

- The following program contains language or images of a frank or sensitive nature that may be considered objectionable by some. Listener discretion is advised.

[CROWD CHANTING]

- For love and for life, we're not going back. For love and for life, we're not going back. For love and for life, we're not going back.
For love and for life, we're not going back.

- I think that's Robin Tyler on the stage leading the chant, for love or for life, we're not going back.

- Good afternoon and welcome to the national march on Washington, DC, for gay and lesbian rights and [INAUDIBLE]. Let's hear it out there. I'm Lee DeLaria.

- I'm Bruce Hopkins.

- I'm a dyke.

- I'm a faggot.

- And we're best friends.

- We interrupt this After Hours opening to bring you a short news update. As most of you are aware, if you were listening to the show last week, Buddy Johnston and Jim Carper are no longer with the After Hours. And we've got a new crew this evening. With that, we've got a new opening we'd like to bring with you now. So stay tuned.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

- Hi, you've discovered After Hours, a continuing tradition on KPFT.

- We must destroy the myths once and for all, shatter them. We must continue to speak out. And most importantly, most importantly, every gay person must come out.

[CROWD CHEERS]

As difficult as it is, you must tell your immediate family. You must tell your relatives. You must tell your friends if indeed they are your friends. You must tell your neighbors. You must tell the people you work with. You must tell the people in the stores you shop in.

[CROWD CHEERS]

And once they realize that we are indeed their children, that we are indeed everywhere, every myth, every lie, every innuendo will be destroyed once and for all. And once you do, you will feel so much better.

- Well, good evening. Hi.

- Good morning.

- Good morning, yes. It's now officially morning. My name is Bruce Reeves. I'm one of the new co-producers for the show.

- And I'm Judy.

- And Judy's helping to host tonight. We're going to have many hosts over the next few months. We're hoping to bring several of the voices you've heard from After Hours passed and give the show sort of a rotating look and hopefully keep it a little fresh.

- Fresh, that's what I don't feel like right now.

[LAUGHTER]

- It's been a long time. I guess three years ago.

- Just about, yeah.

- Just about today was when I did my last show on After Hours, so it's real nice to be back. And one of the first things we want to do this evening is we've sort of put together a tribute to Buddy and Jimmy to thank them for all their long hours and hard work that they put in in After Hours. Buddy started the show in 1986. A long time ago.

- Yeah.

- And we really appreciate his work. And I think Jimmy's been with the show since about 1989, '88, '89.

- '88, mm-hmm.

- So it's been a long time. We've got three special songs for these two very special people. And we hope you're listening and will keep on listening to us. And where are we going?

- Let's do it.

- Now, mouseketeers, here's one thing we want you always to remember.

- Come along and sing our song.

- *Love Don't Need A Reason*, Michael Callen from his *Purple Heart* album. And love doesn't need a reason. And of course, those three songs do go out to Buddy and Jimmy. And to both of you, love doesn't need a reason. And doesn't matter, we love you anyway. And we love you, baby.

- You got that right.

- Tonight's show is going to be sort of a Christmas show since Christmas is right around the corner. Winter solstice will be with us in about an hour, two hours and 40 minutes.

- Almost.

- So we're going to be celebrating a little winter solstice, trying to make things a little merrier around your home this evening. And so stay with us. Our special guest this evening is Ms. Jule Gray from the Bering Care Center. And she's going to talk a little bit about Christmas dinner on--

- Yeah, they're doing lots of special things Wednesday.

- Wednesday. Then about 1:30, we'll do This Way Out. And 2:30, we're going to have a special guest from the North Pole. So be sure and stay with us for that. And you are listening to KPFT 90.1 FM Houston.

- And that was the Seattle Men's Chorus from their album *Snowbound* singing "Christmas Comes Anew."

- Our guest this evening is Jule Gray. She's joining us from the Bering Care Center. And we're going to talk a little bit about Christmas dinner, I believe.

- Yep, Christmas.

- Christmas. So, Jule, you're the kitchen coordinator?

- Yes.

- What's that entail?

- Well, I often tell people it sounds like I do all the cooking, but what I do is organize all the food and kitchen, kind of, utilities that go on there. We put out a lunch for about 70 people between-- I guess, at the end of the month, it's 70 people. At the beginning of the month, we can be down to 20 people.

- OK.

