

CHECKup

Important news from the nation's leading health care facility serving the LGBT communities.

Volume XV, Number 1 • Spring 2003

HIV Testing Today

by Craig Hayworth, Director of HIV Services

There have been several recent advancements in HIV testing that will radically change the way people get tested for HIV in the very near future. The most dramatic change is the availability of "rapid" testing. Rapid testing allows for an individual to receive results to an HIV test while they wait, usually in about 20 to 30 minutes. The most recent test to receive government approval for rapid testing is called OraQuick, although final approval for widespread use (outside of a clinical laboratory setting) had not yet been issued at the time this article was written. The OraQuick test relies on using a drop of blood obtained through a small fingerstick to provide results. Negative results (those indicating a person has not been infected with HIV) are complete results and require no additional testing. Positive results (those indicating a person is very likely infected with HIV) require

a confirmatory test utilizing a blood draw and a wait of several days for results. Callen-Lorde has plans in place to implement this new testing technology as soon as it becomes available.

Most people associate getting tested for HIV with a traditional blood draw done by a nurse or phlebotomist. However, there are currently tests available that do

require a blood draw. However, they both require several days to process. The OraQuick test will also be available within the year as a rapid oral saliva test that doesn't require a fingerstick at all, but uses the HIV antibodies found in a saliva sample to determine HIV status.

It is important to note that if testing is being done because



not utilize blood at all, and are approved by the government as comparatively as accurate as the traditional blood testing. The OraSure test, made by the same people that make OraQuick, uses a cotton swab to take a sample of HIV antibodies from saliva. HIV is present in saliva in only trace amounts, but the antibodies to HIV are there in sufficient quantity for testing. There is also an HIV test available that uses urine instead of blood. The urine test can also be used to test for not only HIV, but for the detection of chlamydia and gonorrhea. Both of these tests have advantages in that they do not

of recent exposure, individuals may need to access another form of testing. All of the above described tests are for the detection of antibodies, the body's response to HIV infection. Generally, it takes three months to develop antibodies in response to HIV infection. If you believe that you are at serious risk for HIV infection because of a recent exposure, you should consult Callen-Lorde or your medical provider to determine if you should take a test which looks for the actual presence of HIV as opposed to antibodies.

Today these tests are classified by the government agency respon-

From the Executive Director

by Jay Laudato



In this edition of the Check-Up, we provide information about the new HIV testing technology and how Callen-Lorde will implement these tests while engaging our community in education and counseling about HIV risk behaviors. HIV/AIDS remains a critical issue in our community, especially among men who have sex with men. In our HIV counseling and testing program 5.4% of patients are found to be HIV positive. This is almost double the average in free, anonymous HIV testing programs run by the NYC Department of Health.

We fully support HIV testing, but testing alone will not give people the information and support to prevent themselves from becoming infected. At Callen-Lorde we believe that counseling and a relationship built on trust is the best way to help our community avoid HIV infection. And so, our counseling services are free and individuals can come for as many sessions as they need in order to discuss their sexual activity or substance use that may put them at risk for HIV -whether or not they decide to actually take the test. Our counselors, nurses, social workers and medical staff are non-judgmental, sensitive and supportive.

Our hope is that as we can engage people who come to us for counseling for the full range of preventive health care and mental health services that help ensure a lifetime of good health and personal well-being.

Also in this edition, our Medical Director's column, Current Health Issues, contains important information about the **small pox vaccine** that can benefit everyone. Please also see the other articles about our services and the announcement of our fabulous 3rd annual LGBT Pride event at the Central Park Zoo.

Jay Laudato

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Expanding Mental Health Services

Callen-Lorde's experience in the five years since our inception has shown that the LGBT communities have many unmet mental health service needs. In response, we are increasing our capacity to help address these needs. Callen-Lorde offers several different programs to meet the mental health needs of our communities. These services include: HIV risk reduction counseling targeted to men who have sex with men, transgender counseling and education, individual counseling (psychotherapy), support groups, substance use assessment and referral, and psychiatry. This article will focus on our individual counseling services. To see a full description of all our mental health and social services, please refer to the Services section of our website at www.callen-lorde.org.

