

DEAN: (ON THE LINE) Jimmy, how y'all tonight?

JIMMY: Great, great, and congratulations on being elected the new president of--

HOST 1: Yeah, great.

DEAN: Well, thank you. Thank you. I appreciate that.

JIMMY: I want to introduce you to Jill Gray. She does a monthly segment here and is a member of normal as a matter of fact.

JILL GRAY: Sure am, for a long time.

DEAN: (ON THE LINE) Jill, how are you?

JILL GRAY: I'm doing fine. Well, actually not too fine. But I'm getting there.

DEAN: Yes, I have a little bit of regular news for y'all. And it's kind of an appeal I'll put at the end if you'll allow. This is a cultural baggage news report, the unvarnished truth about the drug war. And I'm going to repeat a story I gave on ratio last night wasted.

On Monday, drug czar John Walters announced that according to a new study, \$929 million of taxpayer funds for anti-drug campaigns haven't discouraged drug use among children at all. Now he admits that. But he has announced plans to request Congress to give him even more money for some new and of course better ads.

Those guys, they pour billions down the drain and accomplish nothing. In Canada, they're more pragmatic. We've talked about them.

What they intend to do is gut the correctional services zero tolerance policy on drugs. They're not going to test people. They're going to have fewer sanctions on people who smoke a bit and fewer people returning to prison.

And the only opposition they have is from the Prison Guards Union. Now, hard drug users should not go to jail. This is what the members of the European, excuse me, the English members of parliament have said. A sweeping review of drug policy in Britain is expected to recommend next week that users of illegal substances such as cocaine and heroin should be offered treatment to help them kick their habit rather than face jail.

And this long awaited report follows 10 months of evidence from experts, drug organizations, and the police. And they say that police in court time should be better spent on--

JIMMY: Real crime.

DEAN: Real crime. There you go. Now in the United States, the contradiction between rhetoric and reality on medical marijuana is piling up. In '97, drug czar Barry McCaffrey claimed that science, not politics, should determine whether marijuana has medical value. And then he had the National Academy of Sciences review the literature.

And the Academy concluded that marijuana should be made available on a case-by-case basis. And of course, Mr McCaffrey dismissed the report. Now this is just going on time after time.

These reports in any nation around the world come up with the same conclusions. And the government of the United States tries to stifle this information. Since '78, the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institute on Drug Abuse have been providing government grown marijuana cigarettes to a small group of patients each month.

Now, a study found that medical marijuana provided effective, symptomatic relief of pain, muscle spasms, and intraocular pressure elevations. Now despite Mr Walters vague claim of brain damage, researchers have found no sign of neurological harm in patients using large quantities of marijuana for as long as 20 years. Now, federal drug lawyers say it's impossible to make marijuana available.

Even though, at this point in time, they can prescribe morphine and cocaine. Now, surely, they could prescribe marijuana too. Now we're going to continue to fight to remove these criminal penalties against the use of medical marijuana until the government changes the laws. And in that regard, this is the appeal I wanted to make.

Nationally, medical marijuana activists have called for a National Day of nonviolent direct action to push back the DEA. Now this is going to be visitations to the DEA offices nationwide. It's going to be Thursday, June 6 at 12:00 noon.

And I would recommend your listeners visit Americans for Safe Access, or ASA. Their location on the net is www.safeaccessnow.org. That's one big word, safe access now. Now this is a proactive measure to put the federal government on notice.

Now, ASA's Stephanie Scherer, one of the campaign's organizers, stated, we will be doing direct actions and civil disobedience. I understand this to be that we're bringing the activism of Stockport England to Houston to all these nations across America. And we're doing this on behalf of everybody, including the DEA agents and their families, , who have expressed to us that yes, there are reservations, determinations still to be made on heroin and cocaine. But everyone agrees that it's time to end this insanity about medical marijuana.

Now, we will serve the DEA with a cease and desist order demanding that the agency keep hands off of medical marijuana patients and providers. There will be some medical marijuana patients on hand at the DEA headquarters. There's no requirement for anyone to light up.

But we're asking for people to stand with us against this abuse. And if you'd like to be part of this event, voice your protest, please email me. And my email address is dean@cultural-baggage.com. We'll be talking more about this in the next couple of weeks.

My next one hour show will be May 31 from 10:00 to 11:00 AM after Democracy Now. We'll have a speech by Politically Incorrect Bill Maher, interviews with an online medical marijuana provider here about the marijuana vaporizer of Dr. Todd Mikuriya. And we'll have a visit from George McMahon, one of the legal medical marijuana patients.

He gets 300 joints a month from the drug czar. And that's basically my report. I'd be glad to talk about any aspect you might consider.

