

Women of a Certain Age

Annual Report 2011

ABOUT WOMEN OF A CERTAIN AGE (WOACA)

Women of a Certain Age (WOACA) is an award winning HIV/AIDS Prevention Peer Education Program for women over 50. The program includes ½ day trainings for professionals and full day trainings for community-based peer educators. WOACA infuses HIV prevention topics into natural conversations among senior women through existing relationships. It is inexpensive to implement and highly replicable, furthering its potential impact.

Women of a Certain Age educates women as to why they should know more about HIV and other sexually transmitted illnesses; be tested for HIV; be clear with any partner about the need to practice "safe sex" ; or to be able to walk away and feel good about that decision. WOACA addresses deeply rooted social determinants of culture, gender, ageism, and lack of access to information due to limited use of computers, internet, and other technology as well as disparities in health funding and research.

WOACA is effective because it is designed and facilitated by women over 50. The goal of the program is to not only educate the women in the workshops but for them to educate other women in their social circles. The reach of WOACA grows exponentially by educating women and giving them the skills to educate others. This is the most natural way for women over fifty to get access to this sensitive information.



WOACA launch event, 11-10-10

WOACA was created by Jacki Gethner, LMT. A woman of a certain age herself, Jacki was frustrated by the discomfort surrounding discussing sex and sexuality issues among her peers and a lack of resources to make informed health decisions. More than four years ago, Jacki sounded the alarm to the County Health department that women over 50 represent the fastest rate of growth in new HIV cases yet overall reported cases remain low. She wrote articles about women over 50 contracting HIV/AIDS and started to lobby the State and the CDC to little avail. She was informed there would be no funding for HIV/AIDS prevention education for older women as other "high-risk" groups were funding priorities. In 2009, Jacki received Kaiser Permanente's Diversity Award for her massage work with people living positive with HIV/AIDS. Without funding for prevention on the horizon, Jacki used her award monies to launch WOACA in Nov 2010.

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

There are almost no funds for HIV/AIDS in older communities, while there are hundreds of programs and funding opportunities for gay men, youth, people of color, etc. This is critical as women over fifty are the fastest growing demographic of new cases, representing 17% of all new HIV infections in the United States¹.

Older women are severely underserved and often experience late diagnosis and treatment, as well as early death. Most cultures and communities, particularly so in past decades when WOACA women were raised, are characterized by cultural norms discouraging women from talking about sex and sexuality issues. Women have historically been more vulnerable to risky sexual behaviors by occupying less powerful positions in interpersonal relationships.

Women over 50 returning to the dating scene after monogamous long-term relationships may be ill-equipped to deal with basic aspects of setting boundaries around sexual encounters due to low self-esteem or social conventions that no longer apply. The advent of on-line dating and the use of erectile dysfunction drugs enable many people to engage sexually with multiple partners, potentially increasing the risk of contracting HIV.

Risks are compounded by misconceptions that older women are asexual or nonsexual. Doctors are reluctant to communicate with older women about their HIV/AIDS risks or discuss sexual issues. With decreased risk for pregnancy over 50, safe sex is frequently not encouraged and therefore condoms are not utilized adequately. The July/August Issue of the AARP Magazine featured an article, "AIDS: 30 Years Later" which stated "One in seven new diagnoses of HIV or AIDS is in a person over 50"; and, "Older people with HIV contract more diseases of aging than their uninfected peers — even when the virus has not progressed far enough to warrant a diagnosis of AIDS. And though HIV is often transmitted by sharing hypodermic needles, older Americans are more likely to get it through unprotected sex."² However, there is little buzz, even in the HIV/AIDS prevention communities, about specifically addressing this demographic and its increased infection rate. Because of these disparities there is an urgent need to focus specifically on women over fifty.

**IN 2009, 1 IN 6 NEW HIV
DIAGNOSES IN THE U.S.
WAS IN PEOPLE AGE 50
AND OVER, ACCORDING
TO THE AIDS INSTITUTE.**

¹ <http://www.theaidsinstitute.org>;

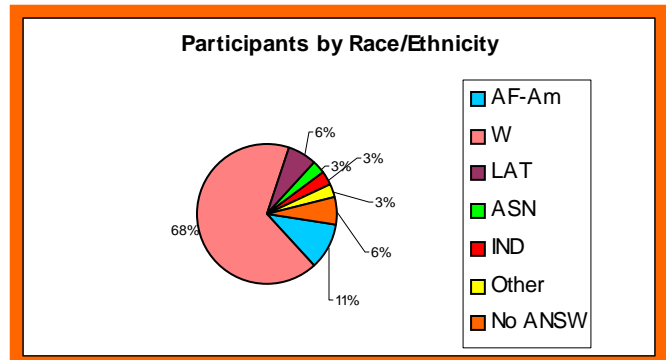
² See the complete article at <http://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-05-2011/aids-30-years-later.print.html>

