

VCU RYAN WHITE PROGRAM CLIENT ADVISORY BOARD NEWSLETTER



VOICES OF INSIGHT: MEMBER REFLECTIONS ON THE CAB

VCU RWP CAB members feel that being part of the group is an empowering experience as it gives them a voice to make a difference and help bring about change. They appreciate the safe space that the CAB provides, allowing them to express themselves comfortably without any negative influence.



Together, they feel like they are making an impact and that they are not alone in their efforts to advocate for important issues, ultimately contributing to a positive force for change in their community.

CAB Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month in West Hospital from 6 to 8pm.

Scan the QR code below to register!

SCAN ME



FYI - Commonly Asked Questions

What do the phrases “Viral Suppression”, “CD4” and “U = U Undetectable” mean as they relate to me and my treatment?

Viral Suppression - This is commonly used to describe the laboratory testing results that indicate the amount of active virus is below the threshold of 20mg/dl for testing, a very small amount. By reducing the viral load to this level, it will have little to no impact on your health.

CD4 - Also known as Absolute CD4; this is a blood test that measures the number of functional CD4 T-cells. A high CD4 T-cell count will make your immune system strong.

U=U - Undetectable is Untransmittable - Taking your medication as described everyday can result in Viral Suppression or being “Undetectable.” While maintaining an undetectable level, means you can not transmit HIV to another.

Undetectable - Used to describe viral suppression which means the amount of active virus in your system is below the measurable standards of laboratory testing.
If you have an undetectable status you will be unable to transmit HIV to another.

Upcoming Dates

- VCU Ryan White Open House: October 23rd from 4pm until 7pm in West Hospital, West Wing
- Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) Conference: November 14th - 16th, 2024
- 15th International Conference on Stigma: November 19th through the 21st
- VCU Ryan White Holiday Party: December 17th from 4pm until 7pm in West Hospital

Community Spotlight



“As a VCU CAB member I had the opportunity to attend the National Ryan White 2024 Conference in Washington DC this past August.” -- Rich, CAB Member

Being in the presence of thousand of others while Ryan White's mother recounted the life of Ryan was a profound experience. As I stood to applaud, tears of sadness and gratitude flowed. I realized I matter, we matter, those with HIV matter and we are a gift to our community but because of stigma we often hide away to protect ourselves and the community at large suffers because of it. Various sessions made me aware of my own gaps in care but gave me ideas of what things could be done to improve care and reduce stigma. Stigma is trauma and beats people down. Ryan White lifts people up. My heart goes out to those who were born with HIV and lived into adulthood and now providers often disregard their unique issues and they haven't been allowed to participate in medication clinical trials because their unique situation is different from those born without HIV and contracting it later in life. I also admired a couple of facilitators who shared how they had been homeless with HIV living out of their car and on the street. Ryan White services were a key component that led to them leading a life dedicated to helping others with HIV. One piece of advice from a panel discussion on people aging with HIV is the need for us, people with HIV, to be our own care coordinator particularly as we age and develop comorbidities. My ongoing involvement with VCU CAB gives me the opportunity to speak up and work to eliminate stigma experienced while seeking care and in my community at large.



Pictured: Jeanne White-Ginder speaking at the National Ryan White Conference in D.C.

Program Highlight: ReFRESHing Wellness



In response to SNAP benefits being dramatically reduced in February 2023, the VCU RWP program has greatly expanded its nutrition services to bridge the gap between lost emergency benefits.

To combat this, we now offer our **ReFRESHing Wellness Program** - a 12 week sub-program that provides nutrition education through cooking lessons, utensils and supplies. This program includes educational sessions, exercise sessions and cooking demonstrations.

Pictured: A typical bag of produce given out in-clinic through our Shalom Farms partnership.

Program Highlight: ReFRESHing Wellness (con'd)

“Together, the collaboration was worth my time, a chance to meet and learn or refresh my memory about foods both healthy and unhealthy, and workout with an amazing group of people.” -- Wilnette

The class was lead and facilitated by Allie Farley, Dietitian at the VCU Ryan White Program and our Chef and Demonstrator was Jason Muckle of Shalom Farms, and a representative from Sports Backers/Fitness Warriors.

This program is a 12-week Nutrition and Fitness program where participants are able to choose a day/time to attend.

Eating healthy isn't all that we learned; we also discussed about the relationship between food and health including learning how to plan your weekly menu, how to purchase the more healthier ingredients, and how to prepare and cook our meals. We made our own dressings and sauces, found out about putting new spins on old recipes and keep them healthy.



There are also healthier drinks that we can choose or make ourselves to pair up with our meals. We also learned why reading labels are so important to our health and learning safe handling of foods and storing practices.

One of my biggest takeaways was that exercising is very important to a healthy lifestyle. A simple walk for 30 minutes twice a day is a great starting point or 30 minutes once a day. Our bodies are designed to be in motion and if you are dealing with health issues, it's easy to stop moving. I myself have had mobility issues but after I had my hip replaced, my mobility is so much better. I haven't totally returned to exercising as I should but every once in a while, while waiting for coffee to stop percolating or food to finish cooking, I do leg exercises and on good mornings, I will do more intense exercises.

We had a trainer come in every other week to get us moving with chair yoga and lite weight training. That was great for me, I was so busy during that time...that those days were the only time I made time for exercising.

There are incentives in place to aid in your preparations and cooking of your meals. Each week that you attend, you will receive a full bag of fresh produce. Some weeks not every week, you will receive spices and gadgets such as a chopper, a set of mixing bowls, a colander, cutting boards and utensils. Incentives may not be the same each season, but you will enjoy it all.

Interested in the program? Reach out to your Case Manager!
Classes will start back up in late Spring 2025.



Pictured: Produce used and cooking lessons given by Chef Jason