The most frequently requested mental health service at Callen-Lorde is individual counseling or psychotherapy. Individual psychotherapy needs include short-term counseling to cope with life events, such as being diagnosed with a serious illness and longer term counseling to help individuals develop insight into their lives and relationships. Serious mental health concerns such as major depression and anxiety disorders may require a combination of psychotherapy and medication.

In order to access these services at Callen-Lorde, an individual must have a medical assessment. This is a requirement due to our New York State licensure as a medical facility. However, if you have been seen by a medical provider at Callen-Lorde in the past, generally no other medical assessment is required.

Individuals can directly make an appointment for a mental health intake. In the intake, patients meet with a Clinical Social Worker who will discuss their needs and help them decide whether our services can best meet those needs or if they would benefit from a referral to another community based mental health provider.

Most psychotherapy services offered at Callen-Lorde are short term. However, depending on the individual's needs, these services may be longer term. At present, we do not accept any commercial plans for mental health services with the exception of psychiatry services. People with private insurance should check with their insurance companies to see if they have out-of-network benefits and can thus be reimbursed from their insurance for services at Callen-Lorde. We do accept Medicaid and ADAP

for mental health services. For people without mental health insurance, our psychotherapy services are offered at a discounted charge depending on income, ranging from \$35 to \$75 per session. For individuals who cannot afford this expense, flexible payment options or other community options can be offered.

Callen-Lorde is actively recruiting licensed mental health professionals to provide psychotherapy services on a sessional basis. Individuals must have LGBT mental health experience, a current NYS certificate or license and carry their own malpractice coverage. For further details please see the Employment and Volunteer Opportunities section of our website at www.callen-lorde.org.

HIV Testing Today

Continued from page 1

sible for monitoring and approving tests used for diagnostic purposes, as being "moderately complex" therefore available for use only in clinical laboratory settings. This means that a person receiving a test someplace that does not have a clinical laboratory onsite, like Callen-Lorde or many other health centers and almost all private physician's offices, will have to wait for the sample to be sent away, analyzed and returned to the office before learning their results. Even rapid tests can only tell if a person is negative, while a positive result requires a second confirmatory test be run.

It is expected that within the year, several rapid tests currently considered to be moderately complex will receive the government waiver and approval that will allow them to be utilized outside a clinical laboratory setting and without having to perform a separate confirmatory test. This will have significant implications for how HIV testing is done in community settings. Traditional blood testing is more expensive and complicated than these rapid tests



and usually requires a trained nurse or phlebotomist to perform. The rapid tests, once approved, will allow for the testing to be done at a number of sites previously not allowed under government regulation. This means people will be able to get an HIV test – and their results while they wait – at places like their doctor's office, health clinics, mobile health outreach vans, and even through street outreach workers.

Callen-Lorde fully embraces this new technology and any steps

that will increase the availability and ease with which HIV testing is performed. Knowing your individual HIV status is an important part of taking responsibility for and managing your health.

The discussion and risk reduction counseling that accompany testing today is equally as important as knowing your status. In the rush to make testing more widely available, we should be careful not to lose sight of the importance of taking action, and if necessary, changing behaviors – whether we

learn that we are negative or positive. These new testing technologies present real challenges in how we engage people in meaningful discussion and risk reduction counseling. Many studies have shown that the one-on-one exchange and risk reduction counseling that accompanies HIV testing is a powerful motivator in affecting real changes in the way a person makes decisions regarding their health.

At Callen-Lorde we pride ourselves on our ability to offer HIV testing and risk reduction counseling in a supportive, sex positive, and non-judgmental way. Our counseling services are free and individuals can come for as many sessions as they need in order to discuss their sexual activity or substance use that may put them at risk for HIV – whether or not they decide to actually take the test. As we all move forward into this immediate future of more available testing options, Callen-Lorde will continue to find ways to engage people on a meaningful, individual level to best serve our community's health.

Callen-Lorde Community Health Center

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Callen-Lorde Check-Up is published two times per year. For inquiries, or to be placed on our mailing list, please call Steve Albert at (212) 271-7272.

