would not receive a charitable deduction for a transfer from your IRA to a charity, the amount of your transfer would not be included in your gross income, nor would it be subject to income tax. You would have the added satisfaction of knowing that your charity could receive the full amount, with no tax cost to you or to the charity.

If you fit any of the following profiles, this may be a good strategy for you to review with your financial and tax advisors:

- You are 72 or older and interested in using funds from your IRA to make a contribution to a charity.
- You expect to leave funds in your IRA to your heirs.
- You take the standard deduction when calculating your taxes.
- You are interested in donating more than half of your annual income to charity.
- You want to make a substantial gift to a charity for a particular purpose.



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# Featured SPOT

## TERESA GOODMAN

### How long have you worked at the Alliance for Positive Health and what is your current role?

I began working in March 2020 just before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am the Executive Assistant.

### What about working for a non-profit organization appealed to you?

I wanted to work with a group of individuals that care about the betterment of people and serving our communities in a greater way.

### What does a typical day at work entail?

There is no typical day. Every day is an adventure of many things.

### What do you like most about your job or what aspect of your role do you enjoy the most?

I enjoy wearing different hats and assisting in multiple areas.

### What do you find most challenging?

Wearing many hats and juggling them but I also thrive trying to meet them.

### What is your proudest moment at the agency?

Moments with Caitlin Ball, filling our Albany food pantry closet and fridge to the brim for our clients and community!

### What advice would you give to someone considering a role as an Executive Assistant?

Be ready for anything, stay open minded, non-judgmental and positive!

### What three words would you use to describe yourself?

Patient, team-player, and gently assertive.

### What is your hidden talent?

Baking orange dream cranberry white chocolate cookies!

### What is your favorite thing to do?

Taking walks outside in nature & taking picture of all things beautiful in this world.

### Where did you grow up and what was it that drew you to this area?

I grew up in Westhampton Beach, NY on Long Island. I was drawn to the area when I attended the College of Saint Rose.

### What is something about yourself that people would be surprised to learn?

I can do a pretty good Grover interpretation but do not ask me on the spot because it only makes me laugh. I used it mainly for little children when reading stories.

### What are your hobbies?

Photography, cooking & baking, jewelry making, decorating, floral designing.



## HARM REDUCTION SERVICES 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

*Submitted by Meagan Strack*

A few months ago, we received word about additional funding to better support our harm reduction endeavor. This new, additional funding has allowed us to expand our team by adding new team members in both Plattsburgh and Glens Falls as well as allowing us to get more innovative with client needs. The dedication of our staff helped establish new partnerships that have proven fruitful for the communities we serve. We implemented several new satellite sites, enabling hundreds of community members and professionals to access our Narcan trainings and Narcan kits. We also added five new kiosks for proper syringe disposal. Additional added partnerships have allowed us to connect clients to needed resources such as buprenorphine, treatment centers, and/or other maintenance programs in an effort to reduce harm in their active substance use.

We continue to reach a minimum of 50 new Narcan enrollments per month, which has resulted in many community members becoming familiar with our harm reduction model. Through the trainings they are able to obtain a lifesaving Narcan kit with the skills to respond to an overdose. We now have over ten satellite site partnerships established in our northern region- one of which is working with the Plattsburgh Police Department (PPD). We will be working on building our Narcan Training right into the police academy. The PPD uses our training for new Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) and supplies each individual with our Narcan. They report their responses, and we share our statistics in effort of recognizing any trends.

We continue to reach more participants in our testing efforts and follow-up to care for our Navigation Program. We have also been operating

several pop-up syringe exchange locations throughout the North Country. We recently procured a partnership with St. Patrick's Parish in Moriah and will be adding a walk-in syringe exchange location, open to community members starting in January 2022. Available twice a month, we are hopeful this additional resource will greatly reduce the uptick in recent fatal overdoses while lessening the risks associated with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) in the community.

Our Harm Reduction Services team successfully launched its first peer-delivered syringe exchange located out of the Saranac Lake Health Department. This will allow community members to have greater access to our Syringe Exchange Program. Our new Regional Care Coordinator will be working on establishing partnerships with hospitals and their providers in several counties to bring the New York MATTERS initiative to their Emergency Room Departments.