JIMMY:

Who me? He was pointing--

HOST 2: Very appropriate that you're going to be doing it at noon to have a sit-in their cafeteria at the DEA office, tell them if you don't get to eat, they don't.

JIMMY: Yeah, exactly.

JILL GRAY: That's right one of the things that I tell people about when I discuss this, and that's something I was telling Jimmy in an email. A lot of people will not discuss this openly amongst their friends. It's like a closet thing. You're in a closet.

I rarely discuss this amongst my friends that occasionally I do imbibe. The thing I say is there's a big difference between abusing and using a drug. There's a huge difference between abusing and using a drug.

And my usual example of marijuana as opposed to some other harder drugs is you send a guy into a convenience store with a gun to rob it, and he's high on cocaine, he'll kill somebody. You send a guy in to a convenience store to rob it who's high on marijuana, he'll trade that gun for a bag of chips.

JIMMY: No kidding.

JILL GRAY: And that's the--

JIMMY: Munchies, you got it.

JILL GRAY: That's the example I want people to walk away with that people that are on grass are not these people who are killing people or burning things or just wild and crazy. They're more mellow. And--

DEAN: Where did they bust these pot smokers? They bust them at home watching TV. It's just insane.

JILL GRAY: I agree that there should-- any use should be responsible, use in the same way that you use alcohol. And you know, I'm not an alcohol person. I have never-- I've had drinks. I do drink on the rare occasion.

But I don't-- it's not something I do regularly. And I don't like the way alcohol makes me feel. I just don't like it. And so my option is marijuana. And--

JIMMY: I do like the way that makes me feel.

JILL GRAY: I do too, very much. And I agree that when you do use alcohol or marijuana, you should do it in a responsible way. You shouldn't be out on the road. You shouldn't be taking care of children or working at heavy duty machinery somewhere.

JIMMY: No, certainly not.

JILL GRAY: You know, that kind of stuff. But it's the same cautions that you've heard your whole life about alcohol.

DEAN: Exactly right.

JILL GRAY: So I'm--

DEAN: Or taking codeine for--

JILL GRAY: Yeah, Benadryl for your head, your stuffy nose. So I talk about this all the time. I'm getting that sign. So I mean--

JIMMY: Yeah, we need to get--

JILL GRAY: It's my time to leave.

DEAN: And I'm just saying, we sure need some people from the land of the free, home of the brave because it's time to stand up.

JILL GRAY: I agree.

DEAN: I appreciate any help.

JIMMY: You bet. Thanks, Dean, for calling in for the weekly report.

DEAN: You bet, Jimmy.

JIMMY: Take care.

DEAN: All right, night, y'all.

JIMMY: Goodnight.

JILL GRAY: Night.

JIMMY: He is the first and only heterosexual person who has ever had a spot on this show. And oops, I think there's a good-- yeah, I mean, he's bringing forth a lot of good information there as--

HOST 2: Excuse me.

JIMMY: As someone with HIV, I know about trying to keep weight on. And sometimes the doc gives me a testosterone shot. But you know, something more easily would be to smoke marijuana or eat brownie or whatever.

JILL GRAY: And then munchies would be-- the side effect of that is the munchies. And that's what helps with the weight.

JIMMY: You bet. You bet.

HOST 3: When he eats a brownie, he gets more [? nilly ?]. When he gets that testosterone shot, I can't stand to be in the same room with him.

[LAUGHTER]

JIMMY: Oh, that's funny. I'm going to close this out with another oldie. And this is from a guy from the '50s, who as it turned out, was gay. And this was his big hit song, huge hit song back in the '50s.

And when we come back, we'll probably have Steve and Jerome. And maybe we'll talk with Judy for a moment, OK.

JILL GRAY: Finally, she says.

JIMMY: Here we go. Just a moment. Here we go.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

JIMMY: And for those of you who are quite a bit younger than me, and that's most of you, that was Johnny Ray from his song from the '50s called *Cry*. And he is an openly gay guy.

HOST 4: [INAUDIBLE]

JIMMY: Well, he is now anyway. With me right now very quickly, sorry, is Judy Reeves. Hi, honey.

JUDY REEVES: Oh, now I have to talk. Oh, hi.

JIMMY: Yes, you have to talk.

JUDY REEVES: Well, I'm sorry.

JIMMY: Well, you've been doing a little--

JUDY REEVES: Commenting.

JIMMY: --talking in the background. Yes, commenting in the background.

JUDY REEVES: Well, I don't comment too much.

- [INAUDIBLE]

JIMMY: I know. I know. And I'm so glad she did.

JUDY REEVES: Well, I'm here.

