



Spring 2022

AIDS Education Poster Collection

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AFRICA

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# Up Against the Wall

# COLLECTING WITH PURPOSE: THE LEGACY AND IMPACT OF DR. EDWARD ATWATER'S AIDS EDUCATION POSTER COLLECTION

By Jessica Lacher-Feldman

Driven by curiosity and the need to document significant historical movements, it was a chance encounter on a Boston subway train that led Dr. Edward Atwater to build the largest collection of HIV/AIDS education posters in the world. This collection is the foundation of a major collaborative exhibition at the Memorial Art Gallery, *Up Against the Wall: Art, Activism, and the AIDS Poster*, which runs from March 6-June 19, 2022. The collaboration between MAG and the University of Rochester River Campus Libraries includes an exhibition featuring 165 of the most visually arresting and compelling posters from around the world that help to illustrate the complex history of the AIDS crisis through its posters.

A complementary book serves as the exhibition catalog, as well as an “evergreen” book that explores aspects of the complicated and rich history of the HIV/AIDS poster, both in the context of the health education poster as well as within the context of the HIV/AIDS crisis and the need for action around the world to help protect ourselves and each other from this deadly pandemic. A wide array of programming around the exhibition is taking place all over the city, including a talk for Historic Brighton in May.

Dr. Edward C. Atwater (1926-2019) and his wonderful wife Ruth Prole Atwater (1923-2017) were longtime Brightonians, living in a beautiful and welcoming home on Whitewood Lane. Their gracious home was full of antiques, plants, books, family, friends, and laughter. Beginning

in about 1990, when Dr. Atwater began collecting AIDS materials, the posters were also an everyday sight in the house, a cardboard tube holding a poster, tucked into a corner awaiting cataloging and notations. Incredibly organized, Dr. Atwater knew just what he had, where it came from, and how he got it, and beginning in 2007, the collection began to come to the University of Rochester's Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, part of the River Campus Libraries.

Graciousness and tenacity stood hand in hand, as a visit to the Atwater's home might include a homemade treat, a glass of wine, a cup of tea, or a glass of scotch and always lively and diverse conversation. And to anyone who paid attention, evidence as to what makes a born collector like Dr. Atwater tick. The ticking was a lifelong insatiable curiosity that manifested itself in constantly learning, asking questions, making connections, and using the evidence he saw around him to document complex and challenging movements, like the AIDS crisis.

The legendary story, what might be on par with a superhero origin story for those of us who value the power of the curatorial mind, was a chance encounter with a single AIDS poster in 1990. Said Dr. Atwater in an interview, “I saw an orange poster that showed two disembodied hands opening a condom wrapper when I was riding the Red Line, the one that runs from true Boston to Harvard. I thought that was remarkable. It was about 1990, and, when I was in medical school 35 years earlier, it

was illegal to teach anything about contraception. The one lecture we had, I recall vividly, they made a lot of hoop-de-doo. We closed the doors and acted as if the police were about to raid the place. In those days, that was illegal and forbidden, and so I thought that poster was really striking. I went home, called the public health department, and said, ‘Could you send me some of these posters?’ And they did. That’s how I started.”

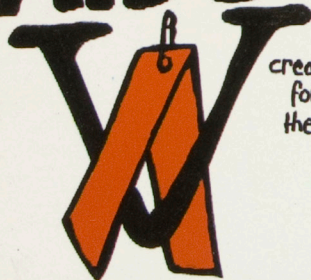
Dr. Atwater, in a 2007 interview with the *Atlantic*, shared his observations about how the AIDS crisis forced a massive shift in how we talk about sexual health and sexually transmitted diseases. His observation that the AIDS crisis and what it brought was not medical history, but social history is apt. “The watershed was October 1986 when Surgeon General [C. Everett] Koop published his AIDS report. That totally changed the picture. That was the beginning of a huge outpouring of posters all over the world, not just the United States. He really made [it acceptable] to talk about using condoms. If you look at *The New York Times*, the word “condom” I don’t think appeared until the mid 1980s.”

