



A PUBLICATION FOR THE FRIENDS  
AND SUPPORTERS OF THE  
BOSTON LIVING CENTER

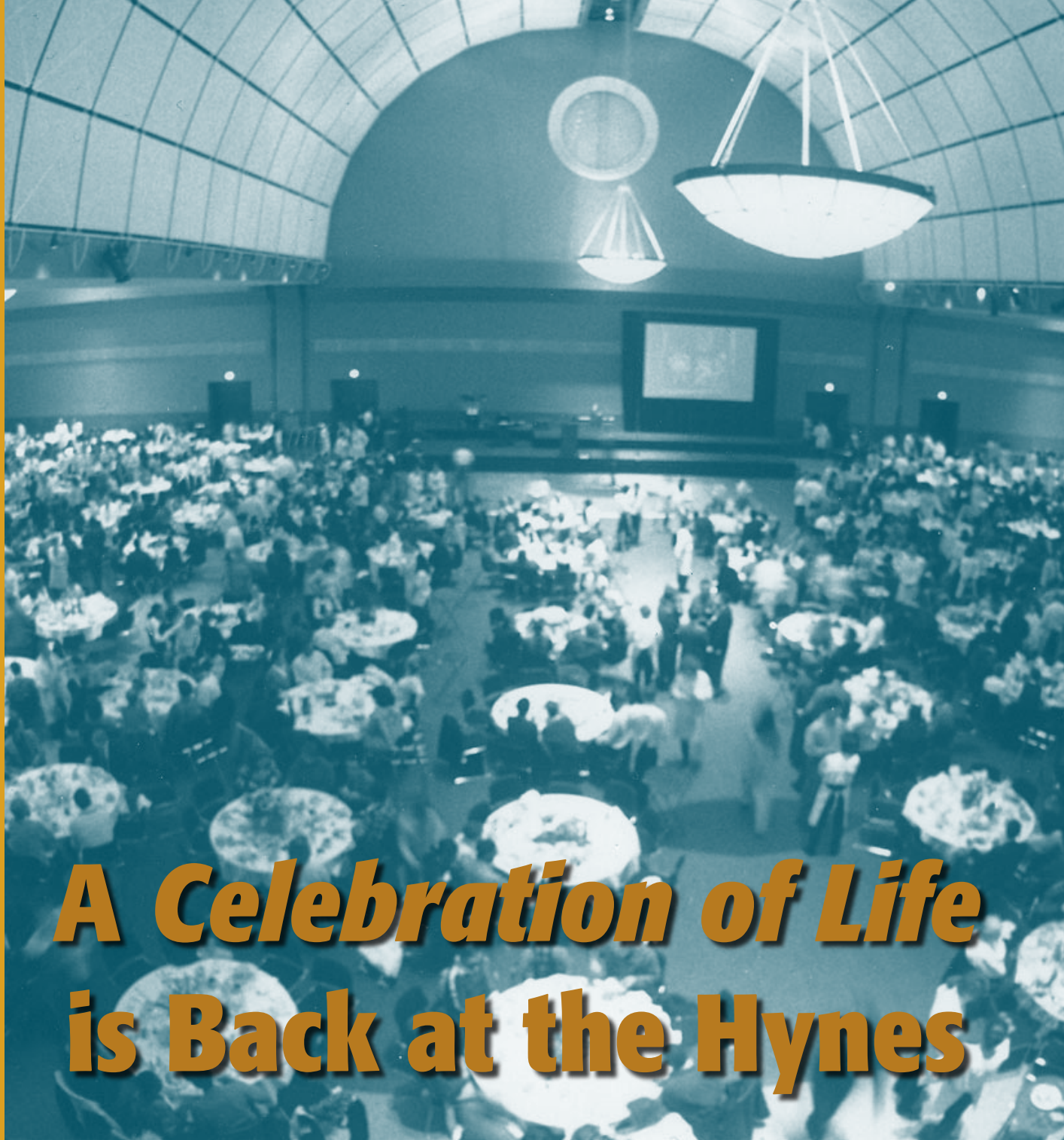
# WALKER LIFE

A Celebration of



Thanksgiving Dinner

FALL 2007



## A Celebration of Life is Back at the Hynes

The Boston Living Center is proud to announce the re-launching of The *Celebration of Life Thanksgiving Dinner* to be held on November 20th at the Hynes Convention Center. This famed event hosted by Liz Walker will serve over 500 HIV+ people and their loved ones. Celebrity servers will join Mayor Menino in his favorite event of the year.

