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theVoice

A PUBLICATION OF RADIANT HEALTH CENTERS
Formerly AIDS Services Foundation

FROM SURVIVING TO **THRIVING**

Photographer Kurt Weston's
Inspiring Story

EXPANDED **SERVICES**

Creating a Healthy
Orange County for All,
One Step at a Time



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Our Mission

Radiant Health Centers will end the AIDS epidemic for men, women and children in Orange County through HIV prevention and links to care and treatment while eliminating the stigma of AIDS.

Our Story

A small group of volunteers founded AIDS Services Foundation Orange County (now Radiant Health Centers) in the late summer of 1985 because people were dying, had nowhere to turn and desperately needed help. Radiant Health Centers is now the largest and most comprehensive nonprofit HIV/AIDS service provider in Orange County, with a staff of committed and caring individuals, a board of directors and hundreds of dedicated volunteers.

Each year, Radiant Health Centers helps more than 1,300 men, women and children, along with their families, who are either

living with HIV or are impacted by HIV. Services include food, transportation, housing, case management, emergency financial assistance, children and family programs, Latino outreach programs, mental health counseling, support groups, HIV testing and an extensive array of HIV prevention and education programs. We hope for a time when these services are no longer needed. Until then, we will work hard each day to prevent the spread of HIV, and to ensure that everyone living with HIV and AIDS in Orange County has access to life-enhancing care and services.

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A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friend,

Never before have we been so close to ending the HIV epidemic. We have—for the first time in the history of HIV and AIDS—the medications necessary to prevent HIV transmissions and to let HIV-positive people live long and productive lives.

But having the right medications available does not automatically prevent HIV transmissions. Together, we need to make sure that each and every one of our community members who is at risk for HIV transmission receives this lifesaving treatment.

We also need to make sure that those who are HIV positive are aware of their status, receive the treatment they so desperately need, have roofs over their heads and enough food on their plates so that they can focus on staying healthy instead of worrying where their next meal will come from.

Our services are crucial to so many of our community members who otherwise would go without proper care and without the basic necessities they need to live a healthy life.

We have made enormous strides against HIV in the last 33 years—there is no question about it.

For the first time, we have an aging population that is HIV positive. Thirty years ago, who would have ever thought that would be possible?

But our fight is far from over. We will not stop until the HIV epidemic is over and there are no more HIV transmissions in Orange County.

Here at Radiant Health Centers we now offer mental health services, an expanded food pantry, transportation services to access PrEP, and removal of many barriers to access PEP. We will continue to expand our services until there are no more gaps in healthcare in Orange County.

The men, women and children of Orange County all deserve lifesaving healthcare and access to services, regardless of who they are and whom they love.

But we can't do it alone. We need your help. Join us in our fight to end the HIV epidemic, once and for all.