Our Drug User Health Hub (HUB) just reached its second birthday and continues to run smoothly while following a hybrid schedule. Three separate partnerships were formed this past year for long-term client care, allowing us to transition more clients to long-term programs and primary care. The HUB has actively seen about 20-30 clients in the last six months. It continues to be a great resource for the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) programs that have a need for bridging clients. The HUB team will be adding a Mental Health counselor and is currently working with Hudson Headwaters to give our clients access to HCV treatment from their providers through telehealth services.

*Submitted by Vanessa Cappon*

2021 was a year of change and growth for our Criminal Justice team. Formally known as Criminal Justice Initiative (CJI), the Department of Health AIDS Institute expanded services and formed a new office—the Office of Criminal Justice Services (CJS). During the pandemic, our Criminal Justice Service teams lost access to the correctional facilities due to limiting the number of members from the community entering the facilities. During this time, our Criminal Justice Service staff were all trained in being COVID contact tracers through the Department of Health for Department of Corrections staff. Eventually, our services were deemed essential, and the team was granted access to the facilities once again to provide these vital services to the incarcerated population.

NYS Department of Corrections is divided up into regions, better known as HUBS. Our agency’s Criminal Justice Services team covers the Clinton and Great Meadow HUBS. In total, we cover 11 state prisons spanning from south of Albany all the way north to the Canadian border. Services we provide in the facilities are Linkage and Navigation case management for individuals living with HIV and/or HCV who are preparing to re-integrate back into the community, Peer Education training where incarcerated individuals are trained to provide education to their peers around topics like HIV/STI/HCV and finally, anonymous HIV testing on an as-needed basis.

In 2021, we received additional funding through the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention to provide re-entry services for recently released incarcerated individuals living with HIV along with their sexual and substance use partners. With this expansion, we were able to create and hire

for two additional positions under our Criminal Justice Services umbrella. A Community Linkage Specialist will be based in both our Plattsburgh and Albany offices and will provide services in our entire agency catchment area.



## join our team!



[allianceforpositivehealth.org](http://allianceforpositivehealth.org)



## Dining Out For Life®

On June 10th, Dining Out For Life® brought back its traditional in-person dining option in accordance with health guidelines as pandemic restrictions began to relax. Based on their comfortability, community members across Northeastern New York were encouraged to dine in (where available), order takeout or delivery, and purchase gift cards. Our dedicated Virtual Volunteer Ambassadors raised thousands of dollars online that will be used for our local program services for those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. We hope to be back to our traditional format when Dining Out For Life® returns on April 28, 2022!



## Columbia~Greene Garden Party

The 2021 Columbia~Greene Garden Party once again took on a virtual format. Keeping the health and safety of our supporters in mind, the event streamed online on Saturday, September 4th. The Garden Party included a virtual wine tasting courtesy of Tousey Winery, a behind-the-scenes look at our HIV & Aging group, an exclusive tour of the beautiful Livingston House Garden, and our online silent auction. As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and implement health and safety protocols as needed, we are looking forward to the fun of an in-person Columbia~Greene Garden Party and hope we can make that return to form during Labor Day weekend 2022.



## BOO-jolais Holiday Auction

While the pandemic once again prevented us from gathering together for our premier Halloween fundraising event, we were still able to provide a fun way to raise funds for our clients in need. The first ever BOO-jolais Holiday Auction featured a wide variety of items to bid on including tropical getaways, restaurant gift cards, beautiful works of art, and much more. Proceeds from the Holiday Auction went directly to our vital services for clients living with and affected by HIV/AIDS and other chronic illnesses.

## World AIDS Day

On December 1st, the Alliance team commemorated World AIDS Day by distributing meals to clients in need, offering free walk-in testing at our Albany office, and provided an HIV & Aging session focused on Medicare. Staff wore red ribbons to honor those who have been lost to HIV/AIDS. While World AIDS Day is acknowledged annually, the Alliance team works year-round to provide care and services to those living with HIV/AIDS in our local community. We are thankful to Gilead Sciences for the support of the World AIDS Day meal delivery, and to Healthy Café Catering Co. for preparing the meals for our clients.





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## OFFICE LOCATIONS

### ALBANY

927 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12207  
518.434.4686

### GLENS FALLS

13 Chester Street  
Glens Falls, NY 12801  
518.743.0703

### HUDSON

160 Fairview Ave.  
Hudson, NY 12534  
518.828.3624

### PLATTSBURGH

202 Cornelia Street  
Plattsburgh, NY 12901  
518.563.2437

### SCHENECTADY

155 Erie Boulevard  
Schenectady, NY 12305  
518.346.9272



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