### A BLC Tradition

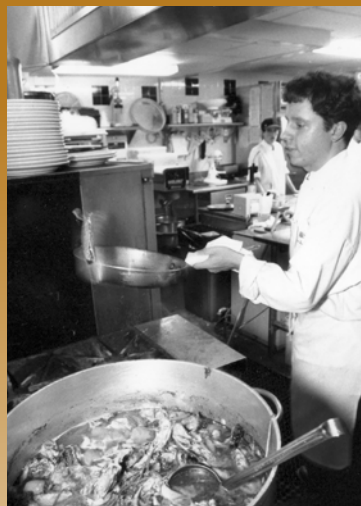
Knowing that holidays can be a difficult time for people living with chronic illness, a group of HIV+ people and their friends gathered for a community Thanksgiving dinner in the late 80's. That event has since become a tradition of

not only bringing together the HIV community, but one of raising awareness about HIV and of thanking those who have supported the community throughout the years.

### How the Dinner Works

While the dinner is free for all attendees, (everything from *appetizers* to *zinnias* is donated) we raise money through table sponsorships to support the 40,000 nutritious meals served each year at the Boston Living Center. Local celebrities, corporate teams, and loyal BLC volunteers contribute by serving as waiters and hosts. Entertainment will feature HIV+ performers, Latin and jazz bands, and surprise guest appearances.

## Re-Living a Thanksgiving Tradition



**BOSTON LIVING CENTER'S**

*A Celebration of Life Thanksgiving Dinner*

Hynes Convention Center • November 20th, 2007

# It Can Happen to Anyone

## Scott Galinsky, Thanksgiving Co-Chair

"I am a man LIVING with HIV, not dying and I learned this at the Boston Living Center"

I was involved in prevention efforts through Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York, distributing condoms in night clubs and places where people might be having unprotected sex, teaching people how to be safe. Then, due to drug and alcohol addiction, I lost focus. In the disease of addiction, I stopped taking precautions to protect myself and in 2003, I tested positive. If the guy who handed out condoms can become positive, anyone can.

After finding out my HIV status, I moved to Boston to have greater access to research hospitals and studies. Seeing that I needed support, my infectious disease physician and social worker encouraged me to go to the Boston Living Center.

It took me a while to get there. I was afraid. I didn't know what to expect when I walked through the door. But eventually, the excuses I used to keep myself from coming to the Center were torn down. I first came to the Boston Living Center for a meal in 2005. I sat alone in the dining room and cried because I was scared. Staff and other members welcomed me without judgment into this amazing community inviting me to check out other programs available to everyone at the Center.

I first joined the Bridges for Life Program as

a member. This program provides a daily continental breakfast followed by a support group of varying topics that help bridge the gap between life's challenges and medication adherence.

After about a year, I was asked to become a peer advocate because of my sobriety time, my sustained housing and my desire to give back. In order to become an advocate, I completed trainings in group facilitation, harm reduction and crisis management.

Now I do outreach to nursing schools, social workers, and students carrying the message about Bridges for Life, addiction and HIV.

This year I am the co-chair of the Consumer Advisory Board. Our focus is on empowering members to give back to the Center, such as the member-organized yard sale which took place in September. We are also working on outreach with other AIDS service organizations to bring in new members and make them aware of the services offered at the Center.

Finally, I have been asked to co-chair the Celebration of Life Dinner. I am so excited to get together with BLC members, their loved ones, and my family and friends. I look forward to meeting everyone and having a great time on November 20th.



## Message from the Executive Director and Chair of the Board

After a four year absence, we are thrilled to announce the return of our *Celebration of Life* Thanksgiving Dinner to the Hynes Convention Center on Tuesday, November 20th. While it is critical to keep HIV visible in 2007, we feel that this is also an opportunity to bring the community together to celebrate another year of living with HIV/AIDS. This milestone event is such an important part of our history.

While we are busy lining up entertainers and confirming celebrity servers, that is not all we have going on this holiday season. Our wonderful friends at Whole Foods



Markets once again selected the Boston Living Center as the recipient of their November coupon drive. This

year, for the first time, we are featured in all 16 greater Boston area stores.

As this is being written, our volunteer judges are faced with the daunting task of choosing artwork by member artists to be featured in our 2008 calendar, called *The Art of Living*. The array of talent is positively breathtaking.

