

SPEAKER 1: Yes. OK.

SPEAKER 2: Gigi, thanks very much.

SPEAKER 1: Oh, you bet.

SPEAKER 2: We'll see you next month.

SPEAKER 1: I want to do a little closing from the vision statement. If we can dream it, we can do it.

SPEAKER 2: That's right. That was a great interview.

SPEAKER 1: Oh, well thanks.

SPEAKER 2: I liked that.

SPEAKER 1: He's very wonderful.

SPEAKER 2: Yes, he is.

SPEAKER 1: He's so cute, too.

SPEAKER 2: OK. And now, and now.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Oh, yeah. It's time for the new after Hours News and Views with Chris because Big Roy is still out.

CHRIS: Well, actually, I heard from him. He called during the last segment.

SPEAKER 2: Oh good.

CHRIS: He is still trying to get back.

SPEAKER 2: He's very trying.

CHRIS: Let's try that it's only on the phone. It's so easy to disconnect rather than a backhand.

SPEAKER 2: I miss Big Roy, I really, really miss Big Roy. He's the only one that knows that I like 10 sugars in my coffee.

OK, I did

CHRIS: Three then I went to six, I'm sorry. I figure you have enough health problems as it is, you don't need diabetes.

SPEAKER 2: Yeah, it's a big cup. It's a huge mug. See, Bobby knows.

SPEAKER 3: Well then Bobby why the hell didn't you get off your ass and do it yourself?

BOBBY: Because I was in here with the rest of these people.

SPEAKER 2: What do we got in the news?

CHRIS: Well, we're going to start off here with a little bit of the national known crisis that is in Houston about the shortage of blood donations.

SPEAKER 2: And Rich, you can just jump in here any time because I have definite feelings about what he's talking about.

CHRIS: I mean, I first heard about this looking at the CNN website. So I contacted the Gulf Coast Regional blood bank and they replied, thanks for your inquiry about donating blood. You are correct, there is a restriction deferring men from donating blood who have had sexual contact with another man since 1977.

The blood center follows the FDA and American Association of blood bank guidelines. There has been a discussion within the last year or two about changing the restriction from a permanent deferral to a shorter deferral time period, such as one year from the last sexual encounter. However, this has not changed yet.

For more information, we can give you some websites you can find out about where these restrictions are. You can go to www.fda.gov, that'll get you the Food and Drug Administration. The American blood bagging centers is at www.aabb.org.

And you can also contact the Centers for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov. As we said, this ban has been in place, the last time they discussed it on changing it was in 1998. And still they have not made a decision on that. And I'm still reading through some of the transcripts of their meetings. You can pull those offline of where their discussions have been on that.

SPEAKER 2: Hold on, I want to say something about that.

RICH: Well the important thing to know about that-- and there's a big misconception by the general public-- is that you obviously cannot contract anything by donating blood. We seem to be in the middle of a lot of blood-borne scares these days. And I think that really discourages people from donating. And people need to realize that they're not going to give you anything when you donate blood.

CHRIS: Yeah, they make it clear on every one of the sites I went to-- the American Red Cross, the Gulf Coast Regional blood Center and the blood banks-- that part of their frequently asked questions, usually the second or the third one is, can I contract HIV or hepatitis from donating blood? So it's a very prevalent question they have. I mean, the only thing that's right after is what are the general guidelines?

And the only basic guidelines they ever say is you have to be 17 years old with parents' permission or 18-year-old without it and weigh at least 140 pounds. It's only later on when you dig a little deeper into it, it's part of the questions on the deferral. Have had sex with a man since 1977 because that's when they feel that's how far--

SPEAKER 2: I know. But there are hundreds, there are thousands of gay men who are not HIV positive who could be giving blood. And so when I hear about blood drives I think, OK, you could be getting a lot more blood if you--

CHRIS: Well one of the parts what they're worried about from what I briefly read in the transcript, is they did a study and they found that about 10% of the gay men-- or what they refer to as MSM, men who have sex with other men-- that 10% of them are doing it solely as an HIV test. That's when they go in for an HIV test. They don't go and get regularly tested. They go in, they donate blood.

