

FROM THE HEART

A Magazine for Hope and Fun
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Celebrating Thanksgiving

By Jim Masters

“How do you celebrate Thanksgiving?” I asked several people recently. And I got a variety of answers to this question.

“Oh, in the traditional way,” some said. “You know--turkey, potatoes and gravy, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie. My family gets together for a meal like that.”

“I get together with friends. We have a potluck meal.”

“I never know how I’m going to celebrate it until the day arrives. Then usually a friend and I go to a bar for a drink.”

“My church puts on a dinner for people who have no families, and I help with that.”

“I don’t really celebrate it. I just stay at home and watch TV or something.”

“I usually have to work, so it’s no holiday for me.”

So, you see, no matter what you do on Thanksgiving there are others like you. You are not alone.

Everyday Miracles

I like to walk alone on country paths, rice plants and wild grasses on both sides, putting each foot down on the earth in mindfulness, knowing that I walk on the wondrous earth. In such moments, existence is a miraculous and mysterious reality. People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is...to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don’t even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child—our own two eyes. All is a miracle.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Born in 1926 in Vietnam; lived also in France.

A Pearl of Wisdom

There are only two ways to live
your life.

One is as though nothing is a
miracle.

The other is as though everything
is a miracle.

Albert Einstein

Gay Pride?

By Is

What a great time we had at the Gay Pride Day...watching all of our brothers and sisters, different ages, different colors, some heavier than others, some taller or shorter, different classes all rolled into one fabulous day. And it disappeared as the day ended; so did the fun. Suddenly, we were separates again...until next year. For the next 364 days, we would regain our stuffy composure by not identifying with or acknowledging our brothers and sisters. For 364 days we insisted on not being a part of the "crowd". We were suddenly *better than* again. How easy it was to pick out idiosyncrasies of our brothers and sisters...now we have something to amuse ourselves with. Now we were one with our tormentors.

I was Betty once, Joan at least 3 times. How I fit into to the social scheme by playing evil. I no longer had to look at who I was...I could point at the unsuspecting and spew my venom. I forgot how I got here. I forgot the small town I left in shame. I forgot the jeers as I chose my destiny. I chose booze to help me forget my own terror. I forgot because it was easier to forget...but I didn't!

Next year is Gay Pride. It was such fun last year. I'll have to find something new to wear. After all, it's Gay Pride.....

We Are Not Alone

Our stories may all be different, but yet they are often all the same. We are in a daily fight for our lives, a fight against an enemy that threatens to destroy us, t-cell by t-cell. We fight back with the tools we have, the skills we've learned, and we adapt with each passing day and experience. In all, we share one common thread - We are not alone!

Maybe you tested HIV+ very recently; maybe you've known it for some time but this is the first time you've reached out for information or support. The Damien Center creates an environment where people can gather to share information, experiences, and make new friends - friends who understand what it is like to live with this disease.

There's no need for you to handle this by yourself. You are not the only person in our community facing this. Just hearing how someone else has adjusted to living with the virus can be enough to help you realize that life is still good, that you can still have love and laughter. We are not alone. And neither are you.

By Perry Junjulas Executive Director of the Albany Damien Center and person living with AIDS. Reprinted in part from *The Body Positive*

YOU CAN BE PUBLISHED IN *FROM THE HEART*

From the Heart is published at the Albany Damien Center to provide a way for the guests, staff, friends and volunteers of the Center to share their interests and their creative talents with others. Submit items that you would like to have included to Jim Masters, the working editor. Perry Junjulas is the editor-in-chief, who finally decides what to include. Send items to Jim Masters by e-mail at jmasters002@nycap.rr.com. Or call him at 459-7827 to arrange to have him get them at the Center.