“I thought it was a very interesting, important type of ephemera. I very soon learned that they weren’t important as a history of medicine. They were far more important as social history. If you look at a whole lot of the posters, you will see how different countries approached the subject. Here you’re dealing with a new disease, dealing with the closeted subject of sex, and it was





# AIDS AFFECTS EVERYBODY



created  
for  
the

RED  
RIBBON  
PROJECT

in  
conjunction  
with

WORLD  
AIDS  
DAY

by  
BARBARA  
GRAHAM



• VICTORIAN AIDS COUNCIL •

"AIDS Affects Everybody" c. 1995, poster designed by Barbara Graham of Victoria, Australia for the Victorian AIDS Council



really amazing to see the variation from country to country and even from groups within a country. To me, that's by far the most striking thing about the collection."

The collection today includes over 8000 posters and growing, along with about 40 linear feet of documentation of how the collection was built. There is also a wide range of related ephemera, including buttons, balloons, pens, condoms, pamphlets, postcards, and clothing, all to help us understand the complexity of the AIDS crisis. Dr. Atwater built the collection by asking questions, soliciting posters, and deputizing friends, colleagues, and the children and grandchildren of those friends and colleagues who traveled the world to help to build the collection. Like an archivist, Dr. Atwater deputized others to not just visit museums and historic sites, but to drop in on health departments and clinics abroad, and to bring back anything that talked about HIV/AIDS. His tenacity, and his persuasive and kind demeanor allowed countless others to help make his vision for this collection a reality.

The bottom line that resonates so clearly when looking at and thinking about the collection as a whole is that AIDS affects everyone. Despite early assertions to the contrary that AIDS was a "gay man's disease" we know that no one is immune. And while major progress has been made in prevention and treatment, there is still no cure, and people continue to be infected all over the world. The over 8000 posters come to us from 130 countries, from every state in the United States, and in over 75 languages and dialects. The posters target behaviors, evoke empathy, remind us to protect ourselves, and to protect

each other. And in the wake of the COVID pandemic, the importance of these posters and the messages they share, and the action that they evoked is even more palpable. It is also remarkable that Dr. Atwater had the vision at the very beginning to want to put every single poster online in a digital resource, freely to anyone. The site is fully searchable at <https://aep.lib.rochester.edu/> and is a resource for educators, designers, activists, health care professionals and more around the world.

People choose to collect for many different reasons – they may be interested in the subject matter, drawn

to an aesthetic, or may be building on something they inherited. Maybe its cookie jars, or model cars, or stamps. Collecting is, without question, both an intellectual and creative pursuit. In looking at the tenacious, dedicated, driven, and organized method used to build what we are confident in saying is the largest collection of its kind in the world, we thank Dr. Atwater for his work in making this happen. And as evidenced by the collection itself, it is clear that it takes a village, or more accurately a town (of Brighton!) and in fact the entire world to make such a rich and significant collection possible.



*"Banana" c. 1983, part of 'Banana Boys' series created by AIDS Rochester*

The exhibition, Up Against the Wall: Art, Activism, and the AIDS Poster is on view through June 19 at the Memorial Art Gallery. The collection is freely available online to view, with a note that there are images in the collection that may be offensive or triggering to some. The book of the

same title was published in 2021 by RIT Press. Jessica Lacher-Feldman, the Curator of the Collection will be speaking at the annual meeting of Historic Brighton on May 15, 2022, about the collection and Dr. Atwater.

Jessica Lacher-Feldman is the Exhibits and Special Projects Manager and Curator of the AIDS Education Posters Collection for the River Campus Libraries Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, University of Rochester.

—HB—



*"I Have AIDS Please Hug Me" c. 1987, poster designed by Jack Keeler for the Tiburon, CA Center for Attitudinal Healing*



*"Care Enough to Love Safely" c. 1993, created by the AIDS Counselling Trust in Harare, Zimbabwe*

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# MERCHANTS OF MONROE - WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF BRIGHTON

Ray Tierney III

Throughout my research for this series it has become obvious that women have played an important role in the economic development of the Town of Brighton. This installment of the Merchants of Monroe will chronicle some of those women contributors who called Monroe Avenue their home, and to introduce everyone to women who have made a difference in the community. Some are well known while others have been forgotten in our town's history.