JIMMY: But we-- I want to get in real quickly--

JUDY REEVES: Real quick.

JIMMY: --from you.

JUDY REEVES: From me.

JIMMY: Because we've got a thing going on for Pride Week.

JUDY REEVES: Yes, we do.

JIMMY: What it is it?

JUDY REEVES: An event folks.

JIMMY: An actual event for Pride Week. Tell me about it.

JUDY REEVES: Gulf Coast Archive and Museum of GLBT History and the Pride committee--

JIMMY: Yes.

JUDY REEVES: --are going to be the recipients of a theater night at Theater Suburbia on June the 26, which is a Wednesday, the Wednesday before the parade. Curtain's at 8:00 PM. They're doing a show called Comfort and Joy. It does have a gay theme.

JIMMY: It has a gay theme.

JUDY REEVES: Paul Hager is directing it.

JIMMY: Oh yeah, he's great.

JUDY REEVES: Yeah, you know Paul.

JIMMY: Yeah, he's from the crew.

JUDY REEVES: Yeah, well, not this year. But he has been with the crew for many, many years. So he's directing. And I'm assistant to the director on this particular show. It's going to be a lot of fun.

We're looking into now and getting ready to set up things to have a raffle during the show. GCAM will have a little mini exhibit out there in the lobby people can come look at and some photo albums and so on. The cost of tickets is going to be \$20. And we're really excited about it. Like I said--

JIMMY: You should be.

JUDY REEVES: --Pride committee and GCAM are the recipients of this. And GCAM's doing a lot of the work to take it off of the Pride weeks hell week so to speak. And I'm just really excited about it. I want everybody come out and see it. We will be hearing more about it on the [? Handnet ?] and on our web page and every place else we can get it.

JIMMY: And here every week until [INAUDIBLE].

JUDY REEVES: Here every week until they make me shut up. That's right, which they frequently make me shut up.

JIMMY: Oh, I'm sorry.

JUDY REEVES: But that's OK.

JIMMY: OK, I have to make you shut up right now.

JUDY REEVES: I know. I'm shutting up.

JIMMY: We need to get to that

JUDY REEVES: My up is shut. Thank you all for the time.

JIMMY: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thanks for being here.

JUDY REEVES: Bye, sure.

JIMMY: OK.

JUDY REEVES: But I'm not leaving until I get my hug.

JIMMY: OK, well, wait a minute here. We got to do a hug thing. An on air hug.

JUDY REEVES: An on-air hug. I love it. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

And a brand new segment. I want to introduce to the *After Hours* audience Steven Jerome.

STEVEN Good morning.

JEROME:

JIMMY: Hello, Steven. How are you doing?

STEVEN Waking up.

JEROME:

JIMMY: Yes, what do you mean? You mean-- this is still Saturday night for us. I mean, you've already been to bed. And it's Sunday morning.

STEVEN Of course.

JEROME:

HOST 2: Somebody here has been to bed already. That's wrong.

JIMMY: Who with?

STEVEN I'm not telling.

JEROME:

JIMMY: Oh, OK.

STEVEN That's next show.

JEROME:

HOST 2: Wasn't me, obviously.

JIMMY: Well, I'm going to tell something right off because you have a guest sitting next to you.

STEVEN Yes, this very nice young lady, Sally Huffer. She's from the Montrose Counseling Center.

JEROME:

JIMMY: And I want to let everyone know that they can see a picture of Sally and Anita in this week's eclipse.

STEVEN Nice shirt.

JEROME:

JIMMY: Yes, and it's a wonderful picture. And right underneath, it says Mary's. And so am I to assume that you two ended up at Mary's?

SALLY: We were at Mary's.

JIMMY: Aha, how did this happen?

SALLY: I'm sure everyone is familiar with Gingervitus and her entourage.

JIMMY: Oh, yes.

SALLY: They did a show to benefit the Lesbian Health Outreach Project one in March and another one in April. And so we were--

JIMMY: Gingervitus is incredible.

SALLY: Oh, she is fabulous.

JIMMY: Yes, she is.

SALLY: So anyway, we were there. And they raised money for the Lesbian Health Outreach Project, which is a joint program from the Counseling Center and the clinic. And it was fantastic. We all had a great time.

JIMMY: And Anita looked like she was having a good time, too.

SALLY: As far as I could tell.

JIMMY: Evidently. What did you do with her? Is she still in the lobby or what? She under the table? What? What's going on?

**STEVEN
JEROME:** Back at Mary's.

SALLY: I think it was an exit stage left.

JIMMY: Oh, she went back to Mary's. Is that it?