SPEAKER 2: But that's not how they do it, though. They check batches. They don't check each individual one.

SPEAKER 3: But see, a lot of people think that they do check each individual one. So they use that as their only type of testing. And then all they do is they just get rejected from donating blood ever again because everything is based off of Social Security numbers. But it's one of those things that, they need blood and unfortunately, when a lot of the original AIDS virus was passed around, it was the fact that straight people were not rolling up their sleeve to donate a little bit of blood.

And at the earlier stages of the disease, when it wasn't even known-- back when it was still GRID, or gay cancer, that a lot of gay men were donating. Doing a community service like that. And it infected the blood supply.

And by having this ban, they are trying to be able to say, hey, we're safe. We're not letting any of them in now. But unfortunately, you come to a crisis stage like this. There was a time when I was a blood donor. I would get calls from the blood Center saying, we need you specifically to donate blood for a specific person. I have special blood antigens in there. But now, if I was to go in and donate and answer that--

SPEAKER 2: You'd have to lie.

CHRIS: I would either have to lie, or what you do is you put on a sticker that doesn't tell the person who is-- actually, you talking with in the interview in that, you have to put on a sticker that says do not use my blood for transfusions. So basically, they'll take your blood and then go throw it away. It won't go into a person. It can go for testing for other topics, but they will not allow it to be transfused.

SPEAKER 2: Still with these guidelines, banning gay men. I think they really need to rethink a lot of things because I just read-- and correct me if I'm wrong, Rich-- that women make up 25% of new HIV zero conversions.

RICH: That's about right, I believe. It's about right, but I think the one thing that the blood centers are concerned about is the window between the time at which you are exposed to HIV and the time that you develop discernible antibodies to it because that takes a varying amount of time, depending on the individual person. So hypothetically--

SPEAKER 2: Three to six months.

RICH: If you-- actually, it's more like three weeks before you develop really antibodies. It can be pretty quick. During that time, if say the blood center was able to run an antibody test on that batch of blood, that antibody tests would come back negative. And that blood would be released into the community for usage. So this is something-- I see both sides. But this is something, I think, where it's probably best to err on the side of caution as opposed to--

SPEAKER 2: So then they should not take blood from women.

RICH: Well, I think the guideline needs to be changed to not have you-- an MSM, which is men who have sex with men-- regardless of how they self-identify. The guideline probably needs to be changed, have you had unprotected sex with someone within the last-- or I don't know, maybe someone you are not in a monogamous relationship with or something like that. There needs to be some broader guideline as to--

SPEAKER 2: I do too.

RICH: But the other side of that coin is you put that kind of guideline on it and you're shrinking the pool of donors even further. So the end result of this thing is that you need blood--

SPEAKER 2: That's right--

RICH: Blood in this community, especially in a community with a medical center like Houston.

SPEAKER 2: And maybe the push should be for a cheap test, a litmus-type test, something--

CHRIS: Yeah, a quick test. Because if you do donate blood, what they do is they test immediately for iron. And that's where they prick your finger, they take out a drop or two of blood and they put it into this blue solution. One is for men and one is for women. And if the blood droplet floats, you're rejected because you're iron deficient. If it sinks, then you're accepted because that means you're not anemic.

So they have a test for that part. And that's the only really preliminary screening that they do.

RICH: Well, and they are in the midst of developing rapid assays to determine HIV antibodies. I am not familiar with where those tests are in the process. I know that as a matter of fact, just a couple of weeks ago, I went to Thomas Street Clinic and took an [? orshore ?] test, which is the test where they put the swab between the cheek and gum. It's a non-invasive test, it's available at Thomas Street Clinic on Wednesdays, I believe, from 9:00 to 1:00. Contact Sharon White at Thomas Street. I took the test on a Wednesday, I had my result on a Friday. And it was a non-invasive procedure. There were no needles, there's no pricks. So if you're afraid of needles and pricks, then you need to do that kind of thing.

