being thrown a life preserver."

I visited Charlie often. We soon became good friends and did the things friends normally do together... go to the movies, go have dinner, or simply take a walk on a nice summer day. He loved to visit Harvard Square and listen to the street musicians.

I remember once... it was a warm summer day... the kind of day that isn't complete unless you're eating an ice cream cone. We sat on a brick wall that surrounds the arena where the musicians play and ate our ice cream... taking in the sights and sounds which belong only to Harvard Square.

We listened to the musicians and involved ourselves in another favorite pastime of ours - people watching.

Charlie wondered aloud what the people who were walking past us were thinking... I mean you should have seen us... here I am, a white-haired grandmother, in the middle of Harvard Square, acting not so motherly, with a man thirty years my junior. Charlie dubbed us the odd couple.

We laughed a lot that day. All else seemed so unimportant.

Charlie suffered through five bouts of pneumocystis - a severe form of pneumonia which is the primary cause of death among people with AIDS.

The final attack left him unable to talk. He was very alert and aware of what was happening, but he just couldn't talk. So, we learned to communicate in different ways... through a note, a glance, or just a squeeze of the hand.

"When I get out of here," Charlie told me during his last hospital stay, "I want to get back on my feet, get a job, and forget about AIDS."

He never gave up hope.

I wish I were writing to tell you that Charlie had gotten better and lived. It would have made writing this letter a lot easier. But the fact is -- there is no cure for AIDS.

My friend Charlie became one of the 19,000 people who have died from this terrible disease.

There are no happy endings. People are dying. Black and white. Young and old. The famous and the boy next door. The disease makes no distinctions.

By 1990, the government predicts that 190,000 of us - men, women, and children - will have AIDS.

There will many more like Charlie. We'll need to be there.

Some people with AIDS may never need a buddy from the AIDS Action Committee, but everyone needs a friend. Charlie didn't

have any friends or family to help him live his final days. They were too afraid, even more afraid than Charlie.

Knowing Charlie changed my life. He taught me about the importance of caring for people... about the real value of friendship... about how precious life really is. I came to realize, more clearly than before, that we all share the same hopes and dreams, and even the same fears.

I was thankful that I was there for him... to listen, to comfort, to cry.

I often wonder what someone like Charlie would do without the AIDS Action Committee.

Charlie was offered a home, meals, and help with everyday expenses. AIDS Action gave Charlie, and gives others like him, a sense of belonging... and lets them know that someone cares.

I want to ask you to help me and the AIDS Action Committee give hope where there is so much despair.

Today, AIDS Action with its 700 volunteers is helping hundreds of people from New England live with AIDS and AIDS-Related Complex.

I was able to help one person. You can help too.

Please send a gift of $15 or $25. If you can afford to give more, a $50 or $100 gift would be appreciated as well. What is important is that you send something.

Charlie often said that he couldn't imagine his life without the people from the AIDS Action Committee. I was glad that I was there for him.

AIDS Action needs you. People with AIDS need your support. Help us help others by sending your gift today.

Sincerely,

Mim Donovan

Mim Donovan

P.S. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. When AIDS Action came to help Charlie, he felt like he had been thrown a life preserver. I just hope that you can help us do even more for others like Charlie by sending your gift today.