**STEVEN
JEROME:** Yeah, after hours.

JIMMY: Oh, very quickly, before she leaves, I want to mention that you're going to talk about the not only the Montrose Counseling Center, but the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, right?

SALLY: Absolutely.

JIMMY: And the big news is that--

SALLY: That we are one of the recipients of the Grand Marshal--

JIMMY: Tada.

SALLY: --for Pride Parade.

JIMMY: Yes.

SALLY: We're all extremely excited about that.

JIMMY: I am really, really happy about that. This is the 20th anniversary.

SALLY: 20th anniversary of the Switchboard.

JIMMY: Yeah, actually, we're fudging a bit because they actually opened their doors around Christmas of 1981. But they didn't really become a corporation in really fully formed until '82. And I've been there for 14 of those years, amazingly so.

SALLY: I can't even imagine. It would be wonderful to hear from other people that have been volunteers for the Switchboard in the last 20 years and invite them to come out for the Pride Parade. And because we're going to-- even the Montrose Counseling Center float is going to be focused on the Switchboard. I mean, all of the staff, everybody is behind it 100%.

JIMMY: When I first went into training for the switchboard, there was a group of 15 of us. One of the people who did the training was [? Jule ?] [? Gray, ?] the woman who just did that first segment.

STEVEN
JEROME: You should have kept her in here.

JIMMY: She's out in lobby somewhere. And if she can hear my voice, [? Jule, ?] get in here.

SALLY: Maybe you can recruit her to come back to the Switchboard.

- We want to cheer for you.

JIMMY: Yes, because she has--

STEVEN
JEROME: And a phone.

JIMMY: --is moving back to [INAUDIBLE] she can.

HOST 2: Here.

JIMMY: And she's back.

JILL GRAY: [INAUDIBLE]

JIMMY: Yes, you do. You do. I was just telling-- you know Sally Huffer, Steven Jerome. Sally is with the Montrose Counseling Center. And Steven Jerome is in charge of well, I don't know. Are you the manager? What are you, Steven?

STEVEN
JEROME: The volunteer manager.

JIMMY: Volunteer manager of--

STEVEN
JEROME: The Gay and Lesbian Switchboard.

JILL GRAY: Yeah, I met you. I remember.

JIMMY: And I was just telling them that 14 years ago, 14, more than 14 years ago, when I was in my training class, you were one of the people who taught me.

JILL GRAY: Yeah, I sure was. That's where we met when you signed on to do that. Yeah, I met two, three of my lovers there. It was a great place to hang out.

JIMMY: Yeah, it was. And I was there through them all.

JILL GRAY: Yeah, you sure were. No, I love the Switchboard. I really did.

I put my 10 years in and just had gotten to a point where it was just time for me to move on. I was on the board of directors for a short time. And I guess what, eight years ago, I guess it was.

JIMMY: It's a brand new switchboard.

JILL GRAY: Yeah, that's what you were telling me.

JIMMY: It's all wonderful. I'm going to shut up and let Steven Jerome-- this is his segment. And Sally is his guest. And so we're going to let them talk.

STEVEN JEROME: But we're talking about the Switchboard. Tell us about how the Montrose Counseling Center works with the Switchboard.

SALLY: Well, the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard Houston is a program of the anti-violence project at Montrose Counseling Center. It's just one branch of the programs that we have in the anti-violence project. And it is staffed entirely by volunteers.

Of course, we have a wonderful volunteer manager, Steven, who's been recruiting a lot of people. I think when we originally joined with the Switchboard about a year and a half ago, we came to that with one volunteer, two volunteers, that were still with the Switchboard. And how many have you-- do we have now?

STEVEN JEROME: We're currently at 21.

SALLY: 21. And we've got another--

STEVEN JEROME: Class going on now.

SALLY: Exactly. So and how many are in that class?

STEVEN JEROME: 6 is in this class.

SALLY: Exactly. So we've been building it up. And we've had a lot of people. And what we ask for right now is just a commitment of one year. So we've-- even though we have 22 right now, in the last year, we've had people come and go in that-- fulfilling their yearly commitment. So--

STEVEN HAYES: It's a constant turnover all the time, so constantly need more volunteers as older volunteers move on to other projects also.

SALLY: And one of the important things, too, I think, is that when you sign up, the commitment is whatever the volunteer is willing to make.

STEVEN HAYES: Correct. We do ask for a minimum of four hours a month.

SALLY: Right.

JIMMY: Which is really easy.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

I used to do three hours every Friday night. I did the-- the what I call the crazy hour, because those who weren't at the bars were calling us on the phone. And I enjoyed it. It really enlightened me. It helped me personally, because I could see in real terms that my life was not so bad, because people who called us were having really hard time. And as ugly as it sounds, it made me appreciate that I was not in that place, and which really helped me psychologically a lot during that time.