The Van Zile Travel Agency was located in the landmark building that was occupied for many years by the Cherry House. It is important to note that Van Zile Travel was instrumental in maintaining the building's historical relevance. **Kate Van Zile** is the third generation operator of the agency. Her grandfather founded the business in 1911 and she grew up being involved from a very young age. She fondly remembers one of her first duties as keeping the conference room stocked with coffee and the ashtrays emptied into a Chase and Sanborn tin. Kate successfully guided the agency through two tumultuous periods in the travel industry. First, there were the pressures presented to the traditional agencies by online travel bookings at the beginnings of the 21st century, followed by the challenges that arose from the 2008 recession. In the first 20 years of the 21st century, the U.S. saw a 40% drop in the number of travel agencies, but Van Zile Travel survived due to the excellent business skills of Ms. Van Zile.

**Marcia Stern** opened The Nut House in 1977 at 1492 Monroe Avenue. As reported in a D&C article on 10/16/78, The Nut House's first year proved that Rochester was "nuts" about her shop.

This led to Stern moving to a larger building just up the avenue. The new shop, a redeveloped Texaco service station, afforded ample space for her growing inventory of confections, dried fruits and nuts. From an article in the D&C on 10/26/79, it was clear that her intentions were to make her shop unique as there was more emphasis put on promoting gourmet items in her new shop. She prided herself in satisfying "can you get this or that" inquiries from her customers. Those requests ran the gamut of stocking childhood favorites like Jelly Belly to obtaining the imported German Reber line of marzipan chocolates.

That same savvy business attitude was evident in 1995 when the Ryder Cup golf tournament came to town. Stern offered free gourmet food tastings as an enticement to visit her shop that was stocked with golf novelties, coffee mugs and golf chocolates. Ms. Stern had clearly taken a business that appeared at its beginnings to be focused on a single product and developed it into a full service retail and gift specialty shop.

**Virginia McQueen** was one of Brighton's most prolific realtors during the 1940's and 1950's as evidenced by an ad in the D&C on 10/23/46. Her ad listed the following locations and prices: Monroe Avenue \$13,000. Warrington Dr. \$17,000, Home Acres \$25,000 and Rhinecliff Dr. \$25,000. Her office was in one of the first homes converted to a business use on the upper portion of Monroe Avenue. According to her obituary in the D&C in 2006, a woman was quoted as saying: "One woman was selling so many houses in one particular neighborhood near 12 Corners that someone joked that it should be named after her (Virginia

McQueen) and so it was." Virginia Colony is that neighborhood and it is a fitting reminder of Ms. McQueen's lasting legacy as a Merchant of Monroe.

Another service provider who has a rightful place in this cavalcade of woman entrepreneurs is **Marilyn DiMaria**. She, with her husband Richard, opened Di Maria Travel Agency at 1521 Monroe Ave in 1972. She joined her husband after leaving her banking job but was much more involved in the agency than reconciling the books as the Secretary Treasurer. She was skilled in planning travel arrangements and then guiding travelers during the escorted tours. The agency resides today across from Brighton Commons Plaza and is now run by her son Richard.

One of the original tenants of Brighton Commons when it opened in 1975 was Lady Madonna Maternity Boutique owned and operated by **Nancy Moscow**. Her motto was "we make pregnant prettier." Also sharing the space was the Baby Boutique in the lower level of the innovative mall designed by Jae Ko Associates. She prided herself in featuring designer Lester Hayott who was innovative in his maternity presentation. He approached the design process by using current fashions that were perfectly proportioned allowing room for the baby. Nancy found success in Brighton Commons that had risen from the disastrous fire of 1974.