Yours in service,

Philip Yaeger
 Executive Director/CEO



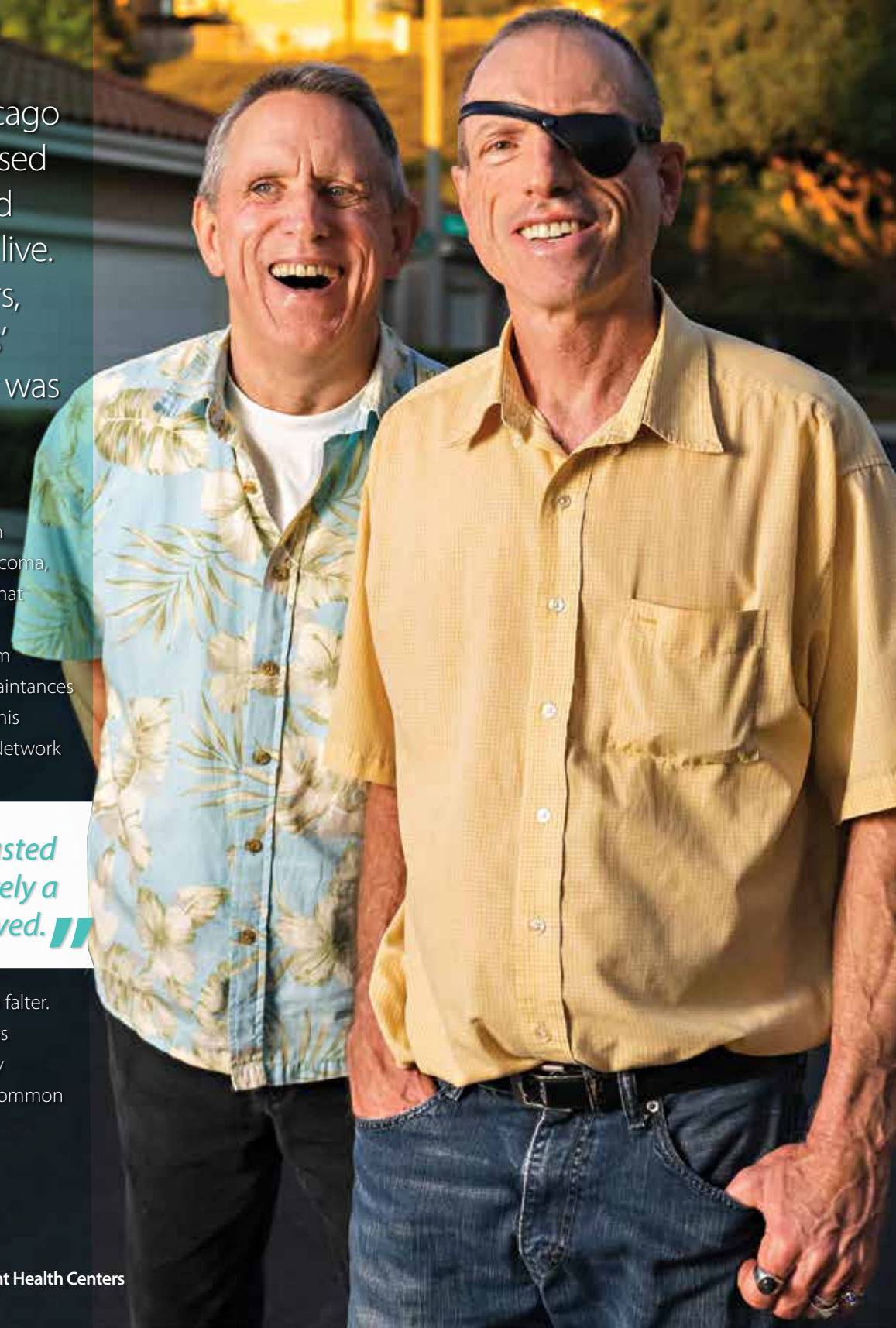
"For the first time, we have an aging population that is HIV positive."

FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

Photographer Kurt Weston's Inspiring Story

Kurt Weston was a 31-year-old fashion photographer in Chicago when he was diagnosed with AIDS in 1991 and given just months to live. For the next two years, Kurt beat the doctors' odds, but his journey was grueling and painful.

Marked by telltale purplish lesions from Kaposi's sarcoma, he suffered the stigma that distanced some friends and family. He bore psychological scars too from the loss of many dear friends, acquaintances and those he tried to help through his nonprofit, the Surviving with AIDS Network (SWAN), in Chicago.



“So many lives were wasted by AIDS,” said Kurt. “Barely a handful of people survived.”

Then, in 1993, Kurt's vision began to falter. His doctors explained that his retinas had been permanently damaged by Cytomegalovirus retinitis, another common AIDS complication.

Kurt tried to stay optimistic. Grateful that he was, at least, still alive, he continued to seek treatment but moved to Orange County in 1995 to spend the last few months he had left with his brother. It was a devastating time for Kurt and his family.