But when I was on the Switchboard, the major topic of conversation was AIDS. It was right after-- I guess it was early 80s, probably 80-81. And it had just changed from grids to AIDS.

SALLY: Right.

JIMMY: And people were calling us, telling us the doctor told him they had this disease and walked out, and they didn't know anything about it, and they were calling us to find out what is it, what am I going to do? Where can I get help? And we were really the only people in town who had that information. It wasn't long-- I guess, another three or four years, the AIDS Foundation set up a hotline that they pretty much took over for that. But for a long time, we were getting some really serious horror stories about death and dying and loneliness and despair and people going from \$70,000 or \$80,000 to \$460 a month.

Their salary from one year dropped, because they suddenly were on disability and no insurance. And people think that the disease was bad enough, but compound that with having this lifestyle, earning money, living this lifestyle, and suddenly because your company didn't cover you or-- and you had no fallback kind of situation you could fall back on, and you went from that kind of living comfortable more than comfortable life down to \$465 a month, eating food from pantries. And it was a really, really miserable time.

And that's one of the reasons I kind of moved on was that I'd gotten that far full-- kind of full of it.

STEVEN HAYES: And even nowadays, you still get calls about AIDS and HIV-related, but we also are seeing a new series of calls who deals with aging issues. It's like the LGBT community has finally reached over 25, and we're looking at issues that we just never thought about before like retirement, insurance, planning for our later lives. And we're now receiving calls that deals with aging issues. We still get a lot of calls that deal with coming out issues, more so--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Nowadays, where they feel that is a safe place I can call to find some answers. And the Switchboard, it works a twofold purpose for the volunteers, because they're not only helping other people. A lot of times, they find out that they get that help back also.

JIMMY: Right.

STEVEN HAYES: They've come back. I've had volunteers come back says, oh, I didn't look at something that way until I had this conversation.

JIMMY: I became very enlightened, very involved in the community, because being at the Switchboard, I knew about everything going on in the community. And before that, I knew nothing. I could-- I would pick up a magazine or a paper and that was my access to what was happening in the community. And when I was at Switchboard, I realized that that's only a minuscule little amount of things going on in our community--

STEVEN HAYES: Oh, yes.

JIMMY: And that the Switchboard had just gobs of stuff, and I became involved in this, and I found things that really interested me. Like The Chorus didn't interest me, and it was in the paper every day. But there were things I didn't know about before. I didn't know there was a LIB, Lesbians in Business, I didn't know there were groups like that. I didn't know there was a Gardening Club. And when I joined the Switchboard, that's when I learned these things and was able to connect with things that were more personally-- I was more personally interested in and was able to participate more in my community, which put me even deeper and stepping into other things. So--

STEVEN HAYES: Well I know one of my sales pitches that I use for getting volunteers is that on the Switchboard, you get the first hand information of what's going on not only in our community but with computers now. And with the Switchboard being on the internet, we get to find out firsthand what's going on around the country and around the world.

JIMMY: I found a lot of people misunderstood what the Switchboard was. I think in some cities, it's just a bar guide on phone.

STEVEN HAYES: Yes.

JIMMY: It's not here. It's not--

SALLY: Although we do provide those services. And--

JIMMY: But it's not just that.

SALLY: Exactly. It's a tremendous resource. What we think though, is that I mean if somebody needs to find a bar or wants information about the bars, if they've got our number, great. Give us a call. We can refer you, and we can take calls now 24 hours. We don't take bar referrals 24 hours, just crisis calls 24 hours. But if somebody has our number, when they call for a bar referral, chances are if they're in a crisis, they'll have our number handy, and then they'll call us--

JIMMY: I still give out cards. I still have some cards.

SALLY: So and like you were saying--

STEVEN HAYES: It's funny though, because I'm the contact person for the GCTC Gulf Coast Transgender Community hotline. And I don't know how many people I have had that have called me at 2, 3, 4:00 in the morning wanting information about the transgender community. And in some cases, they've been referred from the Switchboards. In some cases, they've called us directly. And it seems like that they get desperate at like 4:00 in the morning.

STEVEN HAYES: It's always after 3:30 in the morning.

JIMMY: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. But the thing of it is right now with the Switchboard being a part of the Montrose Community-- Montrose Counseling Center-- dear god-- we have done something that we've always wanted and that was to be available 24 hours a day. As its own corporation, the Switchboard was only able in its heyday to be available 9 hours a day. And now, it's 24 hours a day.