SPEAKER 2: Don't go there.

RICH: Pardon me for the late night--

SPEAKER 2: Don't go there.

RICH: You got to forgive Jimmy. It's been so long since he's been pricked--

SPEAKER 2: Tell me.

RICH: I knew when I said the word and looked at his face, I was in trouble.

CHRIS: Yeah, that's par for the course on this show. There are some moments on here we make South Park look like masterpiece Theater.

SPEAKER 2: Sure.

RICH: So I think the science is rapidly approaching the point where we'll have an instantaneous test. If we don't have one somewhere in the works already, if we do I'm just not familiar with it.

CHRIS: And like I said, there's a lot of paperwork. I downloaded part of the transcript. Just the part where they started talking about the restrictions on MSM donation was like 150, 200 pages of this 300 page document. I mean, it's an official transcript. It's basically a court reporter going through and it's very dry, it's a bunch of doctors talking. We're going to keep looking on this and try and find out some more on that. And I do appreciate the fact that we got such a quick response from them.

SPEAKER 2: Yeah, that was amazing. I didn't think we'd get any response.

CHRIS: I mean, especially with how late I sent out the email to them. But on a happier news--

SPEAKER 2: Yes.

CHRIS: Dr. Laura says gays killed my show.

SPEAKER 2: She killed her show.

CHRIS: Laura Schlesinger says it's not her fault her low rated TV talk show failed. If you want to point the finger she said blame the gay activist who drove away her advertisers. The show was wonderful, Schlesinger said Monday night on CNN's Larry King Live, where she made her first public statement since paramount television officially pulled the plug for her show. I'm very proud of the product we had, unfortunately, it never had a chance for the audience to decide because the advertisers were intimidated or threatened by GLAAD and their constituency.

SPEAKER 2: No, no, it's not that at all. She still doesn't get it. She does not get it. She's a bigot.

CHRIS: Well the thing is, she was very much to emphasize the fact that out of her 130 shows that she did, not one dealt with homosexuality. But what happened to her was the fact that being on at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, that's a money time for the stations.

SPEAKER 2: Yep.

CHRIS: And especially when in some markets, she may have been going up against Oprah and Rosie and Jerry, they couldn't afford to keep a dog like that who wasn't bringing in any advertisers.

SPEAKER 2: Right.

CHRIS: I mean, the couple of times that I watched it, it was for lawyers and diet pills and other low budget stuff you usually see at 3 o'clock in the morning.

SPEAKER 2: That's where they put her.

CHRIS: And they couldn't sell it. She got kicked to that time in a lot of markets. And so she's going to be on for another couple of weeks while they finish out their set up. But Dr. Laura is gone. And the one who was supposedly replacing her--

SPEAKER 2: I forget.

CHRIS: Oh, it's the blonde which on Sabrina. Caroline Ray. Her show is being questionable if it's going to be starting up as well. So who knows what they're going to be putting in there.

RICH: The interesting thing about this is that not only does it talk about the pressure that the gay community can put on to advertisers, it's also a signal to advertisers that it's a well-known fact that the gay community controls 20% of the disposable income in this country. And I think gays and lesbians are beginning to realize that they do wield economic power.

SPEAKER 2: Well, what she doesn't realize is that we do wield-- well, we do wield economic power, but we ourselves could not have killed that show. It took a lot of straight people with us to do it.

CHRIS: Basically, what the problem was, the fact that what she does on the radio works for radio. And the way she tried doing her show, she tried cleaning it up for a market. She tried being more human and it just didn't work for her. And talking about going towards our community, I was watching a commercial today for a breath mint I think it's called Smint. And a car gets pulled over, a person pops Smint and the cop comes up and he leans in and plants a kiss on the guy who's driving the car.