- The other day, we did it for 90. So it was a surprise day. Yeah, we had our big Christmas party the other day.

- Oh, that's good.

- Yeah, it really turned out well. I was really impressed. I do a variety of jobs there. It's kind of a little team we work on that we have a director who's Lindy Huffman and a program director who's Patrick [INAUDIBLE] and myself and a transportation coordinator who takes care of moving people around at the care center, getting them from one place to another-- doctors and social service organizations and such.

So a lot of what I do is pick up when everybody else is busy, which is why I loved the job so much because it's not the same thing day in, day out. It is different from moment to moment. And it was really an interesting place to work.

- OK, and just I guess for those people who maybe aren't familiar with Bering, I'm sure Bering has a nice statement of purpose, but in your own words, what is the Bering Care Center?

- Yeah, they do have a statement of purpose. And I have yet to read it. Actually, I have it here in front of me, but I have yet to read it. To me, what it does is it offers a place where people with AIDS, PWAs can come and feel safe and get some support. And I should go so far to say is love from the community and from each other. And it's a protected place.

Confidentiality is guarded carefully. What it's set up to be is an adult day care center for lovers who can't be home with an ill spouse to bring them down and let us entertain them for the day or someone who just doesn't want to sit around the house and watch TV all day. Most of our guys are on fixed incomes. And it's kind of get pretty boring to watch soap operas all day.

So they can come down and participate at the care center. We watch movies. And we had bingo, as a matter of fact, today. It was a great, great time today, and do all kinds of social activities with each other. Plus, I think, the biggest benefit there is the networking that goes on. If you're new PWA who's just starting to get into the social service system, there are people who've been doing this for several years who you can just walk up and say, hey, can you tell me about some of the shortcuts.

And it helps. It helps to talk to people who've done this before so that you don't have to run into the same walls that they ran into. And there's a lot of that peer support there that goes on. And the staff does a lot of support. We do a lot of phone calling trying to run down leads and help. So it's basically a social place where people can get together for support.

- OK, and what kind of hours do you run?

- We're open from 8 to 4, Monday through Friday. And we serve a continental breakfast to donuts and juice and milk and, once in a while, scrambled eggs and oatmeal. And we serve lunch at noon. And it's open to PWAs. It's the only criteria we have is that you have tested positive and come down and fill out our paperwork. That's about all we ask.

- And so, I guess, major holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas, you try to do something more special. I know you just finished your Thanksgiving dinner.

- Yes, it was a real success. We fed about 200 people-- friends and family and community people. We had about 80 volunteers from various organizations around town. NAMES Project volunteered quite a few people. The Gay and Lesbian Switchboard sent quite a few people, including the president. He was there. It was a real success in the community.

And as soon as it was over, we were planning for Christmas Day almost as soon as we got the dishes done Thanksgiving evening, we were already planning for Christmas Day's dinner.

- So tell us about Christmas dinner.

- Well, it's going to be a pretty simple dinner. It's not as elaborate as Thanksgiving, but we are going to serve a dinner at lunch time at noon. We will have a breakfast in the morning for our clients. And then the dinner part will be open to PWAs and friends and people in the community who are within the family. And we'll be serving in the Fellowship Hall at the Bering Memorial Church, which is our parent organization.

- Right.

- And all those who are in need or can't make it home for Christmas, we'd like you to come down. Join our family for Christmas.

- So if you're real bummed out and don't have any other place to go, well, Bering might be a good place to come on Christmas.

- Definitely. We'd be glad to see you, and we sure will help you cheer up.

- Oh, that sounds great. So what else is going on in Bering?

- Well, we do all kinds of things. When we talked a little bit earlier, this is the real high time for us. It's the real push for doing exciting and wonderful things. And the first year, I think, is kind of rest time. At least, I know I need a rest. I need a couple of comp days, let me tell you. And so it's Christmas and five days off. This is what I'm going to do. We're actually closed the two days after Christmas, which is a real plus for some of the staff members.

We are going to be closed New Year's Day. But after that, we'll be open and be just a normal day. And our normal days, people show up around 8 for breakfast and hang around all day. And we have an extensive library. I wouldn't call it a library, I guess. We have a wide collection of books that we've acquired through various means. And people come down.

They watch TV and read books and participate. We put a lot of them to work. We have client volunteers there.

- Oh, that works?