CHECKUP Editor

Steve Albert

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The Medical Director's report on:

Current Health Issues

by Dawn Harbatkin, MD



Current Health Issues is a feature of the Check-Up which highlights current issues in health care that may affect your well-being as well as that of your partner and your family. Each health issue is followed by Internet links and/or references for more information.

Small Pox Vaccination

Small pox is a serious, contagious, and sometimes fatal infectious disease. There is no specific treatment for smallpox disease, and the only prevention is vaccination. At present, only "first-responder" medical and emergency personnel are being offered smallpox vaccination, in part because of the potentially serious side effects associated with vaccination.

Small pox vaccine contains the live virus, Vaccinia, - not a dead virus like many other vaccines. This poses health risks for those who are vaccinated including rash, fever, and head and body aches. In certain groups of people complications from the vaccinia virus can be severe. At this time, these people should not be vaccinated. People most likely to have serious side effects are:

- People who have had, even once, eczema; this is true even if the condition is not currently active, mild or experienced as a child;
- People with other skin conditions like burns, chickenpox, shingles, impetigo, herpes, severe acne, or psoriasis; people with any of these conditions should not get the vaccine until they have completely healed;
- People with weakened immune systems (cancer treatment, organ transplant, HIV infection, primary immune deficiency disorders, some severe autoimmune disorders, treatment with immuno-suppressive medication like steroids);

- Children younger than 12 months of age should not get the vaccine;
- Pregnant women, or women intending to become pregnant in the next month, because of the risk it poses to the fetus;

- Women who are breastfeeding;
- Anyone having close contact with a person who could be at risk from vaccination should not be vaccinated.

www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/smallpox
MMWR 2003;53:136.

Exercise Intensity vs. Amount

A recent study in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) looked at the relationship between type of exercise and exercise intensity and risks for heart disease among men followed in the Health Professionals' Follow-up Study.

The overall message from this study was that in order to get the most benefit from an exercise program, people should combine a mix of vigorous exercise and weight training, at the greatest intensity that a person can tolerate. However, there is a clear reduction in the risk of heart attack with any amount or intensity of exercise.

<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/288/16/1994>

Lesbians and AIDS

A case of HIV transmission via lesbian sex was recently reported in the Journal of Clinical Infectious Diseases. A 20 year old woman is believed to have been infected via penetration with a sex toy shared with her HIV-infected partner when neither one was menstruating. The two women were found to have viral genotypes with the same resistance mutations, reinforcing that they are infected with the same virus.

This finding supports the same safer sex message that has been out there for years. Woman to woman transmission of HIV is possible. Use barriers, like dental dams, saran wrap, gloves, or condoms, whenever there could be an exchange of infected body fluids. And don't share sex toys - cover them with condoms or latex and wash with soap and water between uses.

Clinical Infectious Diseases
2003;36:E pages 40-41

Sincerely,

Medical Director

Callen-Lorde's Sexual Health Clinic

Designed to meet the urgent need for sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and treatment in our community. Callen-Lorde's Sexual Health Clinic is a specialized program in which medical providers, nurses, educators, and counselors individually address the medical, educational and supportive counseling needs of each person.

Our goal is to increase access to comprehensive clinical care for adults who think they may have an STI, and to incorporate prevention education into treatment.

Each patient who visits the Sexual Health Clinic will also



receive a voucher for free HIV Counseling and Testing on a future visit. Those who wish to access the Sexual Health Clinic do not need to be under the current and ongoing care of a Callen-Lorde medical provider.

The HERC, Callen-Lorde's Health Education Resource Center, 271-7287 is also open to patients who wish to access additional health care information, either through our print resources or through the Internet as they wait.

Wednesdays
4:30 - 8:00pm
Friday
1:00 - 4:30pm
Appointments
(212) 271-7200

Drug Resistant Staph Infections Identified Among Gay and Bisexual Men

by Dawn Harbatkin, MD, Medical Director

Recent reports from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Atlanta, Washington DC, and New York City have been showing an increased number of MRSA skin infections among men who have sex with men (MSM). While this infection is certainly not specific to the MSM community, it is causing serious health effects for those infected. The first two cases of MRSA reported in New York City were identified at Callen-Lorde.

