



FALL 2019

POSITIVELY speaking

ADVOCACY ENLIGHTENMENT EXPRESSION
NEWS & VIEWS ACROSS THE HIV COMMUNITY

[IN THIS ISSUE]

GET CARE BROWARD HIV Health Services Planning Council Needs You!

Page 3



Rapid PrEP Program is Growing
Florida Department of Health

Page 4



Fighting Stigma Through Fashion

Page 5

The First Graduates of the Peer Training & Certification Program

Page 6

IT TAKES A COMMUNITY



Making Life Better, One Haircut at a Time

Page 7

A Legacy of Commitment & Compassion

Tribute to Memorial's Tanya Junkermeier

Page 8

FOCUS ON The Diverse Faces of Stigma

Damaris Cruz says, "Life is Beautiful"

No Bad Days for the HIV Spokesperson



Damaris Cruz

Years ago, I told someone I had HIV after we had just kissed and he put a gun to my head. I had to talk him out of it. He used to call my house and say, "This is how the gun is going to sound." My mother had to change the phone number. It's ignorance. There's a lot of stigma, a lot of discrimination. I came out and spoke because I want to break that stigma.

HIV activist, spokesperson and inveterate optimist Damaris Cruz shares her story freely, punctuating every bump in the road, every adventure, with upbeat words of wisdom and not an empty platitude among them. Everything she says, she feels – literally. Damaris has been living with HIV for almost thirty years but receiving medical HIV treatment for only the last ten. As a result, her health has been compromised and she lives with almost constant pain; a good day, on a scale of 1 to 10, she says, is an 8. But Damaris remains undaunted, her spirit

Continued on Page 11



The Accidental Advocate

Cecil Smith: "I'm doing something bigger than myself"

Page 13



A Guy with HIV & a Keyboard

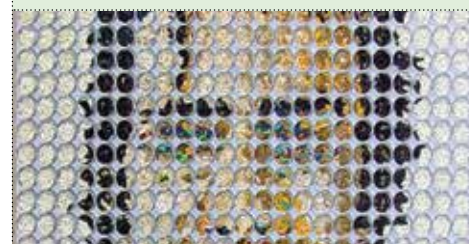
Blogger Mark S. King on Heroes Now and Then

Page 15



HIV Vaccine Trials Network Introduces Mosaico

Page 9



30 Years of Activism

Artist Chris Yoculan Confronts the AIDS Epidemic

Page 10

Ending HIV Stigma We All Play a Part

Leonard N. Jones

Leonard N. Jones,
Human Services
Manager



As the HIV epidemic continues to plague Broward County with the second highest rate of new HIV diagnoses in the country, HIV stigma remains a palpable and damaging presence. Many, if not most, people in the greater community still don't know that HIV is now a manageable condition. They're not aware that adherence to care can render the HIV virus undetectable and thus untransmittable to anyone else. Or that in the U.S., where the average lifespan in 2017 was 79 years old, for a person living with HIV and adherent to care, it was 78. This ignorance is as regrettable as it is surprising; simple facts such as these could disarm misconceptions and untruths about HIV, opening up a world of acceptance and possibilities for those living with it.

Stigma stems from the initial outbreak of AIDS in the 1980's, when a positive diagnosis was often tantamount to a death sentence and the fear of contracting HIV was rampant. Despite the dramatic advances in HIV medicine today, stigma continues to thrive. For people living with HIV, the repercussions of this stigma can permeate every aspect of daily life. Discrimination when it comes to employment and housing are widespread for people who disclose their positive status. Estrangement from family and friends is too often a painful reality that leads to isolation and despair. Rejection and ostracism on the dating scene is anticipated or even expected by people living with HIV. Stigma can even compromise critical medical and dental care, with doctors and practitioners unaware of the advances in HIV medicine

and/or completely unfamiliar with protocol when dealing with someone living with HIV.

The Antidote to Stigma

The antidote to any and all aspects of stigma is largely education. By being informed and informing others of the truth about living with HIV, and of advances in HIV medicine, prevention and treatment, we can erase unfounded fears to eradicate the stigma surrounding HIV. But the responsibility to educate the communities in which we live lies with each and every one of us; we all play a part in defeating the HIV epidemic. We can accomplish this by educating ourselves and those around us as to the truth about HIV, as we rally together to gain widespread understanding and support. Thwarting stigma in the HIV community rests on informing the community at large so not one person living with HIV will be ashamed of being seen going to the doctor for HIV treatment or picking up life-saving HIV meds.

In addition to disseminating knowledge about living with HIV, we need to champion HIV treatment and prevention. With adherence to care, people who are HIV positive can attain an undetectable viral load which translates into "undetectable" status. Once a positive individual is undetectable, he or she cannot transmit the HIV virus to others, creating an additional barrier to HIV, along with safe sex practices. And now with the success of PrEP, the responsibility for HIV prevention can be shared by people who are HIV negative. Equally momentous, attaining undetectable status can register a tremendous impact on individuals living with HIV, offering freedom from judgement for just being positive.

When basic knowledge of HIV becomes common knowledge, the truth about HIV will prevail over the debilitating stigma surrounding it. Because HIV stigma, like the virus itself, can be controlled and hopefully one day eradicated if we all work together.

For information about HIV care, contact Broward Ryan White Part A at 954-357-9797 or visit our website: Broward.org/RyanWhite.



THE RYAN WHITE PART A PROGRAM OF BROWARD COUNTY QUARTERLY JOURNAL

HUMAN SERVICES MANAGER

Leonard N. Jones
Health Care Services
Ryan White Part A Program

PUBLICATIONS SPECIALIST

Lauren Kettler Gold
Ryan White Part A Program

If you have any comments or questions,
please write to:

RyanWhitePartA@broward.org

The Ryan White Part A Program Quarterly Journal is published by Ryan White Part A Program Office (Health Care Services, Community Partnerships Division). The goal of the publication is to provide Broward County residents with HIV information about available services and other special interests. The publication is available at funded Ryan White Part A Provider sites or available by request at ryanwhiteparta@broward.org.

Editors of the Ryan White Part A Program Quarterly Journal reserve the right to edit, rewrite or refuse materials. The editorial team is not responsible for typographical production errors or accuracy of information provided outside of routine fact verifications. The publication does not accept commercial advertisement or other marketing vehicles in its production and reserves the right to refuse any advertiser. The Ryan White Part A Program Quarterly Journal accepts no responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts and/or photographs.

No portion of the publication may be used or reproduced without the express written permission of the Ryan White Part A Program Office. The creation of this document is 100 percent funded by a federal Ryan White Part A grant received by Broward County.

Next Issue
FOCUS ON
Battling the HIV
Epidemic

This publication is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$15,924,940 with 0 percentage financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

Join the Team

HIV Health Services Planning Council Needs You!

You can be a part of **HIV Health Services Planning Council (HIVPC)** efforts by joining the HIVPC or any of its committees. We are seeking community members to contribute their time, ideas and expertise as Council members as well as representatives to fill specific roles on the Planning Council and its committees. The HIVPC directs and coordinates effective responses to the HIV epidemic in Broward County with the goal to ensure quality, comprehensive care that positively optimizes the healthcare of people living with HIV. The Planning Council offers a vital opportunity for community members and service providers to work together to improve the health outcomes of the HIV community.

HIVPC is Actively Seeking to Fill These Council Vacancies:

- Veterans Affairs Representative
- Federally Recognized Indian Tribe Members
- State Medicaid Representative
- Local Public Health Agency Representative
- Health Planning Agency Representative
- Person Living with HIV also living with Hepatitis B or C
- Alternate Members

HIVPC Committees Seeking New Members

The Community Empowerment Committee (CEC) encourages the participation of individuals living with HIV and community allies in the planning, priority-setting and resource-allocation processes. The CEC also conducts outreach and educates community members on topics related to HIV and the Ryan White Part A Program. A significant outreach in July was the Committee's first-ever fashion show geared towards the young adult HIV population (see page 5).



MDCDC Chair Vincent Foster
with HIVPC staff at Stonewall Pride 2018

The Membership/Council Development Committee (MDCDC) recruits and screens applications based on objective criteria for appointment to the Council. The MDCDC also ensures that demographic requirements of the Council are maintained according to the Ryan White Treatment and Modernization Act. The MDCDC led the first-ever membership drive for the planning council in January and been a presence at many community events.

