

# The Star-Ledger

4EX59

FINAL EDITION

TODAY'S FORECAST: Warm, with plenty of sunshine.

at 7 A.M.  
49°

at 2 P.M.  
71°

at 7 P.M.  
70°

DETAILS,  
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## MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

# Rutgers nursing prof honored for work to fight AIDS

**RACHEL JONES**  
58, Boonton Township

**Occupation**  
Assistant professor, Rutgers College of Nursing in Newark.

**Background**  
Jones grew up during the height of the civil rights movement and said it was a profound influence. She earned a bachelor of science degree in nursing from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, a master's degree in nursing from Pace University in New York and a doctorate from New York University.

Jones has a long history of work in Newark. Her recent work has focused on creating innovative approaches to reduce HIV risk in young, urban women.

"HIV/AIDS prevention and use of technology to promote public health has been my major area of work for the last decade," she said.

### A wake-up call

It was in the early 1980s that Jones got involved with HIV/AIDS prevention. She was an emergency room nurse at a facility on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. She and her colleagues were uncertain about why young people, mostly men, were coming in so ill. Soon, they



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Rachel Jones, an assistant professor at the Rutgers College of Nursing in Newark, was selected by the Zonta Club of Essex County as Woman of the Year.

came to understand this infection was human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV.

"In the early years of the epidemic, there were not medications to treat HIV/AIDS. Then, women in my neighborhood

of Jersey City were becoming infected, largely due to sexual transmission by infected male partners," said Jones.

### Prevention matters

Jones became a family nurse practitioner working in Union Square, New York. Despite the fact that they were informed about risk factors for HIV infection, she would see a revolving door of patients with sexually transmitted infections. "Very smart young men and women kept returning with sexually transmitted infections, placing them at risk for HIV. Yes, we had discussions about condom use and partner choices. Months later, they would return for treatment," she said.

"It became apparent to me that knowledge alone would not be enough to reduce HIV risk. I went to New York University and completed my Ph.D. My dissertation was a study about trust and sexual pressure and HIV risk."

### Her work

From 2004 to 2006, Jones received funding from the National Institute of Nursing Research (at the National Institutes of Health) to create and evaluate the potential of a soap opera video to communicate HIV risk reduction messages within the context of emotionally charged relationships. This culminated in

a 43-minute video, "A Story about Toni, Mike and Valerie," based on real stories told in focus groups with African-American and Latina women in public housing and neighborhood centers in Newark and Jersey City.

The romantic soap opera depicts realistic risk situations and then shows the heroine revisiting these scenes, only this time, she acts with power, developing awareness of her value as a woman, her choices and how she realizes her choices and potential, said Jones.

"When we tested the effect of the video on changing attitudes, we were surprised at how the video affected change in attitudes," she said. "Now, we have just received funding from Healthcare Foundation of NJ to create 12 soap opera videos so that we can conduct a long-term study to test the effect on the videos in changing risk behavior, thus reducing HIV risk."

In 2005, Jones received a grant from the National Library of Medicine to create a computer-based interview that would categorize level of HIV risk and provide a version of "A Story about Toni, Mike and Valerie" tailored to patients' specific risk level. Recently, with NLM funding, the video may be accessed online at [www.stophiv.newark.rutgers.edu](http://www.stophiv.newark.rutgers.edu).

### Accolades

Jones was selected by the Zonta Club

of Essex County as Woman of the Year and will be recognized during the organization's annual scholarship brunch on April 27, when scholarships will be awarded to a Rutgers nursing student. Zonta is an international organization of men and women whose commitment is to advance the status of women worldwide.

"I am honored to be recognized by the members of Zonta Charitable Fund. The honor reflects the organization's commitment to public health in the community and the fight against HIV/AIDS," she said.

Jones was also recently awarded the New York Times Tribute to Nurses Educator of the Year Award and is the first recipient of the Rutgers Newark Provost's Community Engagement in Research Award.

### Hope for the future

"It is my hope that the basic public health needs of the community are prioritized in terms of funding. Infection with HIV/AIDS can be reduced with a highly visible public health campaign," said Jones.

### Hobbies

Jones enjoys yoga, hiking, long walks with her dog, jogging, kayaking and photography.

—Reva McEachern