

Helping HIV+ Clients Into Care

“Everybody makes mistakes. But when people see that you care about them, it helps them start over.”

For Nancy Collins of Middle Flint, making sure that HIV-positive clients receive the treatment they need to live a long, healthy life and protect their partners is a top priority. “We work with the Department of Public Health to get HIV-positive clients into care – or back into care – as quickly as we can,” says Nancy. “And we follow up to make sure clients are keeping their appointments. It’s a true team effort.”

Recently, the agency added a full HIV/STD risk questionnaire to their nursing assessment. That, in combination with INSTI training for three Middle Flint nurses, is having an impact, says Nancy. “The nursing assessment leads naturally to a conversation about HIV.”

This quarter an HIV-positive client came to the agency for the first time. “They were looking for a way to get the care they needed without being stigmatized for being HIV-positive and letting their medical treatment lapse,” says Nancy. A big believer in second chances, Nancy understands the crippling effect of stigma. “Everybody makes mistakes. But when people see that you care about them it helps them start over.” One way that she demonstrates caring is with a simple phone call: “Hey, how is it going? I know you had an appointment the other day. Did it go well? Is there anything I can help you with? Do you have plenty of condoms?”

Her support, whether it takes the form of a phone call or access to resources, can mean the difference between staying in treatment and falling out of care. At any given time, Nancy encourages five or more HIV-positive clients, helping them address their barriers to sustaining treatment – and making her community a healthier, safer place. ■



Nurse Nancy Collins of Middle Flint in Americus

Nancy Collins Retires

During the ten years she served as HIV Program Coordinator at Middle Flint in Americus, Nancy Collins tested 2,761 individuals for HIV, diagnosed and linked 11 HIV-positive clients to lifesaving treatment and helped 12 previously diagnosed individuals return to care.

“I have loved what I’ve done for ten years,” says Nancy, “so this retirement is bittersweet. I’ve formed bonds with some wonderful people that I could really count on. For years I was the only HIV worker at Middle Flint, so whenever I had a big event, I would reach out and EIS workers from Newnan, or Griffin, or Columbus would come to Americus to help. We were all part of something – and I’m going to miss that.”

“We at Imagine Hope want to thank Nancy for her dedication to the EIS program and her community,” says Imagine Hope CEO Marie Sutton. “We won’t forget you, Nancy.” ■