The Quality Management Committee (QMC) reviews data and utilizes their findings to recommend new ways of improving our HIV medical care and support services to develop client and system-based outcomes and indicators.

The Priority Setting & Resource Allocation (PSRA) Committee recommends priorities for services and allocation of Ryan White Part A funds based on the review of appropriate data. In August, the PSRA wrapped up its annual process of prioritizing services and allocating funds for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.



CEC member Andrew Ruffner
during the HIVPC Membership Drive



GET INVOLVED!

Join the HIV Planning Council or an HIVPC Committee.

If you or someone you know is interested in joining the Planning Council or any of its five committees, please get in touch!

954-561-9681 Ext. 1343

For more information on the Planning Council, please visit:

Brhpc.org/programs/hiv-planning-council/

Rapid PrEP Program is Growing

Florida Department of Health in Broward County

Participation in a new HIV prevention initiative launched by the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) in Broward has nearly tripled in the past year and program managers hope the numbers keep going up. The Rapid PrEP program has emerged as a central piece of FDOH-Broward's HIV prevention strategy, along with condom distribution and community outreach. PrEP stands for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis. A once-a-day pill called Truvada is available to eligible individuals who are HIV-negative. If taken every day, PrEP is more than 90 percent effective.



PrEP Reps spread the word about the program to community groups as well as health care providers. They visit primary care physician offices to promote routine HIV testing and PrEP.

Eligible participants in the Rapid PrEP program leave with a month's worth of medication at no cost on their first visit. PrEP Reps follow up with patients for at least one year to address barriers to PrEP adherence.

"For the first time in a long time, we have a real opportunity to prevent new infections. Now we have something else that can be done in conjunction with condoms as an additional barrier," said Richardo Jackson, Biomedical Interventions Manager for FDOH-Broward. "You don't have to be scared, and you don't have to get HIV. No one has to." Because outreach and awareness are the best tools to get the message out, FDOH-Broward dispatches outreach workers into the community, Jackson said. "We have to do a lot more education, a lot more outreach and provide a lot more resources to help residents understand what HIV is and that there is pill called Truvada to help them stay negative if they are negative. And if they are HIV positive, we have additional resources to help them get connected to care immediately," Jackson added.

For more information call our 24-hour hotline at 954-295-1211 or visit getPrEPBroward.com.



Members of the FDOH-Broward's Communicable Disease staff march in the 2019 Stonewall celebration in Wilton Manors

"It's going very well. We've gotten over 1,900 people started on the medication, and that is not including those who we have just spoken to and educated on PrEP," said Nick Ferrera, Biomedical Interventions Supervisor for FDOH-Broward. "We are out in the field doing lots of community outreach and meeting people where they are."

FDOH-Broward kicked off the PrEP program in June 2018. People taking PrEP who are at risk for HIV are encouraged to combine the medication with safer-sex practices, such as condoms, to also protect against other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The patient population includes individuals from all sexual orientations, genders,

racas, ethnicities, insurances statuses and disproportionately affected populations, including men who have sex with men of all ethnicities, and African-Americans.

PrEP is accessible to everyone at the Broward Wellness Center at 750 SE Third Ave., the same location as FDOH-Broward's contracted STD clinic. FDOH-Broward navigators, known as PrEP Reps, provide information and education to all eligible clients seen at the clinic. PrEP is also available at FDOH-Broward's Family Planning clinic. FDOH staff helps clients navigate and link to other essential support services they may need, such as mental health referrals, transportation for appointments, primary care services and substance use treatment.

Fighting Stigma Through Fashion

A Fashion Show of Couture and Courage



HIV Planning Council's CEC and Youth Ad Hoc Committees
with event MC



Felix Perez models the Blue Theme

On the evening of Friday, July 19, the Broward community turned out in force to support Ryan White clients and allies who commanded the stage at SunServe in Fort Lauderdale for a fashion show like no other. Fifteen models took to the runway for the HIV Planning Council (HIVPC) event “Fighting Stigma Through Fashion” to strut their stuff, both clothing and attitude, as they challenged the different facets of stigma surrounding HIV. Participant Matthew Eaton, who hadn’t modelled since high school, says, “It was challenging, I was doing something I hadn’t done in years. But the event was so creative, and everything was so well thought out,” he enthuses, “I was really glad to be a part of it.”

Organized by the HIVPC’s Community Empowerment Committee (CEC), and its Youth Ad Hoc Committee, the evening was emceed by the dynamic Angela “Myammee” Pitts of YouTube “A&M” Channel fame, with comedian Chris Priester “The Teacher” warming up the crowd. The goal of the event was to engage and educate young adults in the conversation about HIV prevention and care. One participant, Felix Perez, said he agreed to model because he’s on PrEP

and understands the need to raise HIV awareness. But all the models, whatever their reasons for taking the stage, were clearly pleased and proud to be on it for this event.

The models lit up the runway in three scenes, each with a different theme: red for HIV awareness, blue to reference HIV prevention and the words of stigma themselves. For the finale, the models paraded to the sound of their own voices telling their own stories while displaying signs of stigmatizing words. At the runway’s edge, the models defiantly ripped up the signs, symbolically destroying the stigma itself, before turning to leave the stage.

Matthew’s sign read Death Sentence. “It was a reminder for me,” he cites. Since his HIV diagnosis in 2015, relays Mathew, “I’ve learned so much, and hearing HIV is not a death sentence was pivotal. Standing onstage, I thought, ‘I’m actually tearing these words up, It’s true, it’s not a death sentence!’ It was very impactful.” And while stigma is not something easily dealt with, let alone erased, one Friday night in July, the Broward HIV community had stigma on the run(way).



Ashley Nicole Sullivan portrays the Red Theme



Waldeline Francois-Sainvil strikes a pose

Congratulations to the Class of 2019

The First Graduates of the Peer Training & Certification Program

In the early afternoon of August 5th, the soon-to-be graduates of the Peer Counselor Training and Certification Program, 17 in total, gathered in the Anne Kolb Nature Center in Hollywood for a commencement ceremony. The Class of 2019 is the first graduating class of this unique program, a Ryan White Part A of Broward County initiative. Funded by the Community Foundation of Broward, it was put in place to ensure a pool of peer candidates trained in a standardized certification process for employment within the Ryan White Part A care continuum.



Peer Counselor Training and Certification Program graduates, Class of 2019

The benefits of the program are twofold. Peers provide invaluable perspective and knowledge for people first accessing HIV care. In addition, for the newly certified peers themselves, the skills and the certification they obtain set them up for gainful employment and an opportunity to contribute to the greater good of the community. Affirms Tony Duncan, one of the Class of 2019 graduates, “The program showed me how to help clients use their own strengths to get through the barriers they face.” Employed at Broward House, a Ryan White provider in Fort Lauderdale, as an Intervention Specialist since 2015, Tony found the training greatly enhanced not only his professional skills but also his job performance. “It taught me a lot about client motivation,” he says, noting, “I’ve worked with thirty clients in the last six months. This program helped me understand that I need to listen,” he says, recognizing, “The client needs to go forward in their own footsteps, not mine.”

Tony’s words echo those of Program Instructor Debbie Cestaro-Seifer of the AIDS Education & Training Center, in her address to the graduating class, and the family and friends who turned out to cheer them on. “You’ve been trained in helping people get the right services,” she

advised, “and in doing everything you can to keep them involved in their healthcare; in making them the expert in navigating the healthcare continuum themselves, not doing it for them. Your role is to guide people, inviting them to ‘walk’ through the HIV care continuum with you.”

“

It taught me a lot about client motivation.

Tony Duncan, 2019 Graduate

”

The Peer Counselor Training and Certification Program prepared these graduates for that role in a 12-week course of workshops, which began in November, and included an 80-hour practicum interning as peer counselors in HIV care. When asked, “What barriers to care do you see for people living with HIV?” the group was quick to respond with issues such as “transportation,” “language,” and “fear of showing up undocumented and being picked up by immigration.” In addition, it was noted that, “Showing up to care is not enough, you have to be adherent to care.” Some were issues

they had encountered in their training and some, in their own lives. Whatever their point of reference, it was clear that the Class of 2019 felt equipped and energized to step into their role as peers in the capacity of guide and advocate.