SALLY: Right. And I think it's really important for us to give the phone number.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

--as many times as possible.

JIMMY: Yes. Which is--

STEVEN HAYES: 713-529-3211.

JIMMY: Yes. That's kind of imprinted on my brain.

STEVEN HAYES: Oh, yeah.

JIMMY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Also if you're interested in volunteering, you can call Steven at Montrose Counseling Center at 713-529-0037.

STEVEN HAYES: Extension 4.

SALLY: Oh, extension 4.

JIMMY: It sure turn a light on in my head when I joined. He really did. And most of the people that I dealt with that who came in, because that's one of the things I really enjoyed was training. Because I get to meet people and I got to watch that light go off in their heads. Because it really changed the direction of my life. And most of the people that I dealt with and met through, it did. It altered their life direction by becoming part of the Switchboard. Because before, they didn't know what was going on in town. They thought it was a bar guide too.

And like you said, it is. But it's so much more. And so much more is what sets the light off in people. And they become more involved and more aware of what's going on in town and more-- I think the best thing about Switchboard was teaching me active listening.

STEVEN HAYES: Oh, yeah.

JIMMY: That's the best thing is if I could put my finger on one thing, was teaching me active listening about parroting and things like that. Those kinds of things was the best thing for me, because I wanted to be a counselor. As a matter of fact, I did my practicum at Mount Athos Counseling Center and did some work there, some counseling there. And the first step of that decision was active listening in the Switchboard.

Learning the active listening in Switchboard, it was so cool to realize that I could control not-- I hate that word, because it's really sounds terrible, but I could control what was happening in conversations and what was happening between me and another person, my relationships by how I listened, not control in a way where you direct something but control-- things would go where I wanted them to go, that kind of control rather than controlling somebody.

STEVEN HAYES: You would lead the flow of the conversation.

JIMMY: Right. Right. And I could make more intimate connections with people, because I learned to active listen. And one of the things with the training classes is that the volunteers not only learn stuff that they use on the phone like active listening, but these are also skills they find valuable when they get out in their own daily lives and at home also. Also, a lot of people not familiar, but the Switchboard along with the counseling center does offer other programs also, services, correct?

SALLY: Well like I was saying, it's part of the Anti-violence Project. And along with that we have grant money from the state of Texas that allows us to provide some of these services completely free of charge. And that includes our Hate Crimes Project. If somebody is the victim of a hate crime, they can give us a call. We can put them in counseling services. We can also send an advocate. This is for somebody who is the victim of a hate crime, somebody who is the victim of sexual assault, domestic partner violence.

We have advocates that can meet you wherever you are. If you need to get to a hospital, we've got somebody that can take you there, can be with you the entire time. If there needs to be a rape kit or if you need to be treated for anything, we have somebody that is sensitive to the community that can go with you and be a liaison with the doctors, the nurses and help that person through the process. We can also help you if you need to file a police report, let you know-- if you are going to file a police report, if it is a hate crime against-- and it's targeting the GLBT community, we can let you know that when you do that, what you can expect from the police department.

And we'll have somebody that can go with you. If you choose to do that, we can also let once you know once you do file a police report. And if you do claim that it's a hate crime, that's a matter of public record. So you have a decision to make how out do you want to be when you file that report. And like I said, we have somebody that's available 24 hours. We have somebody who just started who speaks Spanish. So we've got two advocates now that can go out and help people in a crisis situation. And if the only number somebody has is the number to the Switchboard, we can get in touch with those advocates.

HOST 1: Well I think the thing that a lot of people need to realize as far as volunteers and stuff like that is as you mentioned, it is not just a bar guide anymore. And this is an opportunity for people to give back to the community.

STEVEN HAYES: Right.

SALLY: Exactly. The other thing that I wanted to mention is that we also have emergency shelter services. And with those services, if somebody is the victim of a crime, if it's a hate crime or if they're in a domestic partner violent situation, if they need to get out of that situation immediately, and they don't have any place to go, we have developed a program with area hotels. And it provides safety for people. Because one of the things that the traditional shelter programs don't offer is safety.

For a gay man to go into a regular shelter program, he's risking an awful lot. Same thing for a woman that goes through a traditional shelter program. If she's a lesbian, the only criteria to limit who else can follow a person into a women's shelter is based on gender. So if your partner is also female, and it's a violent situation, she can follow you right into the shelter program. And if there are support groups out there, oftentimes, those support groups are based on the heterosexual community, and those pronouns are there, and it's often assumed that the abuser is male, and the survivor is female.

And once the support group-- if you come out to your support group, suddenly the other people in the group are focusing on a completely different issue than healing.

JIMMY: Right.

