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theVoice

A PUBLICATION OF RADIANT HEALTH CENTERS
Formerly AIDS Services Foundation

PAU & JOSIE

Why a Health Center is
Important to Them

BELLONCE

Transitioning in Your 20s

LGBTs in the News

To Count, You Need to be Counted

Stairway to the Stars

The Campaign for Radiant Health Centers



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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, linkage 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

Introducing The Campaign for Radiant Health Centers



The Campaign for
Radiant Health Centers
Creating a Healthy Orange County for All



Dear Friend,

The Campaign for Radiant Health Centers has attracted significant philanthropic support, and I couldn't be more excited or proud.

We are raising funds to build an LGBTQ-plus health center and create a healthy Orange County for all.

This center will close a dangerous gap in our healthcare landscape. It's one that the most vulnerable members of our LGBTQ-plus community are falling through.

To avoid stigma or because they simply lack medical coverage, members of our community are going through mental health crises alone, being exposed to potential HIV transmission without PrEP and skipping screenings for cancer and other diseases.

This gap in care leads to new HIV transmissions, untreated addictions and cancers that aren't caught early. It means unnecessary human suffering, social cost and healthcare costs.

And that's why we're so committed to opening a dedicated LGBTQ-plus health center. Our LGBTQ-plus community needs a place where they're welcomed and provided with compassionate care for their medical, mental health and even dental health needs.

They deserve the highest quality of care regardless of HIV status, race or language, health insurance or who they are and who they love.

With your philanthropic support, Radiant Health Centers will be that place and provide care based on need and, above all, based on love.

I look forward to bringing you campaign updates over the coming months and years. We are in it for the long haul, and we hope you are too!

Yours in service,

Philip Yaeger
 Executive Director/CEO

"This center will close a dangerous gap in our healthcare landscape."



PAU & JOSIE

Why a Health Center is Important to Them

Pau Lagarde and Josie Lopez knew they were different growing up, but they didn't know how. It took them more than 20 years to find out.

Today, they're sharing their transition stories through Radiant Health Centers to inspire change for the next generation hoping they don't have to go through the same struggles. Imagine for a moment that you're a transgender man and the barriers you'd face. Now, imagine you're multiracial, and combine these two identities.

A transgender-Latino man faces potential health disparities because of his identity but also socioeconomic barriers, financial barriers, discrimination, health system barriers and lack of cultural competency by providers. A transgender-Latina woman may face additional barriers like sexual harassment and discrimination.

With research showing more than 40 percent of transgender people attempt suicide, and 54 percent if multiracial, the next generation needs to know that they have quality healthcare and mental health support right here in Orange County. Through Radiant Health Centers, they can find the resources and people who will empower and support them.



Pau's Story



At the age of four, Pau already knew he was different, but he couldn't understand what it was and didn't have time to care. The oldest of

three kids, Pau made family a priority and for the next 20 plus years, he focused on school, graduated from college, got a good job and made his parents proud.

It wasn't until he was 24 that he began his transition to become his authentic self.

Coming from a traditional Catholic, Mexican family, he didn't even know what being transgender meant. It wasn't until he was older and moved to San Francisco that he figured it out.

"I was raised in Orange County, a place where there is very little visibility, services, support and representation for the LGBTQ-plus and gender non-confirming community. I literally had to leave to go find myself. I had to start my medical transition somewhere else where both mental health services and medical services were more accessible, and people were knowledgeable of the topic. I knew that if I stayed in Orange County at that time I would have never started my transition until God knows when and I would probably not

be here today to share my story."

When the time came to share his preferred gender identity with his parents and siblings, he was worried, if not terrified. "I was afraid of losing the one thing I cared about the most... my family."

"My dad took a while to accept it... not because he hated who I was but because he was scared for my safety and well-being. For my mom, she worried about what our Latino community of friends, family and neighbors would think. How would they react to me being a man now?"

At the time, he wished there was some type of support group they could all turn to or someone that could help facilitate these difficult conversations. Support and counseling services for the LGBTQ-plus community and their families are rare.

Today, Pau is 28 years old, married and a Service Coordinator at Radiant Health Centers. He's proud of the work he's doing and continues to volunteer in the community.

Josie's story

Since Josie can remember, she was attracted to girls' accessories and toys. Even as a young child, she enjoyed playing with dolls. She grew up Catholic and had a strict stepfather, which made life hard, so she left home when she was 18 years old without any idea of where she was going.