- Yeah, and they work. And they enjoy it. It's good to be useful. A lot of them look forward to coming down there to work rather than sitting home watching TV.

- OK, and if you're not a PWA but you want to get involved, how can someone help, either with Christmas dinner or day to day or whatever?

- Oh, definitely, definitely. We like to have volunteers who come down to work, but we also would appreciate just volunteers to come down and visit. A lot of the guys are really tired of me.

[LAUGHTER]

And they would sure love some other company, let me tell you. What you can do is come down or call us, and we'll talk to you about what you think you're best at. And we'll see if we can apply that to what we're doing or find some place where you could fit in and participate. Sometimes, all we do is ask you to come down and spend time with us and visit with some of the guys.

Most of them have limited family available and really close. And some of them, even if they do have family, aren't on friendly terms. So they look for an extended family. And I'm not saying that, if you come down, we're going to make you a brother or sister or somebody down there. But it could be. We have some volunteers who came down to just kind of see what went on and just can't get it out of the system now.

And they're just practically there every day. And we have other volunteers who come down periodically and visit with us. What we ask for for our concrete volunteer is a three-month commitment to 4 hours, one day a week. And usually, what we do is assign you or find work with you and find a time that's best for you. It's rather difficult to scrounge up volunteers because we're open during the daytime.

If it were night, I know we'd have hundreds of our brothers and sisters volunteering out there. But it's during the daytime, and what we have are people who are usually retired or financially secure, shall we say, and that they don't need to be at work. So they come down and visit with us. We fixed a time for someone to-- best for them. And then they come down and participate in whatever we're doing that day.

We have a celebration of life once a month. Some of our guys don't make it to the next birthday, frankly. And what we do is we celebrate a birthday the first of every month. Actually, it's the first Monday of every month. And we have a cake and ice cream, and we pick five names from a fishbowl and make it their birthday.

Well, that sounds wonderful.

Yeah, it's one of my favorite days.

- And spread a little good cheer and a little love around to everyone.

- Well, I was a buddy with the AIDS Foundation for quite a while. And it did something to me inside. It really changed the person I was.

- And when this job came open, I jumped at it so that I could get back in there and participate in this. I don't think there's any greater reward. Certainly, certainly not pocketbook, but I don't think there's any greater reward out there than working here and being around people that I think, to me, actually, the truth is the best thing about it is that I'm open there. I'm an open lesbian working with open gay people.

I can talk about my lover when I come in and what we've been doing for the week. And that's a real plus. And because I can do that, I can feel closer to my clients, to the people who were there. And I've gotten real connection with some of them, very, very special. I've had people out to my house and thrown a couple of parties that have invited clients out too.

So I really developed a close attachment there. I think, if my boss isn't listening, I'll tell her that I'd work there even for free.

[LAUGHTER]

I hope she's not listening.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

- Well, if she is, maybe she'll understand. But, well, how did Bering come about?

- Well, actually I've only been there just about almost a year now. And the truth is, I'm not really sure how exactly when and where and who sat down and finally said they wanted to do this. I know that the Bering Memorial Church there wanted to do something and address the problem and the needs in the community. And they began this care center in '88 I think it was. Yeah, in '88.

And it's gone through a lot of changes. It started with kind of a real social place where they played games and showed movies, and that's all they did. Well, they've always cooked, but there wasn't a lot of other connection going on in the community. And it started with 10 or 12 people. And now we have a client list of about 300. So I'm real glad that all 300 don't show up for lunch at one time. [LAUGHS]

- But how many people do you usually have come through on a day?

- Well, like I say, most of the guys are on fixed income. So, at the beginning of the month, we have a smaller group of people. At the end of the month, it gets considerably larger. I'd say, on average, we have 40 to 45, 50 people depending on the time of month. Like I said the other day, we had our big Christmas party, and I think 98 people showed up. And a good time was had by all.

- OK, so we're going to have Christmas dinner at noon at Bering. And Bering is located--

- At 1440 Harold. Actually, we're behind the church. When I give the address, I usually tell them it's Hawthorne. But there's no address on Hawthorne Street. But we're directly behind the Bering Memorial Church at the corner of Mulberry and Hawthorne. When you pull into the parking lot, we're in the long building on the right. The dental clinic is the long ramp on the left.

And we have a lot of people who just come to the dental clinic and having to see us and drop in and become part of our family that way.

- OK, and is the dental clinic connected with Bering too?

