

Changes in Funding Affect SAAF Prevention Efforts

By Wendell Hicks



Photo by David Berger, Cox Media

June 30, 2012 marks the end of an era at SAAF. It is still hard to believe that MSHAPE, the Men's Sexual Health and Personal Empowerment program and lounge closed its doors. For the first time in SAAF's 15-year history, there is no federal or state funding to support HIV prevention programming for gay men in our community. It is our intention that this situation is temporary.

MSHAPE grew out of the Gay Men's Health Project. Together these programs had been running continuously since SAAF was founded in 1997. This vibrant, community-driven, peer-based program, served a diverse group of gay and bisexual men. The MSHAPE lounge was a safe space providing social networking opportunities and activities for men to meet outside of the bar scene as well as education. In part, because of its congenial environment, it succeeded in its mission: to prevent the spread of HIV in our community, and to promote sexual health as a component of overall health.

In the United States, Gay and Bisexual Men and Men Who Have Sex with Men make up the largest percentage of new HIV infections each year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), young gay men between the ages of 13 and 19 represent almost 70% of all new infections. MSHAPE was a critical resource addressing this risk in Southern Arizona. However, due to changes in priorities, the CDC has adopted a "treatment as prevention" strategy. Prevention funding is being concentrated on those living with HIV/AIDS, identifying those infected with HIV through testing and referring newly diagnosed people for HIV medical care. This strategy also shifts funding to larger metropolitan areas with higher rates of HIV infection.

For the past decade or more, regional planning groups comprised of staff from local health departments, community-based organizations such as SAAF, faith-based organizations and individuals from at-risk

groups, participated in prevention planning for their regions. These groups identified needs and gaps in services and made their recommendations to the state. Funding was distributed based on epidemiological data and community input. Now we have a National HIV/AIDS Strategy that is guiding the focus of prevention efforts and funding allocation and the impact is felt locally.

Maricopa County received 70% of the state's prevention funding, northern Arizona 14% and southern Arizona received 16% - a drastic change (for more information, see the article Prevention Services for Gay Men End in Pima County, on page 4). The funding that is available will be used for HIV testing services, brief risk reduction counseling for people living with HIV/AIDS and condom distribution activities here in Pima County.

Regardless of where you stand on this issue, we can all agree that the change in focus and funding priorities is a great loss for our community. SAAF has always used a comprehensive approach to HIV prevention. Providing treatment to people living with HIV is certainly one, viable strategy. However, it is more cost effective to focus efforts to help keep people from becoming infected with HIV saving thousands of dollars in treatment. My concern is for the younger generations of gay men who did not live through the devastation of the early years of the AIDS epidemic. Without education and resources, the unintended consequences will be felt for years to come.

Please consider this a call to action to the entire community. SAAF is committed to doing everything we can to assure that despite these setbacks, HIV prevention programming and services for gay men will continue in our community. With your help, we will make this a reality. Please look for future notices about how you can become involved.

With warmest regards,

Wendell Hicks

Wendell Hicks
Executive Director

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"The MSHAPE lounge is a place where I feel safe being a gay man. When I first became a participant, it was a safe place for me, when I didn't feel safe many other places."

~Jonathan



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2012/2013 SAAF Fundraising Events



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CONNECTION

The Newsletter of the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation

In This Issue:

AIDSWALK Moves to Downtown Tucson	Page 1
Changes in Funding Affect SAAF Prevention Efforts	Page 2
Staff Spotlight – Aretta Hubbard	Page 3
Foundations For SAAF's Mission	Page 3
Prevention Services for Gay Men End in Pima County	Page 4
Jell-O Wrestling 2012 - A Big Success	Page 4
Glenn Street Housing Gets Much Needed Facelift	Page 5
Fundraising Events	Page 6



Our Mission

The mission of the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation is to create and sustain a healthier community through a compassionate, comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS.