Before the graduation ceremony, which began with Angelica Rosas, Strategic Grants Manager of the Community Foundation of Broward, lauding the graduates for their accomplishments, followed by the awarding of a succession of diplomas and applause, the group was queried about what was next for their education as HIV peers. What is it they needed to learn moving forward? Answers ranged from keeping up their knowledge base to staying informed about available job opportunities and, in the bigger scheme of the HIV epidemic, “Are we moving the needle?” But the question, posed again as, “What else do you want to learn about the HIV care continuum?” drew not only agreement but raucous cheering, a testament to the spirit and determination of the graduating Class of 2019, as loud and clear rang the overwhelming response: “Everything!”

Making Life Better, One Haircut at a Time

The Barbershop at the Poverello Center

Every Thursday, hairstylist Stanley Gomiela volunteers at the barbershop in Poverello's Live Well Center in Wilton Manors. The Poverello Center, a Ryan White Part A provider, offers nutritious food, health-related services and basic living essentials to South Florida individuals living with HIV and other chronic illnesses. "A lot of people have it rough," says Stanley of his Thursday clientele. "I know when your hair looks good, you feel good. I get them to feel better about themselves when they leave."

Brad Barnes, Program/Quality Manager at Poverello since 1999, elaborates, "When you have HIV, you have to make changes in your life, maybe your lifestyle, even your job. The barbershop helps people living with HIV face these changes, and face other people too. They can see the change in themselves instantly and it starts building up their confidence: 'I can go get a job or go have dinner with my family because I look good sitting around the table,'" Brad expounds. In addition to pride in their appearance, the barbershop helps combat the sense of isolation often felt by people living with HIV, providing not just human contact but social engagement. "It breaks down those barriers," says Brad. "Coming here enables a sense of belonging."

Barbershop customer Al Borer couldn't agree more. "When you have HIV, you feel very at home here," he swears, climbing into the barber chair. A self-proclaimed "youthful senior" of 65 who remembers when "Stonewall was an actual bar," he's been coming to the Poverello Center since it first opened in 1987. "I used to volunteer at the gym," he recalls, clarifying he's no longer part of the gym crowd. "No more Spandex, no more mesh t-shirts. After a certain age, you can't pull it off." These days, he says, "I have a certain style. I like the retired drill sergeant look," he jests, and comes to the barbershop at



Stanley Gomiela cuts customer **Al Borer's** hair at the Poverello Barbershop



Chris Santiago and Eric McKnight at the Poverello Barbershop

Poverello regularly for a trim and the moral support. "I try to come Thursdays but sometimes Stanley's booked and I have to cut it myself – I save money when I do!" he laughs, the joke being of course that haircuts at Poverello are free, like all the services. As Stanley begins to cut his hair, Al relaxes into the barber's chair with a stream of friendly banter and a smile that never leaves his face.

The free hair care, along with the expert barbers and hip, retro ambiance are all thanks to Chris Santiago and Eric McKnight, who established the shop in the Live Well Center in 2017. "We donated the chairs, the barber stations and made it state-of-the-art," relays Eric proudly. It was their second shop; Eric and Chris are the founders of the Dick's Service Station barber shop in Oakland Park, which they imbued with a 1950's gas station theme. "It's just a

cool atmosphere," notes Chris. The same cool retro atmosphere they introduced into their satellite shop in Poverello, with garage-like Craftsman barber stations, vintage signs and records on the wall.

"Whoever has a license, even retired barbers, can come in for a day or two," Chris cites. "We provide everything, so there are no out-of-pocket expenses for the barbers who volunteer. We're trying to help as much as we can. That was one of our main goals, to give back to the community. Poverello is our main charity." "The shop has become so popular," Eric adds with unmasked pride, "that we're booking up to 120 people a week. That's over 6,000 haircuts a year," he calculates, observing, "a significant impact on the community we serve."

Stanley's contribution can total 15-17 haircuts on any given Thursday. "Hairdressers are therapists," he professes. "I listen to people and I treat everyone the same, rich, poor, it doesn't matter. They start spilling their life out to me: they have HIV, they have to no place to sleep, they're strung out, they have nothing at all. It's a big plus when you can feel safe telling someone your problems. People shed their tears with me. The gratification is just great," he confesses.

Though he's still cutting hair after 42 years, Stanley retired professionally from hairdressing when his life partner, who was living with HIV, took sick. "I quit to take care of him," he confides. "When I met him, he told me he was positive. We were together 16 years." Volunteering at the barbershop in the Live Well Center in Poverello for Stanley is truly a labor of love and indicative of the kind of care its customers receive. "I make sure everyone walks out happy," declares Stanley, "Even if it's just for an hour, their life is better for an hour."

A Legacy of Commitment & Compassion

Tribute to Memorial's Tanya Junkermeier

One week before she passed away last April, Disease Case Manager Tanya Junkermeier called in to work at the Division of Infectious Disease at Memorial Healthcare System in Broward County, requesting to make up missed hours. The year before, she was diagnosed with liver cancer. "What really struck me," recalls her supervisor Amy Pont, Director of Population Health, "was that Tanya was salaried. She didn't have to make up hours. Even when she was that ill, she was worrying that she hadn't pulled her weight." Guerline Verger, Ryan White Case Manager for the office concurs. "Tanya was extremely ill and chose to share the last months of her life with her patients, taking care of them. It shows a work ethic and a compassion that few people have these days. She was helping people with HIV live their best, healthy lives."

Originally from Kansas City, Tanya worked in the prison system as a registered nurse in Tallahassee before moving to Broward County and assuming her position at Memorial. "Disease managers don't just focus on HIV," explains Amy. "They focus on other chronic conditions such as diabetes, high cholesterol, aging and even conditions caused by medication. They educate patients about self-managing their conditions, preventive care, nutrition and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Her patients said she mentored them and they could talk to her about their problems." Equally impressive, Amy reveals, "Tanya really wasn't educated in HIV when she started this job. In the prison, you have people with many challenges. She was used to working with chronic illnesses and behavioral health problems, but she taught herself the HIV part."

Dr. Paula Eckardt, Medical Director of the Division of Infectious Disease affirms, "She was very, very involved with her patients. If they didn't understand their medications, she would set the pill boxes for them. She would meet them at the supermarket and show them how to read the labels so they



Tanya celebrating her birthday with coworkers, 2017

“

She was helping people with HIV live their best, healthy lives.

Guerline Verger

”

would know what they should eat. A lot of the sicker patients are still alive because of Tanya," Dr. Eckardt maintains. "One patient was morbidly obese and qualified for bariatric surgery which requires six months of extensive workup. The patient was very depressed but because of Tanya's support, was able to complete the requirements and have the surgery. Now she's losing weight, getting off medications, because Tanya was there, making appointments for her and sometimes even going with her.

"Another patient with liver disease was very sick," recalls Dr. Eckhardt. "He needed a liver transplant but was too confused about the process to make it happen. Tanya got him to do the extensive workup and when he was declined for a transplant locally, she took it upon herself to get him registered in Miami so he could have the transplant there. He wouldn't be here today if Tanya hadn't been involved in the whole scenario. He's alive because of her."

Last September, Non-medical Case Manager Olga Garcia nominated Tanya for the Shining Star, an honor her company bestows on staff for outstanding efforts. "What stood out for me," relates Olga, "is that Tanya put her heart into each patient and would do whatever it took to help them." There were many reasons Tanya deserved the Shining Star, Olga insists, but in this instance, "It was because she had a patient in hospice dying of cancer who couldn't read or write, and Tanya took the initiative to help the patient write letters to her husband, a former patient who was in prison, and also read his letters to her. Tanya was able to get the patient and her husband, who was also dying of cancer, on the phone together with the chaplain so they could talk and find some peace before they passed away. Tanya stayed with that patient until she died."

As for herself, Amy marvels, "Tanya talked openly about being terminal. She was very strong. "But," she adds wistfully, "a month before she passed, she told me all she wanted was four more years." Tanya's greatest inspiration was her daughter Marjorie Natasha, a student at the University of Central Florida, and the reason she continued to fight. "We told her daughter, 'You should be really proud of the compassion she showed people, regardless of their challenges,'" asserts Guerline. "Her legacy is the clients who relied on her." And the love she left her coworkers at Memorial's Division of Infectious Disease. "We all became family to her," asserts Olga. "She was alone here. I hope she never felt alone, that she felt we cared about her." What would Tanya say now? Olga reflects for a moment, then flashes a knowing if bittersweet smile, "Take care of my patients."