SALLY: They're focusing on the fact that I have a lesbian in my group who's been abused by another woman too. And that happens.

JIMMY: Uh-huh.

HOST 1: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: And so-- so one of the things that we're very proud of, like I said, is the shelter program. Same thing for a transgendered person. A transgendered person doesn't have a place to go. If they're the victim of a crime where-- I mean, if they go into a shelter program, I think we all know what the situation is there. There are no resources. So one of the great things about this program is that we've-- like I said, we've done it through area hotels. That means that male, female, transgender, anybody that is a victim of a crime.

And as I said, we have a grant from the state for these programs. It's at no cost to the individual nor does the person have to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender to access services in the hate crimes program, et cetera. And we can put them in a hotel room where they have their own place all by themselves. And that's just one of the things that we've been able to do with the Anti-violence Project and with Gay-Lesbian Switchboard Houston.

HOST 1: Yeah. I'm glad to hear that, because we had a situation about two weeks ago where we had a transgendered male to female situation where the person needed a place. Unfortunately, they contacted us like on Friday-- Friday night about 11:00 in the evening. And the only place-- they contacted the transgender shelter down there in Galveston, and they had no place to put them--

SALLY: Well, it is different. I mean, the transgender shelter as far as I'm familiar, is the homeless shelter, and the services that we provide are for victims of crimes. So there is that difference.

JIMMY: How does the counseling center connect with the Switchboard? I mean how does that-- I mean, I pick up the phone I just got beat up by my lover, and I pick up the phone, and I call-- I'm sorry, Steve. I call Steve at the Switchboard. And I say, you know, I'm afraid to stay here. You know, she drove away, she's drunk. I'm afraid she's going to come back. What does Steve do?

SALLY: Steve, what would you-- how would you handle it?

STEVEN HAYES: Immediately, I would get the information from you, and then I would call the advocate who was on call at that time, give the advocate this information, then the advocate would actually contact you personally.

JIMMY: And that was what you were saying anywhere that I want to be, because being right there may not be a safe place.

SALLY: Exactly.

JIMMY: So if I say OK, I'm going to my mother's house or my girlfriend, either friend's house, then you can contact or get in touch with them there.

SALLY: Right.

STEVEN HAYES: In cases of violence and-- like the domestic violence volunteers are all trained up on taking their report, the first-- the most important thing to do is to make sure that victim is in a safe place.

SALLY: Safety first.

STEVEN HAYES: That place can be determined either by the victim. If they say they want to go to their parents or a friend's house, that's the first thing we do. We want to do is get them to a safe place--

SALLY: And what a great thing if they do have a parent or a friend that they can go to. But in many cases--

STEVEN HAYES: They don't

SALLY: --there is nobody. There is no support system. And gosh, if people walk away and hear this on the air tonight, and they didn't know that this program existed, call the Switchboard. Call the Switchboard.

JIMMY: Well where would-- if they didn't have a family, and they didn't have this friend to go to, where would the advocate or where would-- I mean like a public place like the bus station, I mean, where would this advocate want to meet? I mean, surely you don't want to meet in a bar somewhere. I mean--

SALLY: Wherever the person is calling from. Start from that point.

JIMMY: Well, yeah. But that's what I mean. If that's an unsafe place, you want to get them away from there and meet somewhere else.

STEVEN HAYES: Yes. That would be--

JIMMY: How would you-- I mean where would you--

STEVEN HAYES: That would be really handled by the advocate, but then the advocate-- it would be as a mutual agreement between that person and the advocate, whether this place or that place is a safe place to be at.

JIMMY: OK. So now the advocate has got this situation, does anybody follow back up with the people at the Switchboard and let them know what's going on? What has happened? There was some resolution or is it just hanging for the people at the Switchboard?

STEVEN HAYES: I know the advocate actually gets back in touch with the volunteer manager, and they base their both of their reports on-- the volunteer manager turns his report into his supervisor and advocate compare these reports together, and they decide, OK, it's closed.

JIMMY: Well, I just want to know if like the minute you handed them over to the advocate, because I know one of the things that really hurt when I worked there was when the phone went click, and you didn't know what was going to happen.

STEVEN HAYES: Yeah.

JIMMY: And sometimes, there were some serious stuff. I remember taking a call one night where a young man called, and you could hear someone violently beating on a door, trying to get to him. And we were-- at that time, there were several people in the room with us, and it was a kind of a team effort to try to get this person separated and what they could do and suddenly, the phone went click. And I know that I've never stopped thinking about that. I have never stopped thinking about that phone just went click. So I was wondering if there was some follow up for the Switchboard person, some resolution some--

SALLY: A lot of that depends on the person who's calling, because when you call the Switchboard, you are completely anonymous--

JIMMY: Right.