In 1983, she became a Jehovah's Witness and practiced the religion for 10 years but was depressed because of her sexuality. She dreamed of one day being a transgender female. In 1993, she left the religion and found the LGBT Center in Orange County.

Following her dreams and passion, she got very involved with the LGBTQ-plus community and continued progressing toward her goal of transitioning from male to female. In 2000, she started her hormone treatment and got her surgery eight years later.

When she joined Radiant Health Centers (then ASF) in 1996 as a client, they helped her with housing, pantry and other supportive services. As Josie got healthier, she became a self-advocate and helped other transgender and LGBTQ-plus community members by letting them know about Radiant Health Centers. In 1998, she got her certification from the State Office of AIDS to be an HIV Testing Counselor and volunteered at the LGBT Center and Radiant Health Centers. In November 2016, Radiant Health Centers hired her as the HIV Testing Coordinator to oversee the testing program.

"My biggest achievement is that I get to be me—a transgender female—and I can help the transgender and LGBTQ-plus community. I'm proud of the person that I am, and I thank Radiant Health Centers for hiring me. I take pride in the work I do as a health educator."



STAIRWAY TO THE STARS

The Campaign for Radiant Health Centers

Stairway to the Stars held on June 2 raised **\$755,000** toward **The Campaign for Radiant Health Centers**, bringing the capital campaign fund to \$1.2 million and bringing Orange County another step closer to opening a health center for underserved members of its LGBTQ-plus community.

The Stairway to the Stars gala was held June 2 at the Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel with headliner Levi Kreis, a Tony Award winning singer and songwriter as well as comedy from Jason Stuart.



“Stairway to the Stars was truly a magical and history making night, raising major philanthropic support to create a healthy Orange County for all,” said David Piazza, chief development officer, Radiant Health Centers. “The LGBTQ-plus community faces severe discrimination in healthcare and also makes up 80 percent of Radiant Health Centers’ current client base. Expanding into full medical services will provide the LGBTQ-plus community of Orange County a haven for health and wellness, free of stigma and discrimination.”

Tony award-winning actor Levi Kreis revived some of his best-known stage performances, including original songs and shared some of his personal journey as a gay man. Kreis has starred in the national tour of RENT and played and performed as Jerry Lee Lewis in Broadway’s Million Dollar Quartet, for which he won a Tony Award.



Jason Stuart, a well-known actor and stand-up comedian, who is widely known for starring on shows including The Closer, Will & Grace and House, M.D., emceed the event and kept guests entertained with his comedic performance.

Radiant Health Centers also honored the Human Rights Campaign for its groundbreaking work to improve health equity for the LGBTQ-plus community. Dr. Vincent “Vinnie” Pompei, director of the Youth Well-Being Project at the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, was on hand to accept the award on behalf of President Chad Griffin.

“To truly eradicate the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Orange County and to improve health equity for the LGBTQ-plus community we need to offer specialized medical services tailored to the LGBTQ-plus community,” said Piazza. “That is why we are raising funds for an LGBTQ-plus health center.”



THANK YOU

MAJOR DONORS

As of May 23, 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.

\$100,000+

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LGBTs IN THE NEWS

TO COUNT, YOU NEED TO BE COUNTED

It was an alarm raised by Dr. Sean Cahill, national health policy researcher with Boston's Fenway Institute, who was one of several LGBTQ-plus health experts who joined a panel on healthcare barriers that we sponsored recently.

Dr. Cahill was referring to a roll back in LGBTQ-plus data collection at the federal level. Sexual orientation and gender identity questions have been removed from the Department of Justice's annual crime victimization study for anyone under 18. The feds have also said that they will remove such questions from the 2020 Census and from an annual survey of America's aging population.



Also, on the panel was our CEO Phil Yaeger. He explained that private donors and governments at all levels expect us to quantify the community's needs as well as show measurable outcomes. So, cutting the collection of LGBTQ-plus health data hurts our ability to access program funding.

The panel was organized by LGBTs In The News and moderated by its founder, journalist Thom Senzee.



We were proud to be joined by three other Orange County experts with fascinating and important insights.

The elderly are a fast-growing segment of the LGBTQ-plus population in Orange County and face unique issues with few culturally-competent senior living options available—particularly for transgender people, explained Dr. Cordula Dick-Muehlke, a clinical psychologist and national expert on LGBTQs and aging. Dr. R. Austin Nation, a registered nurse and an assistant professor at the CSU Fullerton School of Nursing, echoed how stigma, fear and homophobia can keep LGBTQ-plus patients and people living with HIV from accessing health care.