That's when Kurt was introduced to AIDS Services Foundation, as Radiant Health Centers was then known. Radiant Health Centers gave Kurt vital support like a case manager who connected him with their food pantry and to other people who were HIV positive. He felt as though he had gained another family, which he literally did when he met his future husband Terry Roberts through the program.



Terry was there for him through some of the most challenging months of his life and remains by Kurt's side to this day.

Around this time, Kurt heard whispers of a new drug that was saving people's lives.

“For the first time in a long time I finally thought that there might be hope,” said Kurt.

In 1996, the first effective medication for HIV, protease inhibitors, became available, but because the medication was not FDA-approved and extremely scarce it was only available through a lottery. Without

Kurt's knowledge, his doctor in Chicago had signed him up for the lottery, and to everyone's great joy, Kurt had been selected.

The medication turned out to be lifesaving. It stopped the virus from causing a total loss of vision. Kurt was able to maintain peripheral vision in his right eye, albeit with floating streaks making everything blurry. Slowly, his other symptoms improved, and his immune system got stronger. It was nothing short of a miracle. Kurt and Terry rejoiced.

By 1997, Kurt was ready to get back to work and channel his frustration and pain over all the lives wasted by AIDS.

He created a celebrated body of artwork called “Blind Vision,” using his photographs and mixed materials such as tinsel and foam over glass to convey interruptions of vision. His photos drew nationwide attention and were featured in several art exhibits and widely covered in the press.

Despite being legally blind, Kurt has continued his remarkable photographic journey. He obtained a Master of Arts degree in photography from California State University, Fullerton, and his art has been featured in numerous acclaimed exhibits, including at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

This year, for World AIDS Day on December 1, Kurt's many photos of his friends when they were healthy and before AIDS took their lives will be featured at the Orange County Center for Contemporary Art in Santa Ana.

Kurt turned 60 last year. He, Terry and their yellow lab live in a senior residential community in Mission Viejo. He still can't believe that he lived through the AIDS epidemic of the '80s and '90s—and hasn't just survived, but thrived.

In his own words, Kurt says, “My life is nothing short of a miracle.”



“My life is nothing short of a miracle.”



EXPANDED SERVICES

Creating a Healthy Orange County for All, One Step at a Time

Over the past eight months, we have expanded our programs to help even more people. We have launched mental health and food pantry services to qualifying members of Orange County's LGBTQ+ community. We have also added transportation services to and from PrEP appointments and have removed barriers to access for no-questions-asked PEP prescriptions (both PEP and PrEP are HIV prevention medications).

In our 33 years serving the community, we have seen firsthand how stigma, poverty, cultural misunderstandings and other health barriers have led to heightened health risks in Orange County's vulnerable LGBTQ+ population. HIV is just one of the most visible of those health inequities.

There are more than 29,000 LGBTQ+ residents in Orange County who are underinsured or without health insurance, many living at or below the poverty level, so even basic healthcare is out of reach, let alone HIV prevention or suppression medications and mental or behavioral health counseling.

To eradicate HIV/AIDS in our community, we need to provide not just comprehensive social services, as we have for years, but

also medical services specialized in meeting the unique needs of the LGBTQ+ community. With new daily medications that prevent an HIV-negative person from becoming HIV positive and that suppress the virus in HIV-positive people to the point it is undetectable and untransmittable, we know the end of HIV/AIDS is within our reach, but only if we get these medications to those who need them.

We have taken the first important steps to create a healthy Orange County for all, by expanding our services to fill the unmet needs of Orange County's LGBTQ+ community, including our mental health services, PrEP and PEP programs and food pantry.

Stigma and discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals take a terrible human toll and are associated with high rates of mental illness, substance abuse and suicide, as well as a higher risk of contracting HIV. Expanded mental health services are greatly benefiting our members of the LGBTQ+ community who would otherwise not have access to them.

Our expanded PrEP and PEP program provides our clients the resources they need to effectively access PrEP and PEP, when they need it the most, to prevent HIV transmissions. Often, healthcare providers are not familiar with these medications or not comfortable prescribing them, leading to preventable HIV transmissions. In addition, our expanded food pantry now supports members of our LGBTQ+ community whether they are HIV positive or not.