SPEAKER 2: I heard about that. I missed it by seconds.

CHRIS: And it was like, OK. And the slogan for Smint is, no Smint, no kiss. So I mean, it was interesting to just kind of catch it and go, wait a minute, did I just--

SPEAKER 2: We're mainstream, folks.

CHRIS: Oh yeah, and last week on A&E, their biography. They had Hollywood scandal week.

SPEAKER 2: Yeah.

CHRIS: I started looking through the lineup and it's like OK, no this is queers in the closet week. That they had Anthony Perkins, Rock Hudson, Sal Mineo.

SPEAKER 2: Yeah, there you go.

CHRIS: And I'm going well, Lana Turner, was she a dyke?

SPEAKER 2: No

CHRIS: And I forget who the fourth guy was, but it was like, three out of five, they're calling this Hollywood scandals night? I mean, you could have thrown in two other people and just had it as queer night.

SPEAKER 2: Well, I guess because Lana Turner like dick just as much as any gay man.

CHRIS: She fit in then. Who was he? Oh, back to the news. A former wife of a Texas minister presumed dead for 16 years, says she feels hurt, angry, rejected and depressed since he emerged several months ago. Beth McCasland Cox told the Abilene reporter that she doubted Wesley Barrett Cox's explanation of amnesia, resulting from an abduction and beating. She said that he has met with Cox, who now goes by the name James Simmons twice since discovering in December he was alive. She said the meetings were awkward with few revelations.

The former wife said that she and her family wonder if the story is true about his abduction or whether he faked it to seek a new life because he realized he was gay. At the time that he disappeared, he was a minister at McArthur park church of Christ in San Antonio. And he failed to return home from a trip in Lubbock in 1984. His car was found in Abilene and he was declared dead in 1991.

In December, a man named James Simmons, who had auditioned to be pastor of a gay church in Dallas was recognized as Cox. Student is suing his school over banning his pride sweatshirt. A Minnesota teenager couldn't wear a sweatshirt with the words straight pride on it because it was offensive to some students at a public high school has sued the school district in federal court claiming his free speech rights were violated. Elliot chambers, a 16-year-old at Woodbury High School just outside of St. Paul says he was called into the school principal's office in January and told the shirt was not allowed in school because it was offensive to gay, lesbian, bisexual students.

The sweatshirt carried the trademark logo, straight pride on the front and stick figure symbols of a man and woman holding hands on the back. A student actually approached me and she said she was offended by my shirt. And some of her friends were offended by the shirt and she didn't want me to wear it anymore, chambers told Fox News. She said if I continue to wear it, she would go to the principal and he will deal with me.

The principal told Chambers he couldn't wear the shirt because of the recent racial violence at our school, and it might incite straight versus homosexual violence. School officials have declined commenting on the case. It's just stating that the principal, a co-defendant in the case, was trying to keep the school safe.

The American Family Association Center for law and policy, a Christian group that has joined the lawsuit, and the Chambers, who are themselves Christian, visited the principal to Express their concerns of what they said was a double standard. The school attempts to foster an atmosphere of tolerance by displaying inverted pink triangles around designated safe areas of the school. The safe areas are set aside for student, teacher discussion and Counseling regarding homosexuality and other non-traditional relationships.

Elliot's mother, Lana Chambers said she was concerned that moral lessons being taught at the home-- the Chambers oppose homosexual acts on Christian principle-- was being undermined at school. It upsets me that the school district is destroying what I'm trying to build at home. It is too much to ask that they just focus on what's important and let the moral education be done at home, where it belongs.

When raised her concerns, Lana Chambers said the principal called her homophobic. Stephen Crampton, Chief Counsel for the American Family Center, called the situation a case of classic viewpoint discrimination. The school has chosen to openly embrace homosexuality and bisexuality, and does not welcome dissenting points of view. On Wednesday, you can let your voice be heard. Chat online with mayor's liaison to the Houston GLBT community.