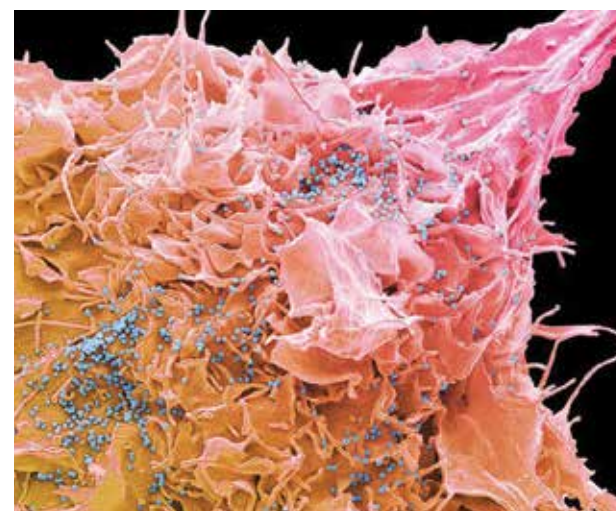
HIV Vaccine Trials Network Introduces Mosaico

New Clinical HIV Vaccine Trials Include 2 Florida Sites

The HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN), based in Seattle, is in relentless pursuit of a safe and effective HIV vaccine. With an estimated 5,000 new HIV transmissions occurring globally each day, their mission remains urgent.

HVTN, which recently completed full enrollment of its four large-scale HIV vaccine efficacy trials, convened a press conference at the 10th International AIDS Society (IAS) Conference on HIV Science which took place July 21-24 in

Mexico City. It then announced a new public partnership to take Mosaico, a promising HIV vaccine regimen, into a phase III HIV vaccine trial, its fifth such clinical trial.



HVTN continues its quest for an effective HIV vaccine (HIV virus particles in blue).

Photo Credit: Steve Gschmeissner, Science Photo Library

Mosaico HIV Vaccine Trials Are Coming to Florida

“We are committed to ensuring that HIV vaccine trial results are generalizable to the populations that carry the greatest burden of HIV infection,” said Susan Buchbinder, M.D., Mosaico Protocol Chair and Director of Bridge HIV at the San Francisco Department of Health. A global partnership of communities, study teams, in-country partners, and study participants will be joined by communities in the United States, South America and Europe, where study teams at an anticipated 55 clinical research sites – including two sites in Florida: one at the University of Miami and one in Orlando – will seek to enroll 3,800 HIV-negative at-risk men who have sex with men and transgender people, aged 18 to 60 years. The trials are scheduled to be underway by the end of this year.

An HVTN presence in South and Central Florida is expected to result in not only critical HIV vaccine research but increased awareness of the HIV epidemic in these regions. “We believe that engaging and involving communities before and during a clinical trial not only leads to better science, but it helps to support community awareness and ownership,” said Stephaun Wallace, Ph.D., Social and Behavioral Sciences Junior Investigator Liaison at the HVTN and Staff Scientist in the Vaccine and Infectious Diseases Division at Fred Hutch. “We view communities as partners

in the research enterprise and not just as study participants.”

HVTN: Finding a safe and effective HIV vaccine that responds to a variety of HIV strains

Key populations at risk of acquiring HIV, irrespective of epidemic type or local context, include men who have sex with men (MSM), people in prisons and other closed settings, sex workers and their clients, transgender people and people who inject drugs. HIV is genetically diverse, more so than any other pathogen, has a complex outer structure or envelope and the HIV subtypes in the different regions vary. The need to find an additional HIV prevention strategy, coupled with HIV’s genetic diversity, requires daily devotion, thought, and strategy.

To combat this, researchers will test a vaccination combination based on “mosaic” immunogens — vaccine components comprising elements from multiple HIV variants — that aim to induce immune responses against a wide variety of global HIV strains. Mosaico (HVTN 706/HPX3002), the new clinical trial, was designed in consideration of the populations that bear a disproportionate burden of HIV. In Europe, North America, and South America, MSM and transgender people are far more likely to be affected by HIV. According to the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC), gay and bisexual men in the United States are most disproportionately affected by the virus, with over half of people with HIV in the U.S. identifying as such. UNAIDS found that transgender women worldwide are 49 times more likely to be living with HIV than other adults of reproductive age.

Study participants will receive vaccinations at four time points over one year and will be randomly assigned to receive either the experimental vaccine regimen or placebo. All study participants will receive a comprehensive HIV prevention package, including risk reduction counselling, condoms and lubricant, STI testing and treatment, and PrEP. Each study site will provide access to PrEP informed by a locally developed PrEP plan. Access to PrEP in each country will be made available to study participants where it is licensed, or through local demonstration projects, where available.

HVTN is engaged in the development of a safe and effective HIV vaccine as an approach to controlling the HIV epidemic not just in the United States but worldwide. The Mosaico team hopes that their vaccine will help to protect at least 65% of the study participants and hope to get results by 2023.

30 Years of Activism

Artist Chris Yoculan Confronts the AIDS Epidemic

Installation artist Chris Yoculan created his Coffin series as a depiction of the AIDS epidemic in 1989, long before he was diagnosed. “Just being a gay man had become a category of risk,” recalls Chris “I was first coming out, figuring out who I was. I did a whole series of self-portraits in shadows, prior to the coffins.

That was me finding myself.”

Through the decades, Chris’s art has reflected his activism in movements such as the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) and other efforts that coincided with the LGBTQ community. “I produced work around social injustice,” Chris cites. The Coffin series was a commentary on the AIDS epidemic, serving as a powerful cry for recognition and compassion for the nameless and faceless people who were dying at the time. In “Being Plowed,” from that series, a distressed human torso is portrayed with a rusty plow for a pelvis, turning a euphemism into a visceral representation of how sexuality was weaponized by some.

In 2000, Chris attended an exhibit at 9MusesArtCenter, sponsored by Mental Health America of Southeast Florida (MHA), which promotes the support and destigmatization for people suffering with



Notification
2002

mental health issues. “They asked me to come teach one day a week and I totally fell in love. What I saw was another stigmatized subculture. As a gay man, I could identify.” He began working at MHA in 2001 and has been the Adult Services Director since 2009.

While working at MHA, Chris began production on the self-portrait “Identity”. The piece is rendered entirely in petri dishes filled with pills. “Medication became part of my life,” cites Chris. “You are compliant because you want to continue to live,” he explains, chuckling, “As the piece progressed, I’d be working here and people were bringing me bags of pills to complete the portrait.”

His installations often involve audio or motion sensors in order to create a unique experience for each viewer. “Notification” shows three sets of his hands cast in bronze holding envelopes which light up when approached. Each envelope glows with possible test results – addressed to Chris; one positive, one negative, and one question mark. “Allowing myself this work,” divulges Chris, “was an opportunity to heal.”

He still produces art but, Chris concedes, “Not on a serious level. I’m not angry anymore. The anger fueled my passion and my work.” These days Chris pours his inspiration into his job. “There’s an opportunity here to give other people a voice. I come to work and enjoy each day,” he says. “It’s not work, it’s a love.”

To see more of Chris’s work in the community, please visit 9musesartcenter.org and @9MusesArtCenter on Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr and Facebook.



Plowed
1989/90



Allowing myself this work, was an opportunity to heal.

Chris Yoculan



Identity
2003



Damaris Cruz says, “Life is Beautiful”

No Bad Days for HIV Spokesperson



Damaris Cruz

outside to visit. Rapid testing had just come out and we had people in the jail testing inmates while we were outside talking to the women,” explains Damaris. “I would share my story with the visitors. They were surprised. ‘My man could be having sex with men.’ They would go inside and tell their men to get tested.”

But the women visitors were just the beginning. Recounts Damaris, “I would go inside the jails and speak to inmates about HIV. I loved it,” she effuses. “I talked about HIV and at the end, I shared my story. You would see inmates crying, saying, ‘If I would see you outside, I would sleep with you, or someone else and not know they have HIV.’” For many, it was their first time talking about HIV. “It was amazing, very powerful for me,” asserts Damaris, who adds playfully, “You know how many marriage proposals I got!”

Continued from Page 1

brilliantly intact with a resolve to not just live her life but rejoice in it and help others do the same.

Most of the time we live a life of defeat. Maybe we were raised that way, maybe we think we are not worthy but that is not real. You are so powerful, so amazing and great. You just have to claim your power and find your truth. There is so much to be positive about on this journey.