2011 IN REVIEW

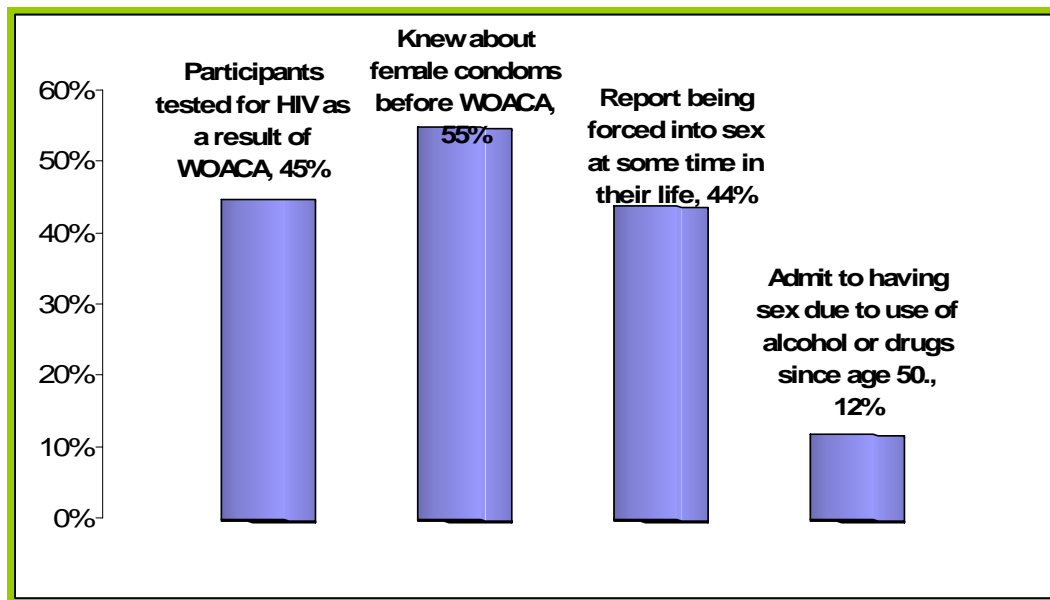
Our focus for 2011 was building a foundation for programming and communicating the WOACA message. We developed evaluative instruments including participant demographic surveys, pre-post tests, and session evaluation forms, a data tracking system, and general program marketing materials including palm cards and website enhancements. We have actively pursued grant funding and have developed materials necessary to quickly respond to RFPs.

PROGRAM RESULTS:

2011 marks the first full-year of programming. We held 31 educational sessions, 27 outreach events and 4 Professional Peer Educator Trainings, directly reaching on average of more than 100 people/month. As such, we surpassed our 2011 goal of reaching 1,000 people by over 20%. Of those providing ethnographic data, 68% are Caucasian; 11% are African-American or Black; 6% are Latino of any race; 3% are Asian; 3% are Indigenous; and 3% check "other" – 6% did not answer.



Initial program results are impressive. When offered, 45% of participants have gotten tested for HIV. Only 55% knew about female condoms; 44% report being forced into sex; and 12% admit having sex due to the influence of drugs or alcohol since age 50.



No one, including professionals, answered all of the basic general HIV prevention questions correctly on the pre-test.

MEDIA ATTENTION AND HONORS IN 2011

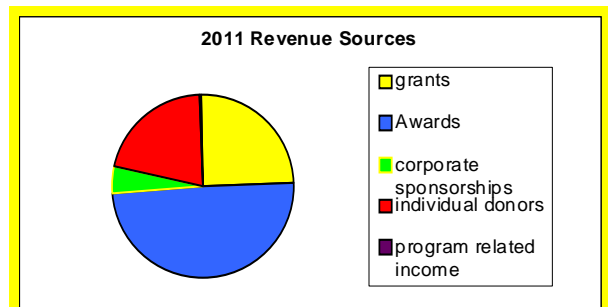
- Jacki was designated a HERO in “Healing Touch” in the national magazine POZ, December 2010.³
- Received our first grant in March, from the Region X Office of Women’s Health to partner with the Department of Criminal Justice – Office Parole and Probation.
- Jacki was named Huffington Post’s Greatest Person of the Day (April 28, 2011).⁴
- On September 18th we facilitated a workshop in honor of the 4th National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day (NHAAAD) a campaign lead by The AIDS Institute. This year’s theme was “*Aging is a part of life; HIV doesn’t have to be.*” The WOACA workshop was the only event held West of Texas.
- WOACA was highlighted in The Portland Physician’s Scribe article “HIV Increasingly Strikes at Older Adults, September 26, 2011.”⁵
- WOACA was featured in the Portland Observer’s article, “Women at risk for HIV: Local healer works to empower those 50 and older.” on October 26, 2011.⁶
- Jacki was honored by the Bank of America Foundation as a Local Hero.⁷ on November 29, 2011 The honor comes with a \$5,000 award which will be allocated toward 2012 programming.