Janine Bruñez will be available from 9:30 to 10:30 at www.talkcity.com. Sign in and go to the Houston GLBT forum room. I believe she'll also be at that time, just before that, at the Houston Lesbian, Gay community Center on every second Wednesday.

RICH: And I think isn't she there on Monday, from 5-6:30?

CHRIS: I'm sorry it is Monday. Yeah, the second Monday. She is at the Houston Lesbian, Gay community Center.

SPEAKER 2: From 7:00 till whenever.

RICH: I think it's 5 to 6:30, actually.

SPEAKER 2: Oh, is it?

RICH: But I might be wrong.

SPEAKER 2: Wait a minute, I have an email--

CHRIS: While you dig, I'll go on. The Montrose Counseling Center also has people available--

SPEAKER 2: It is 5 to 6:30, I'm sorry.

CHRIS: You owe me \$1.

SPEAKER 2: I do.

CHRIS: National Volunteer Week is April 22 through the 28th this year. Here's an article from the Montrose Counseling Center, think back when you first started to question your sexuality, where did you go first? For most of us, this was before the popularity of the internet.

RICH: Well Jimmy tried to get out of the bassinet.

SPEAKER 2: It wasn't that I was trying to get out of the bassinet, I was trying to get into the bassinet of

CHRIS: The one next to you, right? Yeah, but there's Log Cabin hospitals had them a little bit higher up.

SPEAKER 2: Hey, hey.

CHRIS: Hey, I could have said the stone ones. Please, you hit on Fred Flintstone.

SPEAKER 2: He was hot.

CHRIS: When those questions first started to arise, did you talk with anyone about them? Did you know where to find a GLBT friendly place? Many of you probably spent sleepless nights tossing and turning, did you run all the why's and what for's through your head before you ever took the step of socializing with others?

Have you said to yourself, if only someone had told me this was OK years ago, I would have been spared a lot of heartache and grief. Some of us have been fortunate to come from open-minded families, and have had friends that were supportive of us, regardless of our life's path.

But the majority of us, at some point in our life, experience times of confusion, sadness and angst. It is during those times, it is critical to have someone to lean on and simply listen to us ramble on about whatever our problems may be, even if that individual is a complete stranger.

In Houston, we are fortunate to have the Houston gay and lesbian switchboard to call. A friendly and accepting voice can be heard, regardless of your situation. Think back to those first moments of your life when you needed answers and you simply needed a friend to listen to, ask yourself how things might have been different if you had known someone else in your situation?

If you have known where to go to get the support and acceptance and you needed without struggling to find those on your own. If you are a friend in need, I urge you to call the switchboard at 713-529-3211. There are many of us who would love to hear from you.

If you'd like to help foster a spirit of compassion and understanding, we urge you to call that number and volunteer to help the community grow. And Houston's gay and lesbian switchboard recently is merged with the Montrose Counseling Center and are providing services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Also at the Montrose Counseling Center, the men's network is on Tuesday, April 11th.

The topic is gay male sexuality. Does the shame being about gay-- take two-- does shame about being gay interfere with our total and complete enjoyment of sex? Where and how we have learned about sex between men? Do false beliefs about sex between men limit us in our experience of pleasure? Join us as we explore gay and male sexuality, gay male sexuality and talk frankly about what men do with men.

Strange, when I talk about sex I get all tongue tied.

SPEAKER 2: I noticed that.

CHRIS: Tuesday, April 10th, and the Women's Network on Wednesday, April 11th is featuring the exciting topic of to be announced.

SPEAKER 2: Oh.

CHRIS: Stay tuned as we delve deeper into to be announced. Those are happening over at the Montrose Counseling Center.

SPEAKER 2: There's an incredible amount of that stuff going on over there. I've got a monthly calendar. Let's see, TATS, the Texas Association for Transsexual Support is now meeting at this Center. Their next meeting is April the 14th, that's at 3:00 PM. They're going to have a potluck dinner on the 15th. Don't bring pot just--

CHRIS: If you bring pot, you're out of luck. The Montrose Counseling Center is at 701 Richmond, for more information, you can call 713-529-0037. And let me do some quick, these fundraisers here before we head out of here. Jungle nine, don't forget, is occurring on April 14 at the Space Center entertainment Center.

