

Publisher's Note

As we near the traditional year-end festivities, I am again reminded of the fragile existence our economy provides to the least advantaged among us. Even in this period of economic "recovery," Sacramento is



Kevin M. Manz

experiencing reductions in HIV housing assistance, lack of support services for the homeless and ever increasing demands for food assistance. As we celebrate the season, let us do what we can for those in need by donating to, or volunteering with, local nonprofits that assist our neighbors who survive at the margins. Let us know your opinion on this topic by emailing us at: editor@pridemedia.net.

Correction:

In the Nov. 21, 2013 edition, we reported Hoppy Brewery as donating \$7,000 worth of product to charity functions every year. Hoppy Brewery donates \$7,000 worth of product each month.



HIV Does Not Discriminate

by Jovi Radtke

HIV/AIDS has been in the public eye since 1981 and an estimated 33.4 million people are infected with the virus today. HIV can affect anyone at any point in time given the right circumstances — gay or straight, white or black, young or old, married or single; no one is completely safe from this virus.

Most commonly, HIV is contracted through unprotected sex, as well as other fluid exchanging situations such as pregnancy, childbirth, breast feeding, intravenous drug use, occupational exposure, and blood transfusions or organ transplants.

Leo (a pseudonym) was 33 when he was diagnosed with HIV in 2011 and feels our society has become complacent about a virus that was identified only three years after his diagnosis.

Leo became intimate with a man he was steadily dating, who hid his HIV status. In some states, notdisclosing an HIV-positive status before a sexual encounter is a crime, however, not in the state Leo lived in at the time. When he went in for his next HIV test, the results came back positive.

"When you hear that news, it's almost like getting hit in the stomach by a semi," Leo says. "You immediately go into denial; this is not happening — I'm in a dream and I'm going to wake up any second. It didn't really sink in until they started talking about medication. That's when it hit me

that, yes, this is really happening."

"It's life changing," says Cole (a pseudonym), a 40-year-old gay man who was diagnosed with HIV in early 2013. "You now have to take medications every single day for the rest of your life — or you could die. Then you have to decide who you are going to tell, like coming out of the closet all over again. Do you tell a potential partner right up front or after several dates? How will they react? Will I be rejected?"

"A few months after I found out, I dated a guy for three weeks," Leo says. "When I told him I was positive, he told me I was disgusting and walked out."

Both Leo and Cole point out the "us and them" mentality they feel exists even within the LGBT community. It is a divide they feel is growing with the decreased lack of funding for HIV/AIDS education and outreach.

"It may now be more manageable with medication and healthy living," Cole says, "but it is a still a chronic disease — one that will be a huge factor in the rest of your life."

Both Leo and Cole have responded well to medication and have an undetectable viral load (below 500 copies of the virus per milliliter of plasma) allowing them to live relatively normal, active lives. Being diagnosed in the early stages of the virus was a large factor.

Getting tested for HIV every six months is recommended for all sexually active individuals. For places in Sacramento to get tested for HIV, as well as follow-up care, check out breakingbarriers.org and carescommunityhealth.org

Tune in to PrideLive Radio on Talk 650 KSTE every Saturday at 10 p.m. throughout December to hear more coverage of this important topic.



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Gender Health Center

by Jovi Radtke



The Gender Health Center (GHC) is a nonprofit organization focused on providing affordable counseling to the entire Sacramento community — specifically addressing the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community members with an emphasis on the “T” for transgender. While the mission and vision of the GHC is specific to the needs of gender variant individuals, it welcomes all people, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation or economic status; it never turns anyone away for an inability to pay for counseling.

The idea for the GHC came from 30-year-old visionary Danelle E. Saldana, who began working in April 2008 to make the center a reality. Saldana died unexpectedly in 2009, putting a stop to the project until members of the Sacramento LGBT community learned of her vision and were inspired to continue her work.

Today, the GHC facilitates roughly 250 counseling sessions per week, operating with four paid staff members, one clinical director, 35 volunteer therapists and 15 other volunteers

and interns. Not only does the GHC provide the most affordable therapy in all of Sacramento, it also hosts a variety of support groups and workshops focused on the overall betterment of the entire Sacramento community. Twice a month, it teams up with volunteer doctors from UC Davis to provide free hormone clinics for individuals in transition needing their prescriptions.

GHC also offers free legal services, provided by Legal Services of Northern California, including gender name changes on government documents, information on health-care coverage and options for people who are currently uninsured. Recently, GHC began hosting free education workshops on the Affordable Care Act and what it means to be in compliance with the upcoming law mandating that all individuals carry some sort of medical insurance. The GHC is also an official ACA enrollment facility.

For more information on GHC programs or affordable counseling, please visit its website at thegenderhealthcenter.org.

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