Staphylococcus aureus (staph) are bacteria commonly carried on the skin, in the rectum, or in the nose of healthy people without causing any problems. Occasionally, staph causes infections, most of which are minor, like pimples and boils, and can be treated easily with antibiotics. However, staph can also cause serious infections, like surgical wound infections and pneumonia. Over the past 50 years, treatment of these infections has become more difficult because staph have become resistant to various antibiotics,

including commonly used penicillin-related antibiotics. These resistant bacteria are called methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA).

Most MRSA infections occur in hospital settings – hospitalized patients who are elderly or very sick or who have an open wound like a bedsore. However, MRSA can cause illness in persons outside of hospitals. Cases of MRSA in the community have been associated with recent antibiotic use, sharing contaminated items, having active skin diseases, and living in crowded settings. Clusters of skin infections caused by MRSA have been described among injection drug-users, incarcerated persons, players of close-contact sports and other populations.

Most recently cases have been reported among the MSM community. Since at least some of the infections among MSM have been on the genitals and/or anus, the possibility that MRSA infections may be transmitted through sexual contact has been of concern.

Callen-Lorde and LGBT Health Centers in other cities have been in communication with CDC epidemiologists for briefing on the status of the MRSA outbreak among gay and bisexual men.

Staph bacteria and MRSA can spread among people having close contact with infected people. MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact, and not through the air. Spread may also occur through indirect contact by touching objects (towels, sheets, wound dressings, clothes, benches, sports equipment) contaminated by the infected skin of a person with MRSA or staph bacteria.

As stated above MRSA, is carried on the hands and in the rectum and nose. While there is at present no evidence that sharing paraphernalia for intranasal drug use (snorting) may transmit MRSA, it should be considered a substantial risk.

The best way to prevent staph or MRSA infection is to practice good hygiene.

- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and warm water.
- Keep cuts and abrasions clean and covered with a proper dressing (bandage) until healed.
- If your skin is dry use a moisturizer to prevent cracking.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or material contaminated from wounds.
- Don't share towels or clothes with someone who may be infected.
- Wipe off gym equipment before use.
- Don't share drug taking paraphernalia (spoons, bullets, straws) especially for nasal use.
- Wash your genitals and anus thoroughly with soap and warm water before and after sexual contact.

If you think that you may be infected with staph or MRSA (a boil that isn't healing), please see your healthcare provider. More information on MRSA can be found at:

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/hip/Aresist/mrsafaq.htm

Struggling with Healthcare Costs

by Paul Fricken, Director of Development

The health care system in the United States is in turmoil. Physicians on strike, practices refusing to accept insurance of any type – these events are happening because of increasing expense and decreasing reimbursement rates.

For example, it is a common misconception that private health insurance fully pays for the health care insured patients receive. Generally, HMO's only pay a fixed, discounted rate for the services provided directly by a doctor or a clinic. They don't pay for the medical staff who answer patient questions over the phone, the laboratory staff who draw blood, the medical records staff, or the staff who help patients get access to specialists. And, in our case, they don't begin to pay for the dignified building that houses Callen-Lorde.

Although Callen-Lorde faces many of the same financial struggles as mainstream healthcare providers, our unique mission and our history set us apart. We were founded by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, and are committed to caring for our community regardless of any individual's insurance coverage or ability to pay.

The dream of a licensed LGBT medical facility that

would care for our community members regardless of their financial means, began in 1974 among the volunteers at Gay Men's Health Project and St. Mark's Community Clinic. These two grassroots organizations merged in



the early 1980's to form the Community Health Project, which has grown to become the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center. Today, Callen-Lorde is the only licensed medical and mental health facility in New York State dedicated to serving the LGBT community.

While there may not be another LGBT health center in New York, there are many individual physicians who do

care for LGBT patients. And yet, commercially insured people, including people with HMO's, are the fastest growing segment of Callen-Lorde's patient base. We now serve approximately equal numbers of individuals on

government programs such as Medicaid and Medicare, people with no insurance, and people in HMO's or with other commercial insurance.