For more information on that event, you can check out their website at www.BayouCityBoysClub.org. Also on the 15th, which is Easter Sunday, Bunnies on the Bayou at Wortham Plaza. And for more information, you can go to www.bunnies.org.

At the BRB on Wednesday, April 11th at 7:00 PM, Tuna Melt and Pearl will be guest bartending. All tips will be benefiting the bearing Omega community services. The Brazos River bottom is at 2400 Brazos.

SPEAKER 2: Where they have a benefit show every Sunday night at around 8 o'clock.

CHRIS: I'm going to assume that this ad in here, the one I'm about to announce, is for tomorrow on Sunday because unfortunately no one read it to see that they're missing a date, a time or any of that information that's important.

RICH: But with a guy like that in the picture, do you really need a date?

SPEAKER 2: Oh.

CHRIS: Well, if it's laminated, you really don't need a date period. The Royal and sovereign Imperial Court of the Single Star-- and it's just abbreviated on here. I've come a long way since I started the news in views.

SPEAKER 2: Yay! We just call them the [? Resicky ?] Girls.

CHRIS: Emphasis on the sick? Buckles, Beads, Sequins and Stetson's, a benefit for the TGRA Houston chapter, hosted by Imperial Prince Royale 13, and Mr. BRB 2000, Shawn Carter. Date and time, to be announced because-- I guess, they didn't want to cover his face or his right nipple.

SPEAKER 2: Oh, I see. Oh, oh, oh, oh my.

CHRIS: Makes you want to be a cowboy.

SPEAKER 2: Well, Sunday night.

CHRIS: Sunday, Sunday, Sunday--

SPEAKER 2: Sunday, Sunday-- their shows are at 8 o'clock.

CHRIS: So just assume that. So I'm going to wrap up the news. And if we've got time later on, I've got a movie review to do. And then we'll discuss about the penis survey that comes up short.

SPEAKER 2: We certainly want to talk about that.

CHRIS: Oh yes, and--

SPEAKER 2: We're going to do Rich in the second half, too.

CHRIS: So if you want to send us, should look afraid, be afraid.

RICH: I'm very afraid. It's 2 o'clock and things happen.

SPEAKER 2: Oh, yeah.

CHRIS: If you want to send us news, information, stories, love mail, hate mail,

SPEAKER 2: Dirty pictures--

CHRIS: Because Roy is desperate for them. I have to break into my private collection.

SPEAKER 2: Roy is desperate, period.

CHRIS: That too. You can email us at AfterHoursKPFT@hotmail.com.

SPEAKER 2: And you're listening to *After Hours* right here on KPFT Houston and KEOS College Station. We are queer radio with attitude. And I have one song to play before we get into Rich. And it's going to be music you don't want to hear. I've already shut you off, forget it.

On April the 21st, right here in our town, at the River Cafe, which is located at 3615 Montrose, there's going to be two women in performance there. Ruthie Foster and Christy Claxton. Christy is from Austin and she played recently at The Sidecar Pub way out there on Hofmeister with Daniel Lynch. But Christy and Ruthie are going to be doing a show right here in the Montrose, River Cafe.

I'm looking for a time. It doesn't give it time. Of course, it's evening. And it just doesn't give me a time. Well, that really. OK, 8:00 PM, I'm sorry. Both shows, 8:00 PM. I saw it on a different one. And you can get tickets at the door, or in advance. And if you want those tickets, call Laine [? Gosney ?] at 512-423-1770.

And right before we go back to Chris and the 20-something *After Hours*, the next generation, I've got a song by Christy. You've heard it before. You love Christy. You call us and tell us that. This is from her latest CD, *Out of Nowhere*. It's probably my favorite song on the whole CD. It's called *Best Loved Girl*. And you're listening to it of course on *After Hours*.