Finally, get your running shoes ready... we are the first AIDS service organization to be chosen as an official charity of the Boston Marathon® for the next three years! Check out our dynamic marathon logo created by our favorite graphic designer, Terry Stangel. If it looks vaguely familiar, Terry designed our original logo many years ago. We are grateful to her and so many other loyal friends for supporting our vision over the last 17 years.

May this be the beginning of a wonderful holiday season!

With warmest regards,

Cathy Morales,  
*Executive Director*

Alfredo Hernandez,  
*Chair of the Board*

## Welcome New BLC Board Member, Stephen Mally!



We are pleased to announce that Stephen Mally has joined the BLC Board. As a principal consultant for Blackbaud, Inc., Stephen has over 20 years experience in a variety of non-profit organizations in the areas of healthcare and disability including senior development roles at AIDS Action Committee, Joslyn Diabetes Center, and Leahy Clinic. He brings a wealth of experience in fundraising and management and we are honored to have him on our Board.

## Thanksgiving Dinner Co-Chairs

### Liz Walker

After twenty-five, highly-acclaimed years at the WBZ-TV News anchor desk, Walker decided to focus her journalistic expertise, creativity, and passion for the community on her new show. Recognized often for her exemplary



work on the air and in her community, Walker received the Prestigious Governor's Award from the New England branch of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in 1997. She has

been involved with BLC's Thanksgiving Dinners for several years as well as serving as a volunteer in the BLC meals program. Liz spends time volunteering at the the BLC because she felt immediately cared for and welcomed. "In a larger world that focuses on self reliance, and in a city that is too often considered cold and aloof, it is heartening to find communities where compassion and healing thrive. That's what happens at the Center."

### Andie Finard

Thanksgiving is a time for family. What struck me most, as I began volunteering at the BLC 9 years ago with our ceramics class, "Play with Clay with Randy and Andie", was that true feeling of family and belonging. Clay was our "vehicle", but sharing of the good and the not-so-good times of life, through honest conversation, was what kept us all coming back. Here at the Center, one finds a sense of peace and understand-



ing, while everything around us might seem to fail to make sense. As we renew our Celebration of Life Thanksgiving Dinner, I feel honored to continue volunteering at the BLC and to serve as a co-chair of this wonderful community event. Cathy Morales is thrilled to welcome Andie, with all her creativity and energy, to the BLC Board of Directors.

## With Gratitude to our 2007 Thanksgiving Supporters\*

**PREMIER SPONSORS:** Massachusetts Convention Center Authority, Massachusetts Department of Public Health - AIDS Bureau **PARTNERS:** Boston Redevelopment Authority, Joe Smith & Scott Popkowski **BENEFACTORS:** Abbott Virology, Auxilium, BioScrip Pharmacy, Boston Public Health Commission, Burns and Levinson, Larry & Christine Carsman, Fox Relocation, David Frieze, Gilead Sciences, Man-hunt, MERCK, Temple Beth Avodah, Donald Vaughan & Lee Ridgway **FRIENDS:** Bristol-Myers Squibb, Grossman Marketing, New England Leather Alliance, Temple Israel, Wainwright Bank **ALLIES:** 48 Hour Print, Adams Chapman, Aramark, Beacon Fruit & Produce, Community Servings, D&N Provisions, The Food Project, HallSmith Sysco, Hillcrest Gardens, In Blossom, Lotus Designs

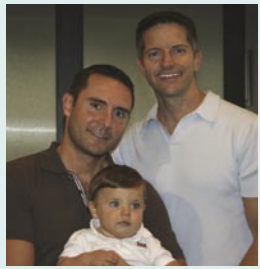
\*As of Press Time

## The Smith Popkowski Family

Joe and Scott have been together for 9 years. Joe is a mortgage banker and branch manager for Countrywide Home Loans where he is in his 15th year. Scott is the former owner of To Go Bakery and Café in the South End and an art director/ graphic designer. Scott is a stay-at-home dad caring for baby Ayden.

### BLC Involvement

Joe: I first got involved in Thanksgiving Dinner at the Hynes in the late 90's when friends asked if I would help with set up. So many of our friends have either died of AIDS or are HIV positive; it hits close to home because of how much it impacts our community.



Scott: Through the bakery we met lot of people who said great things about the BLC. That's how I started giving back to causes that made a difference.