We see this growth as recognition of the quality, respectful medical and mental health services we provide, as well as an endorsement of our education and counseling services tailored to the needs of LGBT people. For example, Callen-Lorde offers licensed nutritional counseling not

only to deal with conditions such as HIV, but also for issues of body image and eating disorders. We offer counseling for individuals who use party drugs or other substances. We provide candid, non-judgmental safer sex education and support that helps people stay HIV negative. We also acknowledge the importance of sex and sexuality in our lives. Our Health Education Resource Center (HERC) offers information about LGBT-specific and general health concerns via free Internet access and an extensive library. We see these services as integral to keeping our community safe and healthy.

There are many generous individuals, progressive government agencies, private foundations and corporations who support Callen-Lorde. We are very grateful to them. They understand our importance to our community, and the incredible challenges we face in providing accessible, sensitive healthcare. If you can, please take a moment today to join them by making a tax-deductible donation. A return envelope is enclosed. Your donation of any amount will help Callen-Lorde to continue providing quality, respectful healthcare to all in our community.

Take a Walk on the Wild Side

Where can you find polar bears, sea lions and three hundred of your best friends? It's Callen-Lorde's annual "Walk on the Wild Side" party held each June at the Central Park Zoo.

Now heading into its third year, this June's Walk on the Wild Side will be a special "thank you" event for individuals making a donation of \$125 or more to Callen-Lorde's June fund drive, the



David and Valerie Peters

"Pride=Health Fund". It is planned for June 17.

Guests enjoy cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, live jazz music, and animal feedings in the magnificent Central Park Zoo... and they may spot a celebrity or two as well.

Last year's party featured three very special Honorary Chairs from the show business world, Kathleen Chalfant, Anthony Rapp, and B.D. Wong.

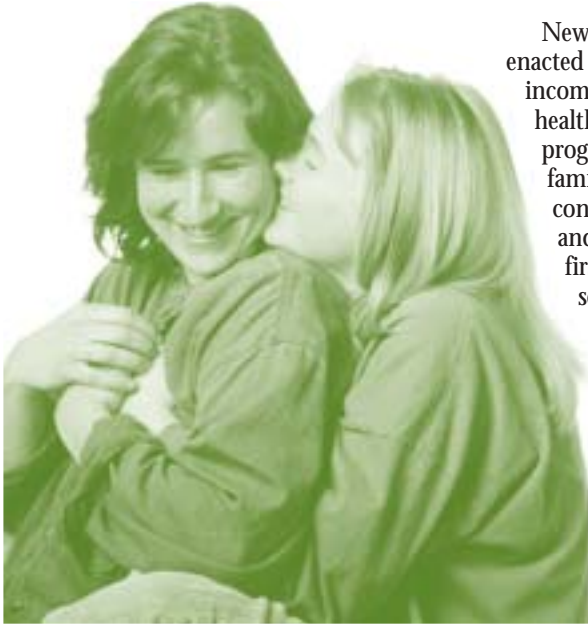
In addition to the

support of many generous individuals, the event has enjoyed the leadership support of sponsors including Abbott Laboratories, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, Continuum Health Partners, Tanqueray, and HX Magazine.

For more information about this year's Walk on the Wild Side or the Pride=Health Fund Drive, please call Callen-Lorde's Development Office at (212) 271-7263.

Family Planning Benefit Program

by Wendy Stark, Deputy Executive Director for Finance and Administration



New York State has recently enacted a new program to help lower income people get access to reproductive health services. The goal of this program is to increase access to family planning (pregnancy testing, conception counseling, contraceptives, and physical examinations). While at first glance this program may not seem relevant to many within the LGBT community, the program also covers a wide range of services related to women's health and screening and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STI) for men, thus making it a very important new option. An even broader range of health counseling is covered for adolescents.

This program will cover all of the medical, laboratory and pharmacy expenses for individuals meeting the eligibility criteria for the program. There are only two basic requirements for an individual to meet. A person must be of reproductive age and have an income at or below \$17,720 for 1 family member to \$36,200 for 4 family members. If you meet these criteria Callen-Lorde staff can enroll you directly into the program (you do not have to go to any government office) and you will receive a Medicaid card to use for the covered services.

This is an important benefit for our community, which will cover many of the most common health problems we face. If you think you are eligible please call our Patient Financial Service Department at (212) 271-7290 for more information.



