

## OBITUARY

Richard W. Villaire, 46, of Ferndale, died Thursday, January 19 at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak after being involved in a pedestrian automobile accident early in the evening. A longtime community activist and organizer, Villaire set up the first support groups for people with AIDS in Detroit in 1982. He was a founder of the Midwest AIDS Prevention Project (MAPP), the state's HIV education and prevention organization, and served as secretary and vice president of that organization for eight years. He helped found Health Emergency Association of Detroit, another community based group that raises money for people living with AIDS. In 1983, Villaire was one of the first board members of Wellness Networks and also helped organize the state's first advocacy organization for people living with AIDS which is now known as Friends Alliance of Detroit.

"Richard was one of the first people in Michigan to recognize the coming epidemic of AIDS and he took action long before most of us even had it on our radar screens," said Craig Covey, President of MAPP and longtime friend of Villaire. "He was an AIDS pioneer when AIDS didn't even have a name then, but Richard knew there was work to be done. He helped design the state's first AIDS prevention and education campaigns, and traveled the state in the eighties alerting people to the crisis and doing his best to raise awareness."

Villaire was also active in the state's Lesbian and Gay community, serving on the board of the Michigan Organization for Human Rights as Education Officer from 1984 to 1986. He was active with the Detroit Area Gay Lesbian Coalition and helped organize the Gay Pride festivals in Detroit for several years during that time. He spoke at all of the community "roasts" held in recent years to raise money for AIDS prevention programs at MAPP.

Richard Villaire was born in Wyandotte and attended Roseville High School. He studied at Ferris State University and later at Eastern Michigan University, graduating with a degree in psychology. He worked for the past twenty years as a social worker at Children's Protective Services of the Michigan Department of Social Services. He was very involved with theater and was a patron of the Attic Theatre in Detroit. He lived in the Palmer Park area of Detroit during the seventies and moved to Ferndale in 1986.

Villaire was struck by a vehicle traveling eastbound as he crossed Troy Street in downtown Ferndale around 6 pm Thursday. He was alert and talking as he was transported to Beaumont Hospital, but died on the operating table at 10 pm from internal injuries. He is survived by his parents, Ruth and Ernie Villaire of Wyandotte, his sister Linda Riley, and niece Laura Riley, also of Wyandotte, and a host of friends and

other relatives.

A memorial/wake is being planned for February and interested person should call MAPP for details at 810-545-1435. The family requests that memorial contributions be made to Midwest AIDS Prevention Project in Ferndale or the First United Methodist Church of Wyandotte.