Living with HIV since 1990, Damaris, who was born in New York and raised in Puerto Rico, split her time between both places before moving to Florida in 1999. A few years later, while working for the Florida Department of Health in Broward, she was commissioned to promote HIV testing in the community, which Damaris swiftly and successfully turned into a stellar opportunity to confront HIV stigma head-on, educating as many people at risk as she could. “I was given a grant to go to the four main jails in the County and empower women who were waiting



From March 2019 through February 2019, of the 2,194 women provided HIV care under the Ryan White Part A Program in Broward County, 220 (10%) were Hispanic, of which 190 (86%) were virally suppressed.

Provide Enterprise, FY 2018/2019 Utilization Report, Ryan White Part A Program, Broward County

she claims of her public persona, “but they pull me back in.” Which is clearly no hardship for Damaris, who likens speaking to “an exchange of energy” and reveals, “The biggest part of my healing has been speaking, with the inmates more than anyone else.”

I do have my “moments” and need to be reminded but that is what we are here for, to help each other to have awareness and see that there are amazing things in this journey and as we do that, we encounter amazing souls that help us grow.

Damaris has had her share of relationships as a single woman living with HIV. She contracted HIV from a former fiancé who knew he was positive. He told her, “I knew I was going to take someone with me, I didn’t know it was going to be you.” She almost married him but learned of his infidelity a week before their wedding. Just a few years ago, she was engaged to another man who was negative. At first, she says, “I didn’t like him that way. I told him, ‘Listen, I have HIV.’ He said, ‘I cannot tell myself to stop loving you.’ He was willing to learn,” which impressed her.



The biggest part of my healing has been speaking.

Damaris Cruz

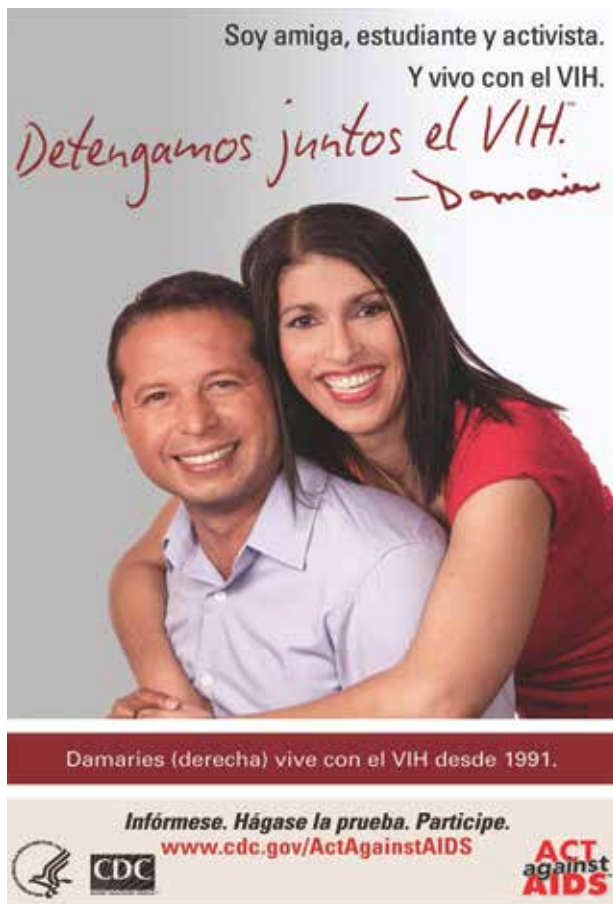


Damaris went on to participate in various HIV awareness campaigns. In 2008, she was a spokesperson for “Soy,” the first Spanish-language media campaign for TV and radio, featuring HIV-positive Latinos, presented by Univision and the Kaiser Family Foundation. In 2013, she was featured in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) anti-stigma campaign “Let’s Stop HIV Together,” both on video and in print. Damaris also appeared on the Spanish-language talk show, the Cristina Show. “I try to retire,”

Continued on Page 12

Damaris Cruz says “Life is Beautiful”

No Bad Days for HIV Spokesperson



Damaris in CDC campaign

Continued from Page 11

Dating negative men has had its challenges. “I haven’t dated in a while,” says Damaris. “I’m not afraid but I’m nervous,” she admits. “I met someone on social media. After a year of messaging, I told him I was HIV positive and it blew him away. We were on a date finally and he blurts out, ‘What if you kiss me and I get HIV?’ He’s a professional, an executive! But people don’t take the time to read anything unless it touches their lives. ‘If it doesn’t happen to me, I don’t have to educate myself about it.’” They’re still friends and, she says, “He still thinks he’s going to get it. I’m still sending him information from the CDC.”

Damaris in CDC campaign



“I tell men I have HIV and explain that I have ‘undetectable’ status, which means because I adhere to treatment and my viral load is so low, there’s no risk of me transmitting the virus to anyone.”* Some men are comfortable with her status. But on the other end of the stigma spectrum, she discloses, “I’ve had men who wouldn’t talk to me or left me stranded because I have HIV.” Or threatened her life.

“I want to be seen as normal,” she insists, “but at the same time, people need to learn how to have compassion. Even people who have become positive in the more recent past say, ‘Why are you complaining so much?’ When you survive for so long, it takes a toll on your body. Long term survivors have paved the way for people living with HIV now. We’ve been through hell.”

Damaris, who just turned forty-nine, waited twenty years before seeking medical treatment, preferring holistic methods of dealing with HIV. “The man who infected me took AZT and it ate his stomach,” she shudders. But her decision to delay meds was not the best one, she concludes. “My body cannot fight the things it could’ve,” she laments, had she started treatment sooner. Yet Damaris remains positive about being positive, displaying remarkable resilience. “I never have a bad day,” she contends. “Only good days and great days.” Even her texts are missives of affirmation and inspiration, and a joy in others that makes you believe her.

I’m just waking up and I’m in pain, but life is beautiful. How are you?



Damaris with her mother: “She’s my strength.”

“

I never have a bad day, only goods days and great days.

Damaris Cruz

”

* “When [antiretroviral treatment] results in viral suppression, defined as less than 200 copies/ml or undetectable levels, it prevents sexual HIV transmission.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2017



The Accidental Advocate

Cecil Smith: “I’m doing something bigger than myself”

Cecil Smith had no thoughts of becoming an advocate for HIV or any cause. But some twenty years ago, he found himself at his first HIV Planning Council meeting and it’s been a whirlwind of involvement ever since. “I live a busy lifestyle,” he discloses. “The good thing about it is, it’s allowed me to meet a lot of people and travel,” adding with his broad, impish smile, “my passion is traveling.” But for Cecil, the journey goes far beyond geography. “I always wanted to find a way to contribute,” he muses. “It’s been a wonderful ride with a lot of ups and downs, just like life.”

Life for Cecil took a decisive turn 23 years ago when he was diagnosed with HIV. He was in the hospital with pneumocystis pneumonia when he was told he tested positive. “When I was first diagnosed, I thought about killing myself. I didn’t want to face it,” he recalls. “You ask, ‘Why do I want to continue to live?’ It’s normal. It was a huge blow. That wasn’t what I was expecting.”

When Cecil returned home from the hospital, he recounts, “I heard people talking about me. The first thing people noticed then was the excessive weight loss. That’s part of the stigma,” he cites. “I would hear things in the community. This guy was talking about another person, ‘You know he’s got the package.’ Or if they say somebody’s ‘sick,’ they mean somebody’s living with AIDS. Or, ‘You see her, she’s full blown’ or ‘she was a carrier.’ Those are the kinds of things people say. It depends where you live. In New Orleans they call it the gangster.”



Cecil Smith,
2019

That’s when Cecil’s life took another unexpected turn, this one setting him on an exhilarating path of community involvement and social connection. He was working at Hope House, an HIV/AIDS housing agency in Palm Beach, when he happened to accompany a client to an HIV peer counselor interview. “I talked to the lady who was interviewing and she hired me as a peer! Then she said, ‘I want you to start attending planning meetings.’ That’s the way it started to grow for me,” recounts Cecil of his initial activism in the HIV community. “Years later, I met the same lady at a Pride event in Lake Worth. I told everyone, ‘She’s the one who encouraged me!’”

