



Obedience Has No Status

Greetings from Sally S. Cherry, BS, MT(ASCP),

I welcome this opportunity to share a previously published letter pertaining to the vision and mission for Community HIV/AIDS Resource Exchange (CHARE) Project! Over the years, I have received several invitations to share my "story" with various "HIV-positive persons only" groups. Since I am HIV-negative, I usually politely declined without any explanation. When I do reveal my HIV-negative status, there is often a response of surprise. Apparently, it had been assumed otherwise due to my active CHARE Project work and other HIV/AIDS awareness activities. As I have never felt a need to explain my commitment to promoting heart disease awareness or cancer prevention, I have never felt a need to explain my commitment to promoting HIV/AIDS awareness. I have felt the need to be obedient to a divine mission expressed in the following words...

*...And do not forget to do good and to share with others,
or with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:16 (NIV)*

In response to the invitation to share "my story", I authored the letter to share personal and professional events that inspired and still fuels my CHARE vision and mission. It is felt that my ultimate mission is to use my God-given gifts and talents while serving others. It has been my personal and professional desire to use my acquired experience, skills, training and resources to help others.

In 2010 after the sudden shutdown of the local AIDS service organization where I served as the project manager, I established Community HIV/AIDS Resource Exchange (CHARE) Project to continue the unfinished mission... To provide culturally relevant health promotion/disease prevention services to African-Americans impacted by HIV and AIDS in the Baltimore Metropolitan Statistical Area. CHARE Project serves as the vehicle to use my acquired thirty-eight (38) years of public health experience (clinical, administrative, training, and outreach); social media knowledge; and professional networks for capacity building and community building. My CHARE mission is to provide capacity building through social media and 3D virtual worlds to enhance access and delivery of HIV/AIDS awareness, HIV testing and related services for targeted populations impacted by HIV/AIDS and related health disparities within local, national, and international communities.

Although CHARE Project was started in 2010, my vision emerged during my early public health years. From 1978 to 1990, I served as the Laboratory Coordinator for the Baltimore City Health Department - Bureau of Disease Control (BCHD-BDC) assigned with the task of coordinating and supervising STD laboratory services within Baltimore City Health Department's STD clinics as well as the planning of the Bureau for Disease Control (BDC) Laboratory. These twelve years of my diverse medical laboratory career offered numerous sharing and learning opportunities. One assignment impacted my professional journey as well as changed my goals and objectives as an allied health professional. In 1981, the Bureau Director instructed me to receive and process an "unknown disease" specimen for shipment to a reference laboratory. As I followed the standard laboratory biosafety guidelines for handling and processing blood and other infectious materials, I found myself thinking that the pathogenic agent and treatment for this "unknown disease" would soon be identified. Sadly that did not happen immediately! I never thought that the "unknown disease" now identified as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) would still be impacting the worldwide community over 35 years later.

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As I look back at the early years of AIDS, I clearly remember the increased reporting of Pneumocystis pneumonia (PCP) and other opportunistic infections; chart reviews to verify reported causes of death; monitoring of laboratory reports, and even the challenge of identifying funeral homes that would accept the bodies of the deceased. Over the years, the learning curve was steep for infection control and laboratory personnel with the development of new CDC guidelines for specimen handling, processing and diagnostic blood tests. Since 1981 in my role as a STD/STI laboratory instructor, quality assurance for laboratory testing has been the focus of laboratory consultations, training and proficiency reviews for clinicians and healthcare professionals. The role of medical laboratory science focused on STD/STI/HIV services is essential to stop the spread of HIV (and other sexually transmitted infections) worldwide.

From 1989 to 1996, I shared my lab expertise as an international genital tract infection (GTI) consultant and medical trainer in Turkey, Kenya, Egypt, and Uganda. The collaborative work with international medical and healthcare colleagues lead to a change in my professional focus. These colleagues routinely deliver STI and HIV/AIDS health services as their USA counterparts but often with more challenges and less resources. The “field” experience redirected my attention to challenged communities with less resources and little access. Upon finishing my overseas assignments, I elected to work within a Baltimore-based AIDS service organization providing project management and community outreach services until it closed. The unfinished mission continues with Community HIV/AIDS Resource Exchange (CHARE) Project .

As a STI laboratory consultant, I am involved in the delivery and quality assurance of medical laboratory services. As a Social Media Health consultant, I am involved in providing capacity building, technical assistance and training to improve access and the delivery of relevant medical and health services by providers. This dual role revealed the need for the acquired public health experience; social media knowledge; professional networks and inherent talents. So, I am obedient to the mission, “*Do good and Share with others*” regardless of my HIV status because “Obedience has No status”. CHARE Project, an HIV/AIDS information and resource exchange network reflects my obedience as well as my commitment to enhance access and delivery of HIV/AIDS awareness, HIV testing and related services for targeted populations impacted by HIV/AIDS and related health disparities within local, national, and international communities. As long as our cities are impacted by HIV and AIDS, the CHARE Project vision and mission continues.



Shared by Sally S. Cherry, BS, MT(ASCP)
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Founder and Manager, CHARE Project

Community HIV/AIDS Resource Exchange (CHARE) Project

Website - <http://CHAREproject.com>

Mobile App - <http://CHAREproject.net>

Facebook - <http://Facebook.com/CHAREproject>

Twitter - <http://Twitter.com/CHAREproject>

Pinterest - <http://CHAREproject.us>

3D Virtual HIV/AIDS Awareness Center - <http://CHAREproject.org>

“*A Timeline of AIDS: First 30 Years*”

<https://www.aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/hiv-aids-101/aids-timeline>