While we are visiting the Brighton Common Plaza's past, it might be a good time to transition to a present occupant, Panache Vintage and Finer Consignment that opened in 2010. **Joan Lincoln's** Panache and its sister store Panache Home Design have

now become anchors for the plaza. While consignment stores are not new or unique, Joan is! Her stores are a wonderful example of old fashioned merchandising and outstanding customer service. Furthermore, she has a entrepreneurial track record that separates her from her peers. She is a highly sought after makeup artist, is one of the original creators of Fashion Week and is a radio personality on Warm 101.3 where she is the host of "Fashion First." No wonder she was recently named Entrepreneur of the Year by the Brighton Chamber of Commerce. She sounds more like a Renaissance woman to me!

During the Great Depression, **May Corris** and her husband were struggling financially (as were many Americans), so May began making and selling baby food out of her home. The May Corris Baby Food Co. was located at 1649 Monroe Ave located adjacent to the where the M&T Bank sits today. A Rochester Times Union ad from 1/17/34 stated that her products were "Superior and Doctor Recommended." Other ads from the Binghamton Press and the Daily News of Tarrytown N.Y. illustrate that she was far from just a local merchant. Her baby food manufacturing business was one of the first to prepare meat products in glass jars. She also featured diet foods for adults. A 5/12/39 Wegmans ad featured May Corris' non-fattening mayonnaise in 8oz jars for 49 cents. The D&C reported on 3/29/36 that the May Corris Baby Food Co. was granted a restraining order preventing a previous employee from canvassing the Corris customers and selling them a rival company's product. It seems that Ms. Corris had contracted not to engage in a competitive business for five years after leaving the Corris company, demonstrating her sharp business acumen and tenacity.

According to her obituary in the D&C on 11/13/69, she sold the business in 1940 but continued to manufacture, with her son, mayonnaise for people on special diets.

Don Barbato (The Don of Don & Bob's) had a partner, Bob Berl who was the owner of Zweigles Hots, when Don & Bobs opened in 1954. More importantly his other partner, wife **Ann Barbato**, provided the heart and soul of the Monroe Ave. restaurant. Her typical day included setting up the cash registers, working at the counter and then reconciling the days receipts. Please refer to Historic Brighton Vol. 21 No.3 to learn how that team developed one of Brighton's iconic businesses. It can be found at [historicbrighton.org](http://historicbrighton.org). Ann is rightfully remembered with her husband on the Chamber of Commerce Memorial Monument located at the Twelve Corners for her tireless efforts enhancing the community.

In 1960 when **Esther Bellwood** stepped in to take over Tuthill Lamp and Shade from her ailing father, G.B. Tuthill, she was giving up her career as a nurse. Her father had started the business in 1924 after buying out Smith Ceramic Studio further down Monroe Avenue in the City of Rochester. Women entrepreneurs were still a rarity when she purchased a building at 1689 Monroe Ave and immediately moved the business to the Town of Brighton. It quickly began to flourish and is currently, according to their website, the longest continuously operating business on Monroe Avenue. Esther was also one to display civic awareness. When the town passed a sign ordinance that would require the removal of her pole sign, she was one of the first merchants to comply. According to an article by Arlene Vanderlinde, she felt she could set a good example and was hopeful that others would follow.

Most did! Today the nationally known company is owned and operated by her son, Bruce Bellwood, who continues to build the 3rd generation business. See Historic Brighton Vol 21, No.1 for photos and more information about Tuthill Lighting.

**Lea Malek** opened Malek's Brighton Bakery in 1977 in the historically significant former Brighton Town Hall, located at 1795 Monroe Avenue. It quickly grew to be one of the finest kosher bakeries in the area. As most who read this publication know, Brighton is ground zero for bagel enjoyment. Leah embraced that reality as stated in the D&C 11/29/2001. She was quoted saying, "give them a good product and people will always come for more." Although she sold the Brighton business, her son Roni currently operates Balsam Bagels on Winton Rd in the City of Rochester. Roni, who grew up in the bakery, commented to me recently that - "I've been dealing with zeros (bagels) all my life and I just wish that I could find a "one" to go in front of them." Leah has retained the building and you can read more about its history and Malek's exciting future in this current newsletter.