Participation in HIV Planning Council meetings evolved into serving on the board. “I stayed as a consumer. We’ve had others come and go but I’ve been able to stay aboard ship.” Cecil, who still lives in West Palm Beach, has made a career of attending HIV council meetings, support groups and advocacy gatherings throughout South Florida, including Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. “I enjoy meeting other advocates, I love the environment, being on the planning council, going to retreats, it’s like an adventure. I love going and meeting new people. And if along the way we become friends, that’s great.

“The other thing I do is I go on HIV community retreats,” he relates. “You get to go away. A lot of those are religious, spiritual-based, and each day you have scheduled activities. With the people that I met attending the retreat, I was able to start friendships. They only thing is, pretty

“

The first thing people noticed then was the excessive weight loss. That’s part of the stigma.

Cecil Smith

”

Shortly after being diagnosed, Cecil left Delray Beach where he was born and raised, and took refuge in a Salvation Army in Broward County. “I didn’t want anyone to see me back in the neighborhood where I grew up,” he admits. “I didn’t look like Cecil, the man I knew. I felt so ashamed. I didn’t tell anyone. It was pretty much an internal thing. I had to handle it on my own.” But within the year, he returned to live up north when the Comprehensive AIDS Program placed him in an assisted living facility in West Palm Beach. “I was slowly getting better health-wise,” thanks to the new digs, he says, where he was assured three meals a day and his status wasn’t an issue with a third of the residents also being HIV positive.

Continued on Page 14

The Accidental Advocate

Continued from Page 13

much they're all gone, the ones that meant something to me. That's the journey," he concedes. "I was able to have some really close friendships going to the retreats every year, and the next year, they're no longer around. I miss them dearly," Cecil confides, noting, "I have survivor's guilt."

As difficult as the losses have been, Cecil deeply appreciates the impact of these personal connections. "What happened was, I started meeting other people and they were passionate, I said, 'I got to stay with this.' I started going to meetings and I started growing and learning. That just kept my passion burning." But beyond his personal motivations, Cecil knows he's fighting for a greater good. "I'm doing something that's bigger than myself," he acknowledges. "I'm representing black males living with HIV and I have the opportunity to contribute with decision-making."

He sees himself as something of an anomaly. "It's difficult to get black males like myself on a board," he notes, citing stigma as a reason why. "It's all real," Cecil affirms, "Stigma, shame, denial. On the streets, people talk about HIV and even though they know it's no longer a death sentence, they talk in a way that stigmatizes people, still using the same hurtful terms."

Even after twenty-three years of living with HIV, that stigma continues to affect Cecil's own life. Despite all his unwavering involvement in HIV advocacy both locally and nationally, Cecil has yet to reveal his status outside the HIV community. "I remember I was in a group meeting and someone had invited my cousin. It scared the daylights out of me. I would never expect a relative to see me there, even if it's more open now, more commonplace. But stigma is still there," Cecil confirms.

"We saw each other, but we never talked about it. We just hugged, but we weren't going to discuss it." And as for dating, Cecil confides, "I prefer someone who's HIV positive," thus avoiding rejection. "You don't know how people will react," he says.

“

I'm representing black males living with HIV and I have the opportunity to contribute.

Cecil Smith

”

Overall, Cecil observes, "HIV is not a death sentence with the newer meds and advanced treatments. But at the same time," he cautions, "it's not something you want to contract, it's not a piece of cake. You have to take that medication each and every day. You have to stay the course." Cecil credits his inspiration to stay the course and his life of advocacy and engagement to his friends who paved the way.

"I'm 61 now. I never thought I was going to have this kind of passion," Cecil exclaims. "Years ago, somebody asked me to participate in a panel discussion in Miami Beach and I ran into Anna



From March 2018 through February 2019, of the 5,845 men provided HIV care under the Ryan White Part A Program in Broward County, 2,420 (41%) were black males.

Provide Enterprise, FY 2018/2019 Utilization Report, Ryan White Part A Program, Broward County



Cecil attends an HIV Planning Council meeting in Broward

Wyman and it just took off from there." Anna* was a vibrant voice throughout the HIV community in South Florida until she passed away in 2008. "She was so independent. When I first met her, I thought she was the one of the most attractive women I've ever seen," Cecil admits. She was part of a group of HIV advocates at the University of Miami's Jackson Memorial Hospital who served as his mentors. "Anna Wyman, Charlie LeClarie, a guy I knew, Lawrence Osband, big advocate. They were all cut from the same cloth," reminisces Cecil, citing with obvious pride, "I'm following in their footsteps."

He misses all three old friends dearly. "What ended it for them was death," Cecil sighs, adding, "I'm going to continue to do this as long as I can."

*Positively Speaking interviewed Anna Wyman's daughter, HIV ally Angela "Myammee" Pitts, in its Fall 2018 issue.



A Guy with HIV & a Keyboard

Blogger Mark S. King on Heroes Now and Then

“Stigma is insidious, it’s hard to define,” suggests HIV advocate and blogger Mark S. King, though, he still insists, “You know it when you see it.” The award-winning writer of *My Fabulous Disease*, the nationally acclaimed HIV blog, is not only familiar with stigma but diligently records for posterity, in writing and on video, its impact on those living with HIV since the onset of AIDS to the present. “We have our opportunities for remembrance, to tell the story,” says the former Broward resident, “and that’s what I do. I tell the story and try to do it in a way that’s not being done to one-up or shame anybody. Or put it in the context of kids today: ‘We had to walk five miles to get our HIV drugs!’ There’s always a balance I’m trying to strike between that history and being here and now.”



Mark S. King,
*I’m an HIV positive gay man
in recovery from drug addiction.
What’s not to love?*

Mark’s “stories” have been published, posted and praised nationwide. His journalistic credentials stretch from writer (*Newsweek*, *POZ Magazine*, *TheBody*) to spokesperson (CNN News, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*) to memoirist (*A Place Like This*). *My Fabulous Disease* was nominated four times by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) Media Awards for “Outstanding Blog” (2015-2019) and twice received the National Lesbian and Gay Journalist Association (NLGJA) award for “Excellence in Blogging” (2014, 2016). NLGJA also awarded their “Excellence in Opinion Editorial” honor to his essays “Once, When We Were Heroes” (2007) and “The Truth About the 7,000” (2019).

His initial involvement in HIV causes began in the role of activist shortly after he was diagnosed in 1985. “I started my career working for community-based agencies,” Mark notes. “I’ve done it all: outreach, testing, distributing condoms. I know that environment and the constant struggle with a job that every day you go home wishing you could have done more.” In fact, he lived in Fort Lauderdale from 2002-2010. “I’m familiar with Broward House, I gave out food at Poverello,” he recalls. “It was when I was in South Florida that I started writing and producing videos. That’s when the blog really took off.”

Mark’s writing bears witness to the anguish and the devastation of the AIDS outbreak in the 1980’s and into the ‘90’s. “There was mortal fear of contagion and it wasn’t limited to conservatives,” he

“**W**hen I started *My Fabulous Disease*,” says Mark of his wildly engaging and equally topical blog, “nobody had that market cornered, somebody writing joyfully and with a sense of humor about living with HIV.” He’s since built a vibrant career on his candor and his conviction. “I’ve always been an ‘out’ person,” he reveals. “HIV, gay, recovery from addiction. I’m a writer first and foremost; I’m a guy with HIV and a keyboard. It’s as simple as that. I acknowledge the fact I’m good at it. I like to be in front of people. I like to tell a good story. And this has given me an opportunity to do that for a good reason.”

There is a shy, friendly man at my gym with silver hair and a handsome face. There was a time when his sick roommate deliberately overdosed after his father told him that people with unspeakable diseases will suffer in hell. My gym friend performed CPR for an hour before help arrived, but the body never heard a loving word again. There is courage among us, astonishing courage, and we summoned it and survived. And then years passed. We got new jobs and changed gyms.

“Once, When We Were Heroes,” Mark S. King, *My Fabulous Disease*, World AIDS Day annual post, *TheBody*, June 2006

Continued on Page 16

A Guy with HIV & a Keyboard

Continued from Page 15

recounts. “Gay guys were kicking out their roommates. Everyone was scared to death.” But, he emphasizes, they were consumed with “the business of taking care of the dying,” as he puts it. “We didn’t take time to stigmatize each other. There were bodies to bury, memorials to be had. We were in the business of dealing with crises and sticking up for our rights.”