- Yes, in our history, what happened at the care center was that we branched away from the church. So we became a separate entity from the church. At first, we were part of the church then we became a separate entity from the church under a foundation umbrella. So now the church falls under that umbrella. The care center falls under that umbrella. And so does the dental clinic fall into that Bering Memorial Community Foundation umbrella. God, I hope I said that right.

[LAUGHTER]

I never can't figure that out.

- Oh, I'm sure that most everybody will get the drift of what we're trying to get across anyway. And, of course, I guess you don't have that much day to day access with the dental side of it, right?

- Well, we keep in touch. We stroll over occasionally and deal with them depending on what's going on. Sometimes they come over and some of the clients wait for their dental appointment at the care center. And they'll come over and get them or we'll send them over a call. And we do connect sometimes. I know the women over there. They're very, very nice ladies over there who work. And the dentist over there, exceptional dentist. I do know that.

- Well, that sounds great. And again, I guess the dental care is for PWAs and working with trying to get their teeth fixed and make sure everything they need done is done right.

- Recently, I was made to understand that was a very, very important thing. I had not really considered it much before, but that a impacted tooth with the infection was much more dangerous to a PWA than it would be to a person who was unaffected. And that's why it's so important over there. I had never really thought that deeply. I guess. But now that I think about it, any infection is dangerous.

And teeth often get infected when you have a toothache. And it could cause major problems, including the ultimate problem in someone passing away because of a tooth problem. So they watch and monitor their clients very closely for their teeth care.

- OK, well, let's take a short break, and we'll be back in just a minute. We are talking to Jule Gray with the Bering Care Center and talking a little bit about Christmas dinner and some of the other things Bering does. And we'll be back in just a few minutes. You're listening to KPFK 90.1 FM Houston.

We're back now with Jule Gray. Jule, we were talking during the break there about several things. And you've got a piece of paper with you that's got the four main objectives for the Bering Care Center. And I'm sure they'd appreciate it if we shared this. So maybe we can hit those real quick.

- OK, yeah, the boss would love it. Our objectives are to provide a comfortable and clean caring safe place to be for the clients to come someplace where they don't have to worry about their confidentiality and somebody hassling them all the time. A lot of our guys walk to our center, and they talk often about the problems they have just getting there.

So once they get there, it's a respite from the storm, kind of. And that's one of the things that we really impress upon people who come there is that this is a safe place. This is a place where you are home. This is your place. The other thing is that we like to make a social interaction among our clients. We have planned activities. We do art classes.

And like we did today, we had the bingo, and it went very well. I was real impressed with the bingo today. I didn't win anything, but I played.

- [LAUGHTER]

- And, well, the point is, is to get these people in a social place and to keep them from isolating and getting depressed. Of course, we know that depressed people become ill people. And that's what we don't want. We want them there. We want them up. We want them positive. We want them involved if we can. Of course, we don't push anybody, but we suggest and we nudge occasionally.

Yeah, come on, go do this or go try this. We nudge to kind of stretch out their wings and participate in some things. We know how easy it is to get bummed out about the situation. If you don't have any money and your family's far away and you don't feel good, bottom line is a lot of these guys don't feel good. And we know how you could just sit home and be depressed.

And we offer all kinds of exciting things to do. We have a bunch of windows around our facility, and we gave a window to three PWAs and ask them to decorate each window. And we broke them down into groups. And we judged these windows at the end of the time. We gave a prize away for the best decorated window. So we do all kinds of things. Our director is real creative about that kind of stuff.

She just pops up with the stuff. I don't know where she gets it, but it really makes for a great time around the center. One of the things that we do that I really think is real important is we make referrals to other organizations. People come to us. They don't know what's going on. They know somebody who's been there, and they are dragged down, and they don't know what else to do this first day.

It's day one kindergarten for some people. And we help them. We offer other organizations. Quite often, people start with us rather than the AIDS Foundation. And of course, we like to get them involved with the AIDS Foundation and set them up with social services, let them know where these places are and what they are, and help them along their travels as far as social agencies around town that can help them in their situation.

Medical Thomas Street, Thomas Odette Clinic, and some of the hospitals that we know which hospitals are offering what kind of services. And we know about the special clinical tests that are going on, and we pass that information on to those who are of mind to participate in those tests. I guess, the way we get our name, Care Center, is that we offer, I said earlier, a place that are primary care givers lovers, parents, family members can feel comfortable leaving someone who's unable to take care of themselves completely.