I'm sure there are many more worthy women entrepreneurs that have graced Monroe Ave and I will update this list in the future. Most importantly, the women celebrated above have left a rich legacy that will continue to inspire future women business leaders. As we celebrated "Women's History Month" in March, I hope it's clear that women have made great progress and continue to make a difference in the business world. A lot has happened since Esther Bellwood chose to ignore her father's advice to stay in nursing over 60 years ago.

# THE HILLEL SCHOOL-MALEK'S BAKERY CONNECTION

By Mary Jo Lanphear

The big news in Brighton in January 2022 was the purchase of Malek's Bakery at 1795 Monroe Avenue by the Hillel School, the Jewish Community Day School in Brighton. This may be the only entrepreneurial venture of its kind in the country. There are many instances of schools partnering with businesses for fund-raising, sports team support, and scholarships but the purchase and operation of a going business as a source of funding is history-making.

The building that houses Malek's Bakery has a story of its own. Constructed in 1925 as a commercial building with apartments on the second floor, it typifies many of the business-residential combinations built on Monroe Avenue at the time. The Rochester Brick & Tile Company had occupied much of the avenue until the early years of the twentieth century. Its departure to Fishers, New York, about 1918 left buildable land for developers on both sides of the street.

The town of Brighton was one of the first tenants at 1795 Monroe Avenue, at first sharing the first floor of the building with a Hart's Grocery store but it wasn't long before the town needed the whole building for police, courts, and other offices. This was a unique situation for the town that had formerly used public buildings for large meetings and the town clerk's home or business for town board meetings. The former rural town had grown substantially as a residential community, spurred by crowded city conditions and the availability of public transportation from the city along Monroe Avenue.

As early as the 1930s, plans were underway for a larger town hall. The

Depression and World War II deterred building until 1949 when the town purchased the nine-acre Twamley property on Elmwood Avenue for a new and larger, town-owned facility. Brighton moved to its new headquarters at 2300 Elmwood Avenue in February of 1953.

After the town left 1795 Monroe Avenue, Cellura's shoe shop and Ye Olde Towne Hall barber shop moved into the first floor spaces. In May of 1954 a fire that originated in the basement shoe storage area did extensive damage to both floors of the building and both tenants relocated.

In the fall of 1954, Herman Storrer, long a baker on East Avenue in Brighton Village, moved his bakery to 1795 Monroe Avenue, beginning a tradition of bakeries in that building. Lea Malek purchased the site in 1977 and opened the kosher bakery that continues to this day.

Since 2002 when Lea Malek first sold the business it has been operated by non-Jewish bakers yet it has adhered to kashruth, Jewish dietary laws, and has continued to offer approved baked goods to the community. In 2011 Hoang Ngo became head baker at Malek's after a long career at the McCurdy's department store bakery that closed its Midtown Plaza location in 1994. In 2011 he purchased the business and in 2021 he announced his decision to retire. He and his staff will assist with the transition for a few months as will Lea Malek.

The Hillel Community Day School also has a long tradition in the Rochester area. Its founding is attributed to Hyman Kolko, a Rochester businessman and

a leader in the promotion of Jewish education.

The school began in 1947 in a 1916 East Avenue mansion designed by architect Herbert Stern for his brother and sister-in-law, Arthur and Irma Stern. After Arthur's death in 1923, Irma Stern sold the house to Martin and Grace Hoyt. Martin's death in 1932 left Grace the owner until her death in 1940 after which her heirs sold the house to a real estate investor. Hillel acquired it from Utica Properties.

1430 East Avenue was the right size for Hillel School when it began with just three grades in September of 1947 – nursery school, kindergarten, and first grade. The plan was to add a grade each year and by 1953 the school offered education from nursery school to grade six. The school received its charter from the New York State Education Department in February of 1949 at which time it had 97 children in nursery school through first grade.

Hyman Kolko continued his connections to the school, serving as president of the school for several years. After his wife Ada's death in 1963, he donated a playground at the school in her memory.

In 1977 the Brighton School District sold its Meadowview school to Hillel, enabling the school to grow on its nine-acre campus. Today it offers full day classes in both secular and religious studies to children in kindergarten through eighth grade.

And what of this new fund-raising venture? It certainly gives new meaning to the term "baked food sale."

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