In “Once, When We Were Heroes,” first published in 2006, Mark states, “My most courageous self, the best man that I will ever be, lived more than two decades ago during the first years of a horrific plague.” Now, Mark contends, “That’s the only thing about that essay I would question today. We all get to be heroes in the here and now. When I was in my 20’s, I never walked up to a Vietnam vet and said, ‘Tell me all about it.’ That’s the nature of life. I hear people say, ‘These younger people today are apathetic.’ I marched in the streets so they might be a little apathetic. Everything that came before was so people today might have a little less anxiety, and be young and frivolous. By the time I was 22, frivolous was over, it was all death and mortality.”

“Stigma came along when positive and negative started mixing,” Mark maintains. “As people with HIV began living longer, social stigma started to rise. Suddenly there was all this anxiety in the ‘90’s, where you’re not so sure anymore who has HIV and who doesn’t. Plus, with the anonymity of the Internet, where you can openly say, ‘I would never date someone with HIV,’ you had people in chatrooms assigning ethical and moral judgements: ‘How could you possibly get infected now?’ When people with HIV are viewed as untrustworthy just for having HIV, that’s stigma: It’s worse than in 1987,” he insists.

That said, Mark does not underplay the immeasurable impact of advances in HIV medicine on his own life. “Even now, the most profound weight off my shoulders is that I cannot infect anyone. With undetectable status,” professes Mark,

happily married to husband Michael since 2015, “I felt whole again.” And of PrEP, he posits, “Inviting people not living with HIV to share responsibility means it’s no longer finger-pointing at the person living with HIV, it’s not their sole responsibility.” So yes, Mark allows, with U=U and PrEP, the future does look bright. “But,” he tenders, “By no means can you wipe away 30 years.” Of history, of pain, of loss.

“I didn’t go through everything I’ve gone through for 30 years for nothing,” Mark declares. “For me, what’s come out of it is I’ve grown as a human being. I’m not as self-centered as I used to be. I’m writing about other people, looking outward rather than navel gazing. It’s been great for me to profile other people or programs I find inspiring that aren’t me, and getting out of my gay white man silo. I’m very deliberate about it now,” he says. “I don’t talk about what a great ally I am to a person of color, I hand them the mike.”

“None of us get through this life unscathed,” Mark concludes. “We can get self-centered because what we went through was legitimately terrible, but the point of it wasn’t so that we could relive it the rest of our lives. The point is to use it as opportunity to help others with what they’re going through now.”



Mark S. King, 2018



Of the 1.5 million people in the United States currently living with HIV, approximately 26% became HIV positive before 1996, which designates them as long-term survivors.

The American Psychological Association

When HIV disease is over—and some day it surely will be—our jubilation will be beyond all imagining. We will have finally put an end to the health crisis that has plagued us for generations, a crisis that polarized nearly everyone, most particularly us as gay men. And once the celebrations fade, another equally important moment will come. We will take a look around at our friends and lovers on both sides of the viral divide—at all of our brothers whom we stigmatized for one reason or another—and our old judgments will be transformed to a deep regret. Hopefully, in that moment, a certain kind of grace will emerge.

*“The Sound of Stigma,” Mark S. King.
POZ Magazine, June 2013*

Awareness Days

September 18

National HIV/AIDS
and Aging Awareness Day
#HIVandAging



September 27

National Gay Men's
HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
#NGMHAAD



October 11

National Coming Out Day

October 15

National Latinx AIDS
Awareness Day
#NLAAD2019



November 20

Transgender Day
of Remembrance



December 1

World AIDS Day
#WAD2019



HIV/AIDS Support Groups

Amigas

Women, Hispanic
2nd & 4th Thursdays of the month
Call for location & information
Ana Bahena 954-549-0632

Angels of Hope

African American, Tuesday, 6:30pm
Modco
1530 N.W. 6th Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33311
954-764-6488

Gay Men's Empowerment Group

Thursdays 7:00-8:30pm
The Pride Center
2040 N. Dixie Hwy
Wilton Manors, FL 33305
954-764-5150 X130

Hispanic HIV Support Group

Latino, 3rd Wednesday of the month,
12:00pm
Care Resource
871 W. Oakland Park Blvd.
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33311
Monica Samper 954-567-7141 X196

HIV Gay Men Support Group

MSM, Thursdays at 2:00pm
Care Resource
871 W Oakland Park Blvd.
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311
954-567-7141 X142

HIV Lunch and Learn

For All, 4th Thursday of the month, 12:30-
2:00pm
Broward Health Comprehensive Care
1101 NW 1st St.
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33311
Trudy Love 954-356-5037

Newly Diagnosed HIV Support Group

1st Friday of the month, 12:00pm
Care Resource
871 W. Oakland Park Blvd.
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33311
Sarina Sechrist 954-567-7141 X157

Positive Attitudes (POZ) Here & Now

HIV+, Wednesdays at 7:00-9:00pm
The Pride Center
2040 N. Dixie Hwy
Wilton Manors, FL 33305
954-764-5150

Positive Social

PLWH, affected by PLWH
or at risk for HIV, Tuesdays 7:00pm
Latinos Salud
2330 Wilton Dr.,
Wilton Manors, FL 33305
954-765-6239

POZitive Attitudes

Gay & Bi-Sexual Men
Wednesday, 7:00pm
World AIDS Museum
1201 NE 26th St. #111
Wilton Manors, FL 33305
954-390-0550

POZ Connection Group for Women

Women living with or affected by HIV
Childcare provided
Friday, 7:00-9:00pm
World AIDS Museum
1201 NE 26th St. #111
Wilton Manors, FL 33305
954-390-0550

SOFFA: Significant Others, Family,

Friends, and Allies
Transgender/Gender Variant
2nd & 4th Saturdays of the month
10:00am-12:00pm
SunServe
2312 Wilton Drive
Wilton Manors, FL 33305
954-764-5150 X174

SunServe Poz Long Term Support Group

HIV+ LT survivors
1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month, 6:30-
8:00pm
The Pride Center
2040 N. Dixie Hwy
Wilton Manors, FL 33305
954-764-5150

Transgender Support Group

Trans, 3rd Friday of the month, 8:30-9:30pm
The Pride Center
2040 N. Dixie Hwy
Wilton Manors, FL 33305
954-764-5150

TransInclusive Group

Trans, Thursdays 7-8:30pm
The Pride Center
2040 N. Dixie Hwy
Wilton Manors, FL 33305
954-764-5150

Women of Empowerment

HIV+ Women, meets monthly:
Sept. 26, Oct. 24, Nov.14, Dec.5
Care Resource
871 W Oakland Park Blvd.
Ft Lauderdale, FL 33311
Jennifer Palmer 954-567-7141 X101

Online Support

Online HIV/AIDS Support Forums

hiv.supportgroups.com

Facebook HIV/AIDS Support Groups

AIDS HIV Survivor Living Memorial, For All
facebook.com/groups/1716936251671905/

Gay HIV+ Men, MSM
facebook.com/groups/GAYHIVUSA

Heterosexual POZ Heterosexual
facebook.com/groups/126252234585822/

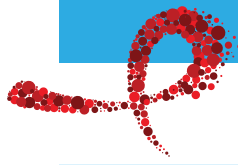
HIV/AIDS Network, For All
facebook.com/groups/284585801584590/

My AIDS Campaign, For All
facebook.com/groups/213320955360312/

Poz & Proud, For All
facebook.com/groups/pozandproud/

*If you would like to add a support group to
this listing, please email the information to
Lauren Kettler Gold at Lgold@broward.org.*

BROWARD RYAN WHITE PART A SERVICE PROVIDERS DIRECTORY



The Broward Ryan White Part A Program provides medical and support services for uninsured or underinsured people living with HIV. In order to access Ryan White Part A services, individuals need to be deemed eligible by Centralized Intake and Eligibility Determination (CIED) provided by the Broward Regional Health Planning Council. CIED representatives are located at the following sites. **For an appointment, call 954-566-1417 Ext. 1242 or Ext. 1279.**

Broward Regional Health Planning Council Hollywood 954-561-9681 <hr/> Broward Community and Family Health Care Resource Pompano Beach 954-970-8805 Ft. Lauderdale 954-567-7141	The Poverello Center Wilton Manors 954-561-3663 <hr/> Broward House Wilton Manors 954-568-7373 <hr/> Memorial Primary Care Center Hollywood 954-265-8410 <hr/> Children's Diagnostic & Treatment Center Ft. Lauderdale 954-728-1088	Specialty Care Center Ft. Lauderdale 954-527-6064 <hr/> Comprehensive Care Center Ft. Lauderdale 954-467-0880 <hr/> Broward County Health Department Ft. Lauderdale 954-467-4700	Paul Hughes Health Center Pompano Beach 954-566-1417 <hr/> AHF One River Plaza Ft. Lauderdale 954-767-0887 <hr/> AHF Oakland Park Oakland Park 954-561-6900 <hr/> AHF Northpoint Ft. Lauderdale 954-772-2411
--	--	--	---