Our LGBTQ+ health center will provide a place where the LGBTQ+ community can access culturally competent care and where providers are well versed in addressing their specific health issues. The health center will also enable Radiant Health Centers to increase its outreach to LGBTQ+ youth and adults of all ages.

Radiant Health Centers' medical center will become a one-stop shop for medical and dental needs, counseling services, and easy access to medications through an onsite pharmacy. In short, it will provide the healthcare home the most vulnerable members of our LGBTQ+ community need.

To learn more about how you can get involved, visit www.radianthealthcenters.org or contact Ana Martinez, Campaign and Donor Relations Manager, at (949) 809-5768 or amartinez@radianthealthcenters.org.



THANK YOU

MAJOR DONORS

As of Sept. 10, 2018

The outstanding leadership and commitment of our generous supporters are essential to our ability to help individuals living with HIV and AIDS. Major donors contribute \$1,200 or more annually through both event and non-event related means. Many contributors give through member groups such as Patron's Council, our major donor recognition society. Major donors are vital to the success of the agency and we applaud their unwavering commitment to people living with HIV/AIDS in Orange County.

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JOIN RADIANT HEALTH CENTERS FOR THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF WORLD AIDS DAY

**SATURDAY, DEC. 1
FROM 5 TO 10 P.M.**

Exhibition

REMEMBER: An AIDS Memorial Retrospective

Three artists' work commemorates those lost to AIDS in their prime. The panelist will focus on the impact and status of the epidemic then and now.

Panelists

Dr. William Thompson IV
Infectious Disease & HIV specialist

Philip Yaeger
*Executive Director & CEO
at Radiant Health Centers*

Alina Oswald
*Author and Editor for A&U
America's AIDS Magazine*

Kurt Weston
Artist, Educator and Advocate

**Orange County Center for
Contemporary Art**

117 North Sycamore St.
Santa Ana, CA 92701

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Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, Inc. \$20,000
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Meals on Wheels Association of America \$11,814
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Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation Inc. ... \$10,000
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HIV Case Management Program

The Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation .. \$7,500
Family & Children's Program

Janssen Pharmaceuticals \$5,000
HIV and Hep C Testing

Orange County Bar Foundation \$3,350
HIV Testing

Disney Worldwide Services, Inc. \$3,000
General Operating Support

Renaissance Charitable Foundation \$2,500
Family & Children's Program

MEMORIALS

In Memory of Ruby and Dino Gomez,
Arthur R. Gomez

In Memory of Ander Scheller,
Jane Tjepkema

In Memory of Vivian Voyles,
Julie Lea

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, December 1
World AIDS Day

Saturday, January 26
Annual Gala



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Questions & Feedback:

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Phone: (949) 809-5700

**Come buy-in
to Radiant Health Centers'
33rd Annual Gala –
Radiant Royale: A Night
in Vegas.**

From the moment you step through the doors, prepare to be dazzled by a night inspired by the shimmering lights of the strip. Once again, this year's gala will be held at the historic Yost Theater in Santa Ana. This stunning theater is the perfect centerpiece for our step back to classic Vegas.

Show up ready to play amongst other 'high rollers' at our games tables, poker and blackjack to name a few, with dealers fresh off the strip. Let's see who's going to go home with the most prizes, with all donations for chips going directly back to RHC.



Saturday, January 26, 2019

As you might expect from previous years, a night this big wouldn't be complete without outstanding live entertainment, a hosted full open bar (including a signature drink for the evening), and dinner by 24 Carrots, Orange County's finest when it comes to catering. You'll also have the opportunity to bid on a great lineup of silent and live auction items, including experiences you won't want to miss.

Watch for your personal invitation to arrive by mail – including information about our discounted, early bird tickets. Brush off your dancing shoes and dress to the nines because we're looking to hit the jackpot for our clients.