Like someone who has dementia problem, their lover or spouse or friends may be uncomfortable leaving them at home. They might leave a burner on or the stove on or something, and they're just uncomfortable leaving them alone, so they bring them and we spend the day with them. Or someone may need medication. We have several clients that come from the Montrose Care Center over on, I think, it's Fannin.

It's a nursing facility. And occasionally, they are brought over on the center's van, and they spend the day with us. And most of those people have to have constant care. We're not a medical facility nor do we have medical staff there, but we do have people who will spend the day with that person. Other clients who will take a few moments and talk with someone or sit with someone or get someone coffee who can't walk or bring them a pillow if they're sitting down and need a pillow and just not as mobile as the rest.

We have several beds in the back for people who want to take a nap or want to lay down. And so that's one of the things that we provide is a place for family and friends to keep going on with their life and still be secure in the knowledge that their loved one is being cared for. I don't want to say that we were like a nursing home. We're not. We're not a facility for medical care, but we are a place where if you just don't want to leave someone home alone, that you can bring them to us.

- OK, we were also talking about some of the different people that you have that you said you've got several people that are long term survivors.

- Yeah, we have some long time survivors there who are wise and wise in years that offer a lot of hope and support for people who - what I tell people, my friends, is that because someone tests positive doesn't make them an expert on AIDS and that, quite often, people who've just tested positive can be as ignorant as people who live on the other side of the planet. [CHUCKLES]

And they need support and someone to teach them and to educate them in a gentle way. And that's what these longtime survivors represent. They represent this is not immediate. This is not an immediate death sentence to me. Here, I can have a long time. And I don't have to think of this as today, I test positive. Tomorrow, I blink out of here. These people suggest differently.

And they're strong and they're vibrant around the care center and they're involved. They do a lot of the volunteering. And they're very supportive to the other people, especially the new people that come down.

- OK, so you're located at 1440 Harold. And your phone number--

- Our phone number is 520-7070.

- And your next big event is going to be Christmas dinner,

- Christmas dinner. Santa, I think, is going to be there.

- Well, that would be great. And that'll be at noon. So if you're a PWA or you've got a PWA that's a friend of yours, then you want to bring him down for Christmas dinner, go right ahead. And I think we also mentioned that we've said he a lot because, of course, most of the PWAs are gay men. But they're not all. You've got some women and some children. And we'd like to thank you for coming on tonight, Jule, and sharing with us a little bit about Bering.

And I'm sure, as time goes on and more events come about, we'll be hearing more from you.

- My pleasure.

- So thanks again. You're listening to KPFT 90.1 FM Houston.

- And Jule is a very busy lady with a lot to do between now and Christmas I don't envy her any of it. She did leave us a poem that was written by one of the PWAs at Bering Care Center. And it's kind of a tribute to the Bering Care Center and all the people there who are helping out. And I'd like to read it if I may.

As I sit and wonder what to print, my thoughts are taken by humorous scent. The feeling of happiness is in the room. Taste buds of my mind are waiting to consume. If only I had ESP, it wouldn't hurt. Be hard really to see the joy you can see and feel when people are really being real. Their hearts sing with a song, a hymn that you sense nothing is wrong. Just knowing that we are alive, we honestly fight not to take that dive.

Spirits here are very high indeed. I guess that's how we really feel watching and listening to people relate. I will never forget this date. Same time, same place, I will be here no matter what the case. I know HIV is not a gift, but times like now give me a lift. The people around me help me maintain. Without them. I didn't think I would be sane.

- And, of course, Christmas is a very special time for many people. It's a time for families and friends. And, of course, I know Judy and I have sort of adopted our own families.

- They're the best kind.

- We always spend Christmas here in town with our friends that are now our family and usually see our families but not necessarily on the holidays, our birth families.

- Our birth family, yes.

- [CLEAR THROAT] But we did have a phone call from Bruce who requested that we make a dedication to Andre. He wanted us to play "White Christmas" by Bing Crosby. And we didn't get here with Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" album. But we did get here with some Bing Crosby. So we're going to play a little "Let It Snow" for you. And obviously, right now, with the weather as it is in Houston, I think we'd all like to see some cooler temperatures, if not a little snow.

- I know I would.

[MUSIC PLAYING]