"The importance of finding LGBT culturally competent health care providers and whether or not to disclose HIV status are all issues," he said. Dr. Nation also disclosed that many years ago he was a client of Radiant Health Centers. He later went on to become an HIV/AIDS educator and ultimately a public health researcher with his Ph.D.

Fellow panelist, Dr. Michael Krychman an obstetrician-gynecologist, author and executive medical director at the Southern California Center for Sexual Health and Survivorship, agreed with Dr. Nation.

"If we're not counted, we don't count."



"All of these issues are part of competency," he said. "We have to be careful about language and making access to treatment feel safe."

We hope that this event will be the first of many public conversations Radiant Health Centers facilitates on LGBTQ-plus health equity. And, no matter what direction our federal government takes with its data collection efforts, we and our LGBTQ-plus community can never be counted out!





AIDS WALK ORANGE COUNTY 2018



AIDS Walk OC raised more than \$200,000, bringing us one step closer to ending the AIDS epidemic in Orange County by 2025. The funds will go directly to Radiant Health Centers' social services programs that help the men, women, and children living with HIV in Orange County.

The theme for this year's AIDS Walk was Rise Above, and many participants wore festive outfits and costumes. This theme reminded us that together, we can lift each other up to overcome adversity, stigma and end the HIV epidemic together. It was a day to remember and honor those who have lost their lives to this tragic epidemic and to celebrate our HIV and AIDS survivors.

A heartfelt thank you from the bottom of our hearts to our sponsors that include PIMCO Foundation, Pacific Life Foundation, M-A-C Cosmetics, Quest Diagnostics and Room & Board.





BELLONCE

Transitioning in Your 20s

At 21, Bellonce Portillo made the decision to transition her gender. But she faced stigma pursuing work and was spending all her savings on what seemed like a never-ending process. She didn't have the proper guidance and continually asked herself if she was making the right choice.

After years of slow progress and struggle, she felt she needed to find more support. What she found instead was empowerment! She remembers seeing members of SOMOS OC passing out condoms and flyers with HIV testing information which introduced her to ASF (as Radiant Health Centers was then known). Through the LGBT Center, she found a transgender group called Transgeneros en Accion, which helped her become an activist.

Today, Bellonce is proud to be the first and only transgender woman to hold the title of Miss OC and LA Pride in the same year for two different counties. She's been able to travel to eight states (including Hawaii) representing her community, but her biggest struggle has been not being able to visit the states that really lack in health services for the trans community.

"No one should be left behind. They are my trans sisters and deserve the same rights as me. Being true to myself has been my biggest secret."

Radiant Health Centers came into her life in a moment when she felt stagnant. It gave her the platform she needed to grow and blossom into an activist who is helping a new generation.

"I'm truly glad to work with such great leaders that allow me to tell my story and help others and convey that it's OK to be different, it's OK to be your own identity, it's OK to like uncommon things, it's OK to not like what society wants you to like. I'm truly blessed to stand with more than 10 years of advocacy in the LGBTQ-plus community and I'm not stopping."

Radiant Health Centers provided the guidance Bellonce lacked when initiating her transition. She is a shining example of what a little love, support and empowerment can do when matched with a determined and beautiful spirit!



GRANTS

Gilead Sciences \$50,000 PrEP Navigation Services	The Roddenberry Foundation \$10,000 General Program Support
S. Mark Taper Foundation \$50,000 Family & Children's Programs	Anonymous \$10,000 Family & Children's Programs
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Anonymous \$10,000	

MEMORIALS

In Memory of Georgia Garrett-Norris,
Bob Schuetz & Ric Young

In Memory of Rob Henry - You made a great contribution to AIDS Walk OC. I hope they have rodeos in Heaven.
Dale Jenkins

In Memory of Lydia Natoolo's brother,
Oscar Teran

In memory of Dwight W. Spiers in appreciation for his many years of generosity toward ASF,
Jeff Benedick & Duane Vajgrt, M.D.

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

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, October 27
OC Ride for AIDS

Saturday, January 26
Annual Gala



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**SAVE
THE
DATE**

Saturday, January 26, 2019

The creative team behind
Radiant Health Centers'
2018 hit Mardi Gras Gala
is hard at work on 2019's
Retro Las Vegas-themed Gala.

Don't miss this evening,
Radiant Health Centers'
signature fun and
fund-raising event
of the year!



Radiant
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