SPEAKER 2: Christy Claxton. And that wasn't quite the normal stuff. It was pretty peppy.

CHRIS: OK, I'll give you that. She wasn't the whiny part that I put on the note.

SPEAKER 2: She doesn't do any kind of whiny stuff. She's got lots of energy in her music.

CHRIS: I'm sorry, I missed her, especially since I live out in the boondocks where she played.

SPEAKER 2: Yes, really. This is After Hours. I'm Jimmy Carper. Bobby's here.

BOBBY: Hello.

SPEAKER 2: Chris is here. And our special guest, Rich [? Aaronshield. ?]

CHRIS: Hello, and thank you.

SPEAKER 2: Thanks for being here. You are representing tonight Project Leap.

RICH: Right, Project Leap-- just one more time, if you just tuned in-- is a program of the people with AIDS Coalition, here in Houston. project Leap is an advocacy training program for HIV positive folks.

SPEAKER 2: And what is it that you do?

RICH: Basically, what we try to do with this project-- which is one of a kind project in the nation-- is we want HIV positive folks to be at the table, making decisions about where money and services for HIV positive folks go because our feeling is, they know where the services are needed. And you often hear from folks, you know, I didn't get these services, or I can't get these services. They're not available.

Well, our response to that is come through this project. Spend a hundred hours of your life with us. We will teach you everything you need to know about how the service system works in Houston, Harris County. I often tell people, call me. And they say, hey, I'm interested in Project Leap. Which is an acronym, by the way, that stands for learning, empowerment, advocacy, and participation.

And they say, well, what do I need to be involved in this project? Do I have to have a degree? Do I have to have some kind of knowledge of federal, state, city, local, and county funding? What do I need?

And my response to them is, you need two things. One, you have to have some amount of passion to help folks with HIV because if you go, say for instance, if you get your medical care at Harris County Hospital district's Thomas Street Clinic, you walk in there, most of those folks are going through the motions of getting medical care. They walk in, they go to their appointment, they follow their doctor's advice.

SPEAKER 2: Maybe, and then they leave.

RICH: That is their exposure with the system. They are not there to advocate for others. Some of them are-- because of the stigma that's associated with HIV-- some of them are still afraid to be open about their status. And what our point is, if you are the one person in 10 that's willing to stand up and be a little more forthright about your status and be willing to help other people that may not quite be at the same place you are, they may not be ready to tackle the world.

If you're one of those 10 people that's not afraid to speak for others in a similar situation, we want you to come through Project Leap. All you need is number one, a passion to help others in a similar situation. And number two, you need a commitment to complete the entire program because one of the problems with a program like this-- and it's a six, month 100 hour program-- we have 24 sessions of four hours each.

It requires a big time commitment on the part of anybody. My feeling is, I tell people, we will teach you everything you need to know. All you have to do is show up and be interested in the process and have a commitment to help others in a similar situation as you. I'll teach you everything else you need to know. You just need to know your name, and how to get to the building.

Everything else will happen once you're there. And the interesting thing about this curriculum is we've had this program for about three years. And when we first took over the program, it had kind of moved along in a fairly static way. And we've taken this program, we've expanded, it we've refined it, we have the best of the best as far as presenters in this program.

People from administrative agents, people from Harris County Health department, people from the Ryan White Planning Council. People from service providers, people from funders, epidemiologists, and behavioral scientists. Medical people, folks from the Center for AIDS. Some of you might Joe Martinez and his gang out there.

We have picked the brightest and best who are involved in HIV service delivery and knowledge in Houston Harris County. We go on field trips. We go out to Conroe to the I'm sorry, the DRW Clinic out there. We see how services are delivered out in the rural community.

You think services are bad in Houston? You should try coming out to Conroe, seeing the kind of medical care--

SPEAKER 2: Yeah, I've never even been to Thomas street.

