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Kevin Lynch



Photo/Jim Bovin

Kevin Lynch, a counselor and president and CEO of BESTD Clinic, says AIDS has become part of our culture.

BESTD Clinic, 1240 E. Brady St. (414) 272-2144

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How I got my job

Kevin M. Lynch, Counselor at BESTD Clinic

By Diego Costa

Posted: Nov. 25, 2004

Kevin M. Lynch, 26, is an HIV counselor and president and CEO of BESTD Clinic on Brady Street. The clinic has served the gay community in Milwaukee for 30 years.

Q: How did you get involved in this line of work?

A: I went to BESTD to get tested myself when I was 17, and I felt kind of bad that I didn't have any money to donate. So I figured I'd volunteer. And I've been there nine years.

Q: What's the best part of your job?

A: Working with an all-volunteer team. Everyone is there because they wanna be there, there's no paycheck. So it's a great group of people to work with.

Q: What's the worst part of your job?

A: Telling someone they are HIV positive.

Q: Did you ever give someone the wrong results?

A: No, thank God.

Q: What's the most embarrassing moment you've had at the clinic?

A: The first time we did testing at Midtowne Spa. I had no idea I'd have naked people walking around was so red. It was like culture shock.

Q: Is it cool to have your job?

A: Yes, I like it. I have to - they're not paying me.

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Q: Why do you choose to work in Milwaukee?

A: Born and raised, I know the city, I know the people. Pretty established, I don't wanna start over a

Q: How does it feel to tell people their HIV status?

A: Sometimes it's hard even when it is negative. The reason they can come in may be rape, so there lots of other issues. When they're positive is a lot harder. But as a counselor there are ways you deal with it: The sooner they know, the better their quality of life is going to be.

Q: Have people forgotten about AIDS?

A: I don't think anyone's forgotten about it. But our generation hasn't seen people die from it, so we it's less serious. And it's certainly not.

Q: Why don't people wear a condom every time?

A: There are all kinds of studies on this: The condom is not around, the heat of the moment, it's awkward to bring up the subject, some guys don't like condoms. If people truly understood all the consequences not just HIV but all other STDs, I think they would use it every time.

Q: What kinds of diseases do you get in contact with?

A: We do testing and treatment for syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis, herpes, genital warts, and HIV.

Q: Are you ever grossed out?

A: Yes. People will tell you all kinds of things, and there is always one more story that will unnerve you no matter how long you've been doing this. You just can't let it show.

Q: What does working so close to HIV teach you?

A: That it has really become so much of our culture that it's accepted as a part of life. Corporations are built behind it, there's politics behind it. It's more than just an illness; it really has evolved into a part of our culture.

Q: What is the best part of your job?

A: Knowing that you help people. They get a service from people who aren't there for a paycheck. A people who get the result they're hoping for and give you a hug. It really means a lot.

Q: What is the biggest drawback?

A: Time commitment.

Q: What did you want to be when you grew up?

A: An architect, a teacher. I actually ended up with my dream job, though. I wanted anything that involved a computer and a swivel chair.

Q: Do you test yourself?

A: No, we are not allowed. Someone still has to test me.

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