● MEDICAL ● PHARMACY ● CASE MANAGEMENT	● MEDICAL CASE MANAGEMENT ● DENTAL ● SUBSTANCE ABUSE ● HEALTH INSURANCE CONTINUATION PROGRAM	● MENTAL HEALTH ● LEGAL SERVICES ● FOOD SERVICES
--	---	--

	●	●	●	●	●
AIDS HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION (AHF)	●	●	●	●	●
Wilton Manors Pharmacy Wilton Manors 954-494-8013		●			
Northpoint Healthcare Center Ft. Lauderdale 954-772-2411	●	●	●	●	
Sunrise Pharmacy Ft. Lauderdale 954-462-9223		●			
AHF Healthcare Center Ft. Lauderdale 954-767-0887		●			●
Oakland Park Healthcare Center Ft. Lauderdale 954-561-6900	●	●	●	●	
One River Plaza Healthcare Center Ft. Lauderdale 954-767-0887	●		●	●	
BROWARD COMMUNITY & FAMILY HEALTH CENTERS					
Health Center Pompano Beach 954-970-8805	●		●	●	●
Central Broward Community Health Lauderhill 954-583-4710	●				
BROWARD HEALTH					
Comprehensive Care Ft. Lauderdale 954-467-0880	●		●	●	
Children's Diagnostic & Treatment Center Ft. Lauderdale 954-728-1088	●				
Bernard P. Alicki Health Pharmacy Ft. Lauderdale 954-527-6042		●			
Broward Health Medical Center Ft. Lauderdale 954-522-3355		●			
Cora E. Braynon Family Health Center Ft. Lauderdale 954-759-6600	●	●			
Annie L. Weaver Health Center Pompano Beach Medical 954-786-5903 Case Management 954-786-5929	●		●	●	
Specialty Care Center Ft. Lauderdale Medical 954-463-7313 Pharmacy 954-463-7313 Case Management 954-527-6064	●	●	●	●	
Lauderdale Lakes Health Center Lauderdale Lakes 954-759-7557	●				

	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Margate Health Center Margate 954-759-7477	●									
BROWARD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT (FDOH)										
Paul Hughes Health Center Pompano Beach 954-213-0638		●								
Fort Lauderdale Health Center Ft. Lauderdale 954-467-4700		●		●						
BROWARD HOUSE										
Broward House Ft. Lauderdale 954-568-7373	●				●		●			
Broward House Wilton Manors 954-568-7373			●					●		
CARE RESOURCE										
Care Resource Oakland Park 954-567-7141	●		●	●				●		
LATINOS SALUD										
Latinos Salud Wilton Manors 954-765-6239			●							
LEGAL AID SERVICES OF BROWARD COUNTY										
Legal Aid Services of Broward County Plantation 954-765-8950									●	
MEMORIAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEM (SBHD)										
South Broward Community Health 35th Ave., Hollywood 954-265-8400	●		●	●					●	
South Broward Community Health Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 954-267-1616	●		●	●						
Memorial Center for Behavioral Health Hollywood 954-276-3422						●		●		
NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY										
Nova Southeastern University Ft. Lauderdale 954 568-7709							●			
Nova Southeastern University Oakland Park 954-568-7709							●			
POVERELLO CENTER										
Poverello Center Wilton Manors 954-561-3663										●
SUNSERVE										
SunServe Wilton Manors 954-764-5150									●	

Keeping Clients Engaged

Legal Aid Service of Broward County

with Senior Ryan White Attorney Kara Schickowski



Legal Aid Service's Kara Schickowski, Senior Ryan White Attorney & Alisha Hurwood, Supervising Attorney for Housing Rights Projects, on World AIDS Day 2015

2019 Legal Aid Office

Legal Aid Service of Broward County (LAS) has been a Ryan White provider since 1996, serving more than 7,000 clients each year in legal consultation and representation concerning Ryan White and HOPWA, children's advocacy, veterans, foreclosure, homeless, housing, immigration, low income tax clinic, special projects/education training and support services. For more than three decades, the nonprofit, founded in 1973, was the only law firm in Broward providing free civil legal services to underprivileged county residents. In 2004, the partner agency Coast to Coast Legal Aid of South Florida was formed to address the needs of clients who could be served under federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funding, allowing LAS to direct its resources to segments of the underserved population not represented under LSC restrictions.

The mission at Legal Aid Service, relays LAS Ryan White Attorney Kara Schickowski, is to improve the lifestyle and living conditions of disadvantaged Broward residents while encouraging self-sufficiency. "If you look at our Ryan White clients over the last five years," Kara cites, "close to 75% have had no or very low income. They wouldn't have been able to afford a private attorney for assistance with, for example, Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance and so on. For an attorney, some of these cases aren't especially difficult or time consuming," she continues "but are essentially impossible for a client to handle

on their own. It makes a significant difference in clients' lives when we can step in."

In addition, she points out, Ryan White clients accessing LAS and other support services maintain high rates of retention in HIV care and have viral suppression rates higher than the system-wide average. "We recognize that this may be a client's only other regular contact with a Ryan White provider, so for these clients especially, we're in a unique position, and a vital one, to keep clients engaged in the overall system of care and improve their data by doing things like confirming appointments and reminding to provide labs at certification.

"When we assist with vital legal services such as obtaining necessary benefits and medical-legal documents," Kara stresses, "clients are able to focus on remaining healthy without the worry of stressful legal concerns."



Legal Aid Service of Broward County and Coast to Coast Legal Aid of South Florida are located in Legal Aid's Center for Law and Social Justice facility at 491 N State Road 7, Plantation, FL 33317.

For information on eligibility and services, call 954-765-8950 or visit Legalaids.org.

Legal Aid Service of Broward County provides the following civil legal services:

HIV Law Project Legal assistance to service organizations and community members, including Ryan White and HOPWA.

Children's Advocacy Dependency Law Project, Children's Education Legal Rights Project, Kinship Project.

Veterans In partnership with the United Way of Broward County's "Mission United," provides access to civil justice for military veterans, connecting them with pro bono attorneys.

Foreclosure / Consumer Foreclosure prevention, garnishment defense, debt collections advice and counsel, etc.

Homeless Public benefits, immigration, family law, driver's license, etc.

Housing Public and subsidized housing, eviction defense, illegal lockout or shut-off of utilities by landlords, tenant demands for repairs, tenant rights.

Immigration Advise and represent immigrant victims of domestic violence, victims of trafficking, and victims of other violent crimes in obtaining lawful immigration status; represent abused, abandoned, or neglected immigrant children in their applications for lawful permanent residence; litigate complex immigration cases before the Department of Justice Executive Office of Immigration Review and the Board of Immigration Appeals.

Low Income Tax Clinic Assist individuals with a federal income tax controversy not exceeding \$50,000 in any taxable year.

Special Projects: Education, Training and Support Services Legal counseling and representation to Broward County residents eligible to receive benefits from various federal and state programs.

Coast to Coast Legal Aid of South Florida provides following civil legal services:

Family Law Injunctions for protection against domestic violence, divorce/custody.

Senior Citizen Law Project Age 60 and over: Health and public benefits, Housing/foreclosure defense; domestic violence and financial exploitation, consumer, naturalization.

Economic Advocacy and Community Health (EACH) Benefits assistance, veteran representation.

GET CARE. BE THERE.

If you're living with HIV and adherent to medical treatment, you can attain "undetectable" status. That means the virus is undetectable in you and you cannot transmit it.*

It also means you can live a long and healthy life: In 2017, the average lifespan in the U.S. was 79 years old; for someone living with HIV and in care, it was 78.**

**So get care and stay in care.
Live like there is a tomorrow.**

*According to the NIAID (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases)
**Avert.org, "Life Expectancy for People with HIV is Now Near-Normal," May 15, 2017

**HIV Care Starts
with Ryan White Part A
954-357-9797**

GET CARE 
BROWARD
TREAT HIV | BEAT HIV
RYAN WHITE | PART A