RICH: Well Thomas Street is the largest freestanding HIV Clinic in the nation. And a lot of folks don't know that. And there's a new Clinic director out there. His name is Ahmed [? Agyapong. ?] And Ahmed is a terrific guy. And he's very client centered, he is also a presenter for our program. As a matter of fact, last year, he was our graduation speaker at our commencement exercises.

He's a wonderful man. Has great clinical knowledge, but the best thing about Ahmed is that he's very client centered. Client's needs come first to him. And he is reshaping that clinic to be much more client centered and much more friendly. So that's one of the topics that we cover in LEAP is access to public health care.

So the curriculum is kind of interesting because I sometimes call it, everything you ever wanted to know about HIV and service delivery. What we do is we start out with a history of HIV, where it came from, where it's going. We talk about epidemiology. We have Kay Reynolds who's the lead epidemiologist with the city of Houston. She does a four hour presentation on epidemiology.

Mike Ross from the UT School of Public Health, a world published researcher and a noted speaker. Matter of fact, he just completed the Surgeon General's Report on sexuality in America. He was one of two authors that was asked to complete the study.

SPEAKER 2: Wow.

RICH: He's here in Houston. He is an originator of this program. And he presents for project LEAP. So we have him talk about history and epidemiology as well. We talk about HIV related wellness. We bring in Dr. Arlette Fierro, who is a wonderful alternative medical practitioner because our feeling is, folks with HIV, they have to stay well in order to advocate.

You can't be out there advocating for goods and services unless you're well, yourself. So we spend four hours of the session on how to manage side effects and how to manage the drug toxicities. And how to know about your own body. So we even cover something like that, which may seem unrelated, but it's really not because we want our folks to be well. We want them to be out there. And we want folks to be in this for the long haul.

And with the new drug cocktails, the number one problem that we see relates to side effects management with patients.

SPEAKER 2: Tell me about it.

RICH: So as a matter of fact, Jimmy, that's a great-- you know what we need to do, we need to get her on here one night.

SPEAKER 2: Yeah.

RICH: She's a wonderful woman. She's just absolutely terrific. We need to get her on here. One night and do a show on side effects management. Things like GI intolerance, peripheral neuropathy, a central nervous system problems, gut problems, nausea, those kind of things.

SPEAKER 2: Dry mouth.

RICH: Dry mouth, diarrhea, I mean, it's amazing. Dr. Farrow and also Fred Walters, who I think you probably know from the Houston Buyers Club.

SPEAKER 2: He's been on the show.

RICH: He's a graduate of our program. He graduated this past year. As a matter of fact, I don't know if this or not, but Fred competed for and got a Ryan White Title I grant for the Houston Buyers Club. He got that grant, partly as a result of the training that he received in Project Leap.

SPEAKER 2: Wow. That's really good. And the Houston Buyers Club is getting more and more prominence nationwide. They do some really great stuff.

RICH: Yeah, it's a great organization. So when we talk about HIV related wellness. And then we move in the curriculum to funding. We talk about federal funding. We talk about the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control. The NIH. And we talk about HRSA, which is the federal agency, Health Resources and Services Administration.

They're the agency that the Ryan White funding, the Ryan White Care Act falls under their purview. We go through the Ryan White Care Act in detail. And we talk about all the titles that are within the Ryan White Care Act. Sometimes you'll hear sports figures talk about Title IX and things like that. Well, the Ryan White care title-- I'm sorry-- the Ryan White Care Act has different titles.

And I'm just going to go through them briefly. Title I goes to cities. Title II goes to States. Title III goes to primary medical care organizations, and Title IV goes to women and kids. So there are different titles. And they target different communities. So we talk about that.

We also talk about how funding is accessed through the state process, through the Texas Department of Health. And what they do, what their role in, and what and with the legislative session in session now, what their role is in HIV funding. We also talk about funding at the county level. What the Harris County Health department does. And we have--