AIDS victim devotes life to son, educating others

BY BUR MARON
FATF WARTER

"I don't think we'll ever see a
world without ALDS."

It's a matter-of-fact statement
that 33-year-old Tannny Boccomino makes to the small group of
people gathered in the Harrison
Center auditorium in Garden City
. Matter of fact and a reality
for the mother of two who deals
with the tragedy of ALDS daily.
Boccomino is HIV positive, her
r-year-old soon Michael has ALDS.
Disgnosed seven years ago, following Michael's birth, hab has
devoted herself to her son and to
educating people, sepecially
young people, about the killer discase.

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"There's no second chance with
this disease." Boccomine said.
"You can be tested this morning,
have sex tonight and get AIDS.
You can be a virgin when you get
married and still have AIDS.
Boccomine decided to go public
about the disease for Michael and
son Tony, age 9. The question
was how could Michael live out
halfe in dignity, if they kept the
illness a secret.

Since then, ahe has apoken at
hundreds of high schools and
appeared on several local and national television shows to tell har
story and talk about what people
must do to avoid being infected.
Her Aug. 8 speech in Garden City
was sponsored by Hospice Services of Western Wayne Inc.,
which also cares for patients from
Farmington and Farmington
Hills.
Sha directed several of her re-

Hilla. She directed several of her remarks to the lone teenager in the group, telling her that "AIDS is not going to go away when you get married; you have to worry about your kida. You have to talk to them."

Shared disease
It hasn't been easy for Boccomino, who was infected by her first husband, an IV drug user whose drug of choice was occaine. He died almost four years ago, its second wife, whom he also infected, died two years ago.
Suprisingly, Boccomino has only infected Michael. Her hus-

band Brian and 9-year-old son Tony tested negative for the virus. And, yes, she and Brian practice safe sex. It was by chance that she was disgnosed. The hospital decided to de a specialized test on the um-bilical blood of mothers delivering bables the day Michael was born and tested that blood for a variety of diseases before using it. The mothers knew nothing of the test-ing.

ling.

Boccomino found out a month later when the hospital called to tell her she had tested positive for HIV. Retesting turned up the

HIV. Retesting turned up the same results.

The resection was a "big disbelief," she and her husband didn't believe nor did they want to believe it. Brian turned to hinge drinking to deal with the fact that he would lose both his wife and son to AIDS.

"We didn't have a marriage then," Boccomine said, "we just lived for our son. We didn't think would live to be I year old. I've gotten to a plateau where I live for my son."

son."
Michael developed full-blown
AIDS at age 4 and Boccomino has
become his primary caregiver.
Brian gave up his own business
and went back to being a pipefitter to get the union's medical
insurance for his family.

insurance for his family.

Crippled Children's help pays for a lot of Michael's expenses, and their current policy does reimburse them for a portion of Boccomino's \$250-s-month AZT prescription, but when she develops AIDS, she said she will have to divorce her husband to get help with her "outrageous" medical bills.

with her "outrageous" medical bills.
Relatives sued her family because she used her name and as a result it was associated with AIDS. Some people also picketed the school where she did volunteer work, wanting her to wear a mask and gloves.
"People react meetly out of fear not their hearts," ahe sald. "But if you think about there's someone living on every street who is HIV positive. Within five years, each of you will know someone who is

HIV positive. There will be one child in every grade who will have AIDS! that they got from their mother."

Boccomino pool- pools the idea of AIDS as a gay disease. Granted, a not of pay makes were dying of AIDS in the early 50s, but with education, the gay community is no loriger getting infected.
However, the group now at risk of AIDS, she said, is women. "women who think little did, I'm not gay and I'm not an IV drug user, i's With her internal organs, the disease can filter into a woman's body through the thin membranes.

And literatus a man most think

hranes.

And likewise, a man may think because he isn't gay or an IV drug user, he can't got AIDS, but he can get it from a woman, according to Boccomino.

can give it from a woman, according to Boccomino.

The AIDS ways

The AIDS ways

The AIDS virus lives on Trociles: high concentrations of which; can be found in blood, semel; weigned fluids and breast milk and can be transmitted in thing ways, the most prevalent like and can be transmitted in the case of oral sex, the property of the case of oral sex, the case of the contracted from failing, sevent and tears because the concentration of the virus sixto low can't get it from kissing like been kissing my husband for 10 years and bu's not infected. Boccomino said. You would have for take in a cuart of saliva at one time to get a high enough concentration any you'd drown before you get. AID Su and you would have for take in a cuart of saliva at one time to get a high enough concentration any you'd drown before you get. AID Su and not pritic. The second way is blood to blood — through IV drug uses of a child with AIDS and not pritic. The second way is blood to blood — through IV drug use, popular among high school athletes, said Boccomino, pointing to a high school wrestling team down tiling team shared the needs. During the early 80s, hemophilics were at risk of AIDS because the clotting factor they rely on

in turn pessed it on to their children.

The third way is from mother to child while it is a fetus, while giving birth where a lot of blood is present and through breast milk, which has a lot of T-cells.

Boccomino talked of her friends who have been infected and died of AIDS. There's Ruth who dated a my for a while before thry separated. When he turned up aick at a later date, she discovered here a casual IV drug user. She, too, became ill and died. She was age 21.

21.
Another friend named Shelly at age 19 married an IV drug user. She cleaned up her act when she had a baby. He didn't, so ahe divorced him. She remarried and discovered she was HIV positive at the birth of her second son. She new is in hospice care.

"She doesn't want any more drugs; she just wants to be home with her family." Boccomine said. "I'd like to go over once a week to give her husband a break; he has quit his job to be with her."

Boccomino had though about naming the names and ages of the people she has come to know in the last seven years who have died as the result of AIDS. She decid-

as the result of AIDS. She decided not to when she realized her list had 15-16 names on it. And their ages led her to stress to the hospice workers present that there will be a lot of young people ages 25-35 who will be dying, infected 10 or so years earlier when they were in high school and collere.

when two college.

She also stressed that caregivers respect their patients' confidentiality, asking who they have and haven't told, and offering them compassion and support.

"Hug them right away and tell them you'll be there to listen; AIDS patients need a lot of psychological help," she said. "And don't judge them. Look, anyone this room could be infected with AIDS, but you've just been jucky."



Straight talk: HIV positive, Tammy Boccomino talks about the effects of AIDS on a family.

Wildfowl carvers flock to area for national contest

The 1994 North American wildfowl carving championship and fish decoy is Friday through Sunday at the Holiday Inn, 17123 Laurel Park Drive, Licente

Livonia.

This show marks the first time the two groups have merged their individual shows into one big event.

"The merger of these two fine groups will give our associ-ation a better opportunity to showcase the fish decoy as functional and collectible American folk srt, both old and new," said Frank Baron of Livonia, secretary/treasurer of

the Great Lakes Fish Decoy
Association.
The show starts at noon Fri
day with the buying, selling
and trading of waterfowl, fish
and other collectibles.
Registration of decorative
fish cavrings is at 3 p.m.
The chow features numerous
contests, including floating
decorative wildfowl, service
and shore bird decoys, traditional hunting decoys and miniture decoys.

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More than 30 vendors will display carving supplies, art and gifts. For information, call Baron at 427-7768.

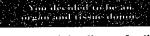
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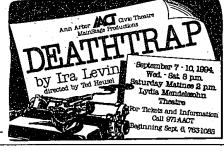
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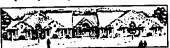


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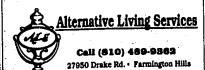
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