356 W. 18 St.
212 271-7200
www.callen-lorde.org

Funding for these services provided by the Greater NYC Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, the New York Cancer Project / AMDeC and the Manhattan Breast Health Partnership

- Primary Care
- GYN Care
- Mammography
- Clinical Breast Exams
- Breast Health Education

- Nutritional Counseling
- Menopause Management
- Cervical Cancer Screening
- STI Screening

Free Mammogram and GYN Care for women who qualify



Medical Services



Bob Pileggi

If you're looking for a primary care provider, consider Callen-Lorde. Our sensitive and compassionate staff can address all of your health needs, including:

Primary Care, an ongoing relationship with the medical professional of your choice who will provide:

Annual Physical Exam, including cholesterol, blood pressure, and diabetes screenings

Immunizations (such as flu, hepatitis A and B)

Care for Common Medical Problems

- Cold, flu, and sore throat
- Back pain
- Headache and sinus pain
- Urinary tract infection

On going Care for Chronic Health Problems

- Asthma
- Allergies
- Diabetes
- Heart Disease
- High Blood Pressure

Testing and Treatment

- Sexually Transmitted Infections
- HIV Counseling and Testing

Specialty Services, an ongoing relationship with a medical professional with specific training and expertise in the following areas:

Gynecologic Care

- Pap Smear
- Breast Exam
- Colposcopy
- Pre-Conception

HIV/AIDS Medical Treatment

- Immune system monitoring (viral load and T-cell testing)
- Antiretroviral Therapy with educational treatment adherence support
- Nutritional Counseling
- Support Groups, Psychotherapy, and Case Management Services

Transgender Health

- Education and Counseling
- Hormone Therapy including laboratory monitoring
- Ongoing Primary Care

Senior Health

Ongoing Primary Care and Chronic Health Problem Management

Appointments

Same or next day appointment are available with the medical professional of your choice. For appointments, call Callen-Lorde at (212) 271-7200.

Business Hours

Monday 12:30pm-8pm
Wednesday 8:30pm-8pm
Tues, Thurs & Fri 9am-4:30pm

Location

356 West 18th Street
(between 8th and 9th Aves.)
New York, NY 10011

Subway

A, C, E, 2, 3, to 14th Street
1, 9, to 18th Street; L to 8th Ave.
Bus
M10, M11 to 18th Street
M14, M23 to 9th Avenue

Oral Health Clinic

- Preventive Oral Health Services
- Restorative Services
- Rehabilitative Services
- Endodontic Treatment
- Periodontal Treatment
- Emergency Services

Appointments 271-7152

Monday 12:30 pm to 8pm
Wednesday 2:30 pm to 8pm
Tues, Thurs & Fri 9 am to 5pm

Payment

Callen-Lorde accepts Medicaid, ADAP Plus, Medicare and most major insurance plans. Please call ahead to inquire about our specific plan participation. Uninsured patients who may qualify for assistance programs are offered on-site financial screening, referral and enrollment into government-funded insurance, such as Family Health Plus, Child Health Plus or Medicaid. Other uninsured patients may qualify for an income-based sliding scale fee discount. Flexible payment plans are also available.

www.Callen-Lorde.org

Our Mission

The Michael Callen-Audre Lorde Community Health Center provides quality health care and related services primarily to New York's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community regardless of ability to pay. To further this mission, Callen-Lorde promotes health education and wellness and advocates for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender health issues.

Financial Support

Callen-Lorde is truly grateful to the following for their generous support. Their gifts ensure that we can continue to provide the quality, compassionate health care that our community deserves.

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Calamus Foundation
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Generation Next Fund
Gilead Sciences, Inc.
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The New York University Community Fund
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Community Supporters

Big Apple Softball League
Diving for Life/Village Dive Club
The NYC Eagle
The Imperial Court of New York
Sirens Women's Motorcycle Club
Team NY



We treat people (like people).

Walk on the Wild Side

WWWS 3

Save The Date!

A Summer Party for
Callen-Lorde Community Health Center
at the Central Park Zoo

Tuesday · June 17th, 2003

6 · 9 pm