### Why we give

Joe: Our accountant, who was treasurer of the BLC's Board at the time, was a catalyst. He said it's important to give back. **If you can't donate your time, donate money. We realized we should give a bigger percentage of our income. I believe that everyone should choose a way to give back.** Americans give a small percent of their incomes to charities, and I think it's sad. It is our responsibility to give to the greater good, to people without opportunities.

### Why we give to the BLC

Scott: **I give to the BLC because the mission is in line with what I believe.**

Joe: A lot of organizations do great work, but the BLC stands out because of the grassroots effort and the visible impact. Our friends who come here say such positive things about the meals, the feeling of camaraderie, of being taken care of. We never ask if we should write that big check. We write it and we never regret it. And then we come to the BLC and it is amazing to see all the work!

Scott: The BLC welcomes people with open arms so they feel there is nothing to fear or hide, that there is nothing wrong with them. This gives people hope and a better life.

## Betsy Kunkel

One of BLC's most dynamic volunteers, Betsy was a professor of counseling in Alabama who recently relocated to Boston. Betsy is also a quilter, skier, rollerblader and kayaker.

At this point in my life, I have time and energy to work as a volunteer. Since I have a professional background in research and clinical work with people who are HIV positive, I chose the BLC as opposed to other volunteer opportunities. The minute I came into the Center, I liked the feel of the building and the people; it was colorful, interesting, and fun. There is serious business going on here and yet there is a feeling of joy and affirmation for life. It is gratifying to be in an environment that makes a real impact on members' lives.

### Women's Day of Beauty

*The joy on the women's faces as they indulged themselves that day was irreplaceable! To have participated in the joyfulness of someone else's life- wow! You just can't buy something like that!*

After decorating floats for the Pride Parade,



I was assigned to help with gift solicitation and logistics for the **Women's Day of Beauty**. Our female members

were given the opportunity to spend the entire day being cared for, rather than caring for others- which is so often the case. And they did so with gusto! Professionals volunteered to give massage, hair, and make-up treatments. The women felt that they are valuable enough to receive this care. That was an unbelievably fun day!

### In The Kitchen

I have a blast in there! I help with meal prep, serving and clean up. There is a real culture of teamwork in the kitchen. Since members require balanced nutrition, staff work hard to prepare healthy food that is also delicious and attractive. I admire this ethic and enjoy being part of the team.

### Thanksgiving Celebration of Life Dinner

This is my first Thanksgiving Dinner with the BLC. I am working with the committee to make sure there are enough volunteers, as well as helping with general organization. I've heard about the history of this spectacular event and I can't wait for the big night!

## Chris Casale, Bioscrip Pharmacy

Chris has been involved in HIV services for over 15 years in the Boston area. With a passion for healthcare, he has degrees in pre-med, biology, psychology and pharmacy.

After several years as a pharmacist at CVS, I was excited to develop Bioscrip, a specialty pharmacy focusing on HIV/AIDS, because it was an opportunity to merge my personal and professional passions. Bioscrip allows pharmacists to be a vital part of the healthcare team, advising patients on medication side effects, insurance, clinical trials, and drug interactions. Members feel comfortable talking to us since they come in for meals, prescriptions and wellness services. Staff of Bioscrip and BLC are in a unique position to help members access and maintain the services they need.



Back in the 80's, coming out as a gay man was difficult because of the stigma associated with HIV and being gay. I wanted to do whatever I could to help remove that stigma. The BLC was the perfect place to do that, so I helped pioneer the medication adherence program with Sheila Davis.

In 2007, the Thanksgiving Dinner



Staff of Bioscrip Pharmacy

is back at the Hynes as a reminder that HIV is still a concern. Despite progress, people are still dying, people are still getting infected, and there is still stigma and discomfort about HIV in our society. We want to ensure that our services are available as long as people need them. **The Celebration of Life Dinner is a way to deepen Bioscrip's connection with the BLC to help people living with HIV/AIDS; a perfect example of a non-profit and a for-profit working together to achieve similar goals.**

The Dinner is a time for everyone to come together, share a meal, commemorate lives lost, and create new memories. Since holidays can be tough for people with HIV/AIDS, many of whom suffer from depression, it is important for us to show that no one has to be alone. I couldn't ask for a better prescription to fill! BioScrip is honored to participate in the Celebration on Thanksgiving and every other day of the year.