STAFFING NOW AND PROJECTED NEEDS:

In 2011, the WOACA team grew to include a grant-writing and development consultant, a website administrator, and a part-time administrative assistant who earlier got involved as a volunteer. In 2012, it is our hope to add to our team a publicist to increase WOACA’s media attention and speaking engagements.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

In 2010, over 80% of revenues came from awards. In 2011, corporate and individual contributions made up 26% of revenues; grants 24%; and awards 49%. All 2011 funders are first-time funders.



WOACA established relationships with many government agencies, including Multnomah County Health Department, Department of Justice, and Office of Domestic Violence; US Dept. of Health & Human Services, Region X Office of Women’s Health; Portland Public Library, and the Oregon Department of Health & Human Services Office of Disease Prevention & Epidemiology. Non-profit and corporate sponsors include Cascade AIDS Project; Sacred Life, CareOregon, Hollywood Senior Center, Intersect Worldwide, BeadforLife, LifebyDesign, American Family Insurance, Albina Community Bank, Massage Warehouse, Central Drug, and others.

³ See the complete article at http://www.poz.com/articles/Jacki_Gethner_HIV_2546_19379.shtml

⁴ See the complete article at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/04/28/jacki-gethner-greatest-person_n_855041.html?ref=email_share

⁵ See the complete article at <http://www.msmp.org/Files/Scribe%20September%2016%202011.pdf>

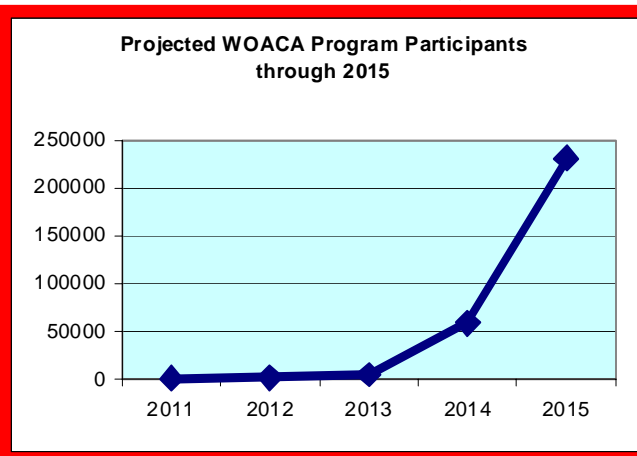
⁶ See the complete article at http://jackigethner.com/news_content/metro_article.pdf

⁷ More information about the award can be found at <http://ahead.bankofamerica.com/supporting-communities/nei/local-heroes/>

LOOKING FORWARD: 2012 OBJECTIVES

In 2012, the goal of WOACA is to directly reach 2,500 women over the age of 50 and start tracking the outreach data of peer educators. WOACA expects to have 15 reporting peer educators in 2012 after hosting at least one Community Peer Educator(CPE) training and at least two Professional Peer Educator(PPE) workshops. Just with their direct contact plus that of WOACA staff, we conservatively estimate our reach to double by the following year. With only 2 additional trainings for both professionals and community members each year, and calculating that at least half of program participants will talk with at least one other person per month about WOACA in the course of the year, by 2015 we conservatively expect to reach over a quarter million women.

Jacki also plans to present the issue of HIV/AIDS in the senior population at two conferences: the 20th Annual Canadian Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (CANAC) in Victoria, BC, Canada in May and the 12th International AIDS Conference in Washington DC, in July.



WOACA NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT:

Please consider supporting WOACA and our mission to prevent HIV/AIDS infection in older women. The WOACA program is so powerful, yet so simple and we need your support to make it more successful in 2012. **You can:**

- 1. Schedule a workshop for your community group**
- 2. Talk with the women of a certain age in your life about these issues and consider signing up to be a peer educator.**
- 3. Make a donation at <http://jackigethner.com/>**

For further information, call us at 503/ 790-0974 or e-mail to jacki@jackigethner.com.