SALLY: If you are referred into Montrose Counseling Center's Anti-violence Program, then we have personal information about you. Will that get back to the person on the Switchboard? Probably not.

JIMMY: OK, so--

SALLY: In an abstract informational--

JIMMY: Confidentiality, yeah.

SALLY: --certainly, we can say, the advocate was able to go out and help this person.

JIMMY: Good.

SALLY: And so--

JIMMY: That's one. Yeah.

SALLY: Exactly.

STEVEN HAYES: Yeah. We don't need the details. It's just nice to know that the person was--

JIMMY: Right.

STEVEN HAYES: And actually, the volunteers don't get the exact information, just says, OK--

JIMMY: And that's wonderful. That's something that we never had before. And that was always a big problem.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Yeah, it's really tough many times. Did I ever tell you about the guy who clicked the gun on the--

STEVEN HAYES:No!

JIMMY: On the-- he was clicking a gun. And I know what a gun sounds like, and this was a gun. He was clicking this gun. Click, click, click, click, click. And we were talking to him. And then fortunately that night, there were three of us there too. That was back when there were three or four people in the room at old times. And because that was a really, really bad night for me, he was talking about killing himself. And I could hear him clicking that gun, clicking that gun.

And we know, and this is something you learn about suicide, is that there's a window, there's a window that if they're going to-- that, that's the place, if you can talk through that window, then some percentage of the time that you've passed that point of crisis. And so that's what we were trying to do was get through that window, but the person on the phone never knows when that window is.

STEVEN HAYES:Right.

JIMMY: So you just try to keep talking in. And the more we talk, the more often he clicked this. And then suddenly, he said, well, I'm through with this conversation, and he was gone. Those kinds of calls just left us hanging. It was a tough kind of thing, but like I said earlier, that kind of thing has made me-- my personality so much different than it might have been before. Because here's this guy clicking a gun, because he's at the end of his rope. And he-- and I know all the things that had brought him to the end of his rope.

And here I'm suffering with this little bitty, you know, hangnail compared to his. And it really made-- it really gave me perspective on the value of my life. Let's put it that way. It gave me perspective on the value of my life.

STEVEN HAYES:The Switchboard can be very humbling at times. But at the same time, I say and I tell all the volunteers, one of the greatest joys is when somebody do call back and says, well, I don't know who I talked to, but like when I moved here a year ago, I called the Switchboard and got some information. I just called to say thank you. That's one of the best calls you get. They happen for in few between, but they do happen.

SALLY: Well Steven, why don't you talk about some of the training, because it's a very intensive training program. You were just saying before about do learn things about that there is a window of when something is going to reach a crisis. And a lot of those things are covered it's not just a two hour training program, it's a pretty extensive--

JIMMY: You're certainly not going to be a therapist when you walk out, because that's not what the Switchboard is looking for a therapist.

STEVEN HAYES:In fact, actually one of the things that we teach throughout all the training is a little motto is I don't have the answers.

JIMMY: Right.

STEVEN HAYES:So a lot of people don't-- and in fact, a lot of people when they call, they're not looking for the answers, they're just looking for an ear that's non-judgmental to listen to--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

STEVEN HAYES:--somebody sympathetic. When I started with the Switchboard, our training was right at 25 hours. It has now increased to 40 hours. It's a total 40-hour training, very intensive. We cover subjects, everything from community resources. We even go on a bar tour, so that you can talk about the bars and know which ones you're talking about.

JIMMY: That was my favorite when we--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

HOST 2: And that was very important because many of the men had never been to--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Yeah.

STEVEN HAYES:Also, I found out one of the fun things about with the bar tour is how very-- as you go from each bar, their rules are, and each bar do have their own particular rules. But along with the bar tour, we also hit on subjects like transgender issues. We hit sexual assault. We actually have just in the last class added aging issues and teen issues, because these are two very important issues that are now starting to really come into focus here in these new 2000 crisis intervention, how to stop a crisis. Basically that's just what it is.

Not to be a martyr, or anything but just how sometime diffuse, sometimes otherwise, a very volatile situation. Hate crimes, we touch on. We deal with lesbian health issues, gay men health issues. We also talk very in detail about HIV and AIDS, because it is still a very pressing issue, and people still have a lot of questions about it also. Some of our new topics is bisexual-- bisexuality. I almost can't say at this time of morning--

SALLY: And legal issues. I think Brenda in the last hour was saying that there's some resources at the Switchboard for people who need a legal referral.

HOST 2: Yes.

STEVEN HAYES:One of the great things is the Swi--