## Buy Coupons at Foods Market to Support the BLC

This November, shoppers at Whole Foods Markets can provide a hot and nutritious meal for Boston Living Center members. Shoppers will be able to "Buy a Meal for Someone Living with HIV/AIDS" at \$3.50 for lunch or \$5 for dinner by purchasing a coupon when checking out at the register.

This year, the BLC has partnered with **all 16 Area** Whole Foods Markets. Participating stores are located in Bedford,



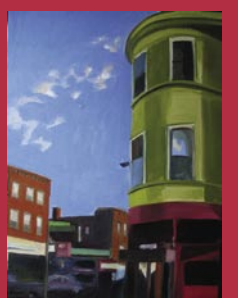
Bellingham, Boston (three locations: Brighton, Charles River Plaza and Symphony), Cam-

bridge (three locations: Central Square, Fresh Pond and River Street), Framingham, Hingham, Newton, Newtonville, Swampscott, Wayland, Woburn and Wellesley Hills. With a mutual focus on wellness, the continued relationship between the Boston

Living Center and Whole Foods Markets is a natural fit.

## The Art of Living The 2008 Desk Calendars are Ready!

We are delighted to feature the work of talented BLC members and other artists living with HIV/AIDS in our newest desk calendar. This makes a great holiday gift, plus it supports BLC art classes and studios. You can view and purchase the art in the calendar plus more work by HIV+ artists at the Stoneham Theater on November 29 to December 23. Call 617-236-1012 x256 to order your desk calendar for \$10.



Laura Mendez Garcia

# 26.2 Miles with the Boston Living Center

**BLC's 2008 Running for Life Marathon Team is Recruiting! Spread the Word**



The Boston Living Center was selected as one of just six new charities of the Boston Marathon®. As

the only AIDS service organization represented, the BLC is honored to be part of this elite race. Funds raised through the marathon will support our education workshops empowering members to become advocates for their own health and well-being.

We are accepting applications for our 2008 "Running for Life" team. Runners with a commitment to HIV/AIDS and an understanding of the demands of marathon training are encour-

aged to apply. Team members will benefit from fundraising and physical training support, and pre-and post race celebrations. Qualified runners may also join the team. For an application, visit [www.bostonlivingcenter.org/marathon.shtml](http://www.bostonlivingcenter.org/marathon.shtml).

Or call the Boston Living Center 617-236-1012 x 256 for more



## BOSTON LIVING CENTER

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## Coming OUT about HIV

**"Who should I tell that I am HIV+? . . . How can I tell my Mom? . . . Do I have to tell my boyfriend?  
What if my girlfriend kicks me out of the house when she finds out?  
When should I tell my friends? . . . When do I tell this new guy I am dating about my HIV status?"**

These are some of the confusing questions that arise when dealing with HIV and relationships. Staff members Brenda Bellizeare and Kim Tracy describe a participant who had a transformative experience with BLC's newest program called *Healthy Relationships*, a support group that teaches how to manage issues around disclosure and relationships.

James is a 56 year old BLC member who has never participated in this type of group before. After helping him find housing, Brenda encouraged him to try *Healthy Relationships*. James explains that he felt shy at first, "As an only child, I never had a feeling of being part of a group. But in *Healthy Relationships*, I felt comfortable with my peers. I found that I could open up and share my feelings. I learned that my emotions and my situation are not totally unique. It made my experience living with HIV more understandable and acceptable."



Kim Tracy, *Healthy Relationships Coordinator*

act out different ways of handling the situation. "The film clips are extremely effective" points out Brenda, "Besides being fun; they allow participants to role play a real life situation in a safe place. This helps explain the differences between disclosing to friends, family and partners."

"*Healthy Relationships* helped ease my fear about disclosing. I was always trying to hide the fact that I am HIV positive and now I feel more confident in talking about my status" says James.

James can often be found in BLC's Cyber Space keeping up on his computer skills and

"*Healthy Relationships*," explains Kim "recognizes that living with HIV can be very stressful and the thought of telling someone your status or beginning a new relationship can be overwhelming."

Using scenes from movies that portray disclosure, participants analyze a scenario and

is now participating in another program at the Center called *L.I.F.E.*, an educational support group that increases immune functioning. "The Center as a whole opened a part of me that I already had inside but didn't know how to get out," says James, "When I feel relaxed with the people and the surroundings, I have no barriers. I feel comfortable being me."



Brenda Bellizeare, *Healthy Relationships Coordinator*