AIDSWALK Moves to Downtown Tucson

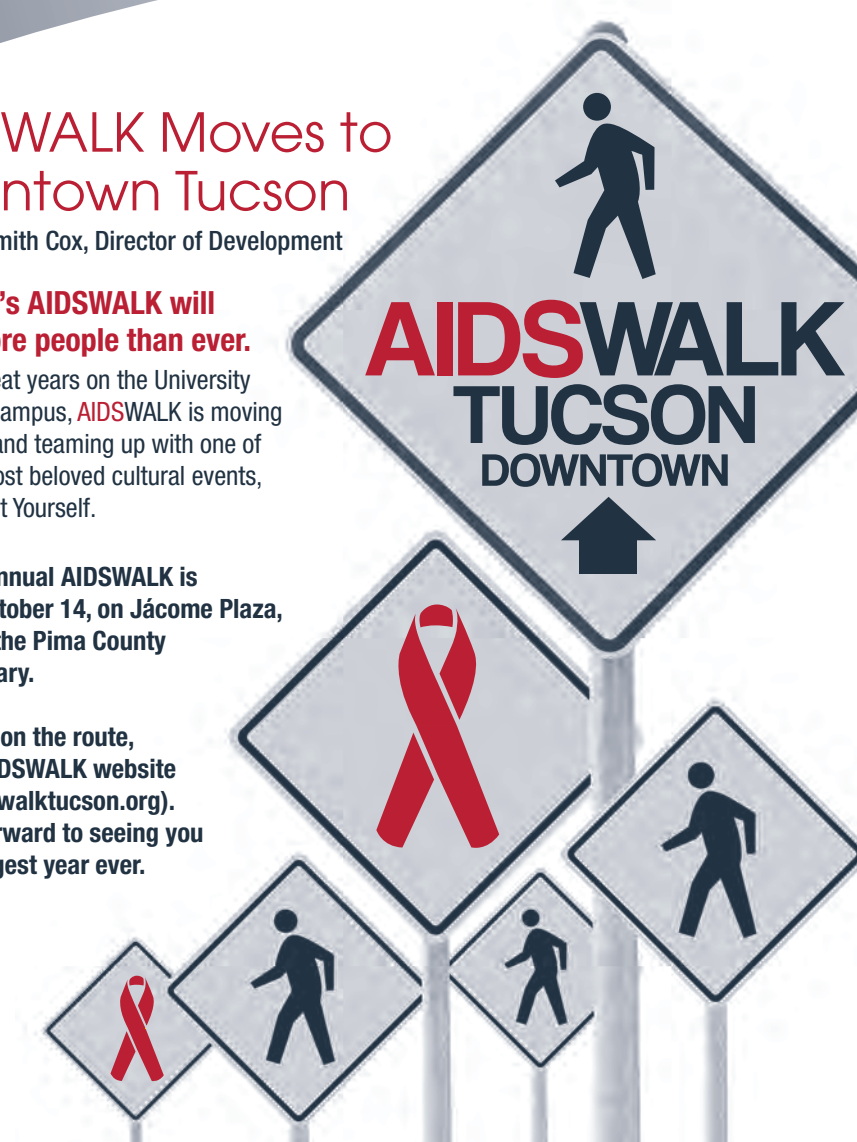
By Ethan Smith Cox, Director of Development

This year's AIDSWALK will reach more people than ever.

After six great years on the University of Arizona Campus, AIDSWALK is moving downtown and teaming up with one of Tucson's most beloved cultural events, Tucson Meet Yourself.

The 24th Annual AIDSWALK is Sunday, October 14, on Jácome Plaza, in front of the Pima County Public Library.

For details on the route, visit our AIDSWALK website (www.aidswalktucson.org). We look forward to seeing you for the biggest year ever.



Register Now for AIDSWALK 2012!

Every paid registrant through August 31 will be entered into the drawing for the Home Entertainment Package. The winner will be announced and notified in early September.

Thanks to a contribution from longtime SAAF supporter Kristie Graham, we are excited to offer a 40" flat screen television and DVD player to one lucky AIDSWALK registrant.

Entering to walk is