

## PENNY PENHALL

'Southern African HIV Clinicians Society, Penny Penhall speaking, how may I help you?' Countless numbers of members who telephoned the Society would have been greeted by those words. Behind them was a person who dealt with a diverse range of requests, complaints and enquiries, always in a polite, caring and helpful way. I have received countless compliments on how helpful Penny had been in resolving an issue. It is difficult even to begin describing what she has meant to the Society, and the crucial role she has played in its development and maturation – her contribution has been enormous.



Penny comes from a nursing background, where she excelled, having received a number of academic awards. Her desire to contribute in the larger health care arena led her to become interested in the field of HIV/AIDS. It was fortuitous, therefore, that at the establishment of the Society in 1998 she was available to become involved in the crucial early phases. The beginning was humble – Penny started work in a shared office, and as I was President of the Society at the time, we would meet two mornings a week for a couple of hours to carry out the necessary administration. As the Society grew, a permanent office was secured and Penny started working full time for the Society. In the early days Penny did everything, and I mean everything! Answering the telephone, office administration, secretarial duties, writing grant proposals, arranging Society meetings, dealing with funders, organising conferences – she did the lot! Her work on the *Journal*, however, deserves

special mention. This became our special project and I, as Editor, benefited enormously from Penny's expertise in the editing and publishing arena. The look and feel of the *Journal* as it is today is largely due to Penny's vision and expertise.

Over time the Society grew to its present size with 11 000 members and 29 active branches. The Society's activities expanded, and it became necessary to increase our capacity. Samantha Klusener, Pat and Jean Solan and more recently Venie Pillay came on board to assist in the

activities that hitherto had been carried out by Penny alone. If I were to reflect on Penny's strengths they would include patience, meticulous attention to detail, an enormous work ethic and readiness always to 'go the extra mile'. This was particularly evident in dealing with the editorial deadlines of the *Journal*.

Penny has decided to take a break (she so richly deserves a rest) and would like to explore other challenges in the future. I know that whatever she decides to do she will give it her all and make it a success.

For me it has been a privilege working with Penny for the past eight years. She has taught me an enormous amount, and I know that I am joined by Francois, the members of the executive committee and all Society members in wishing her well in the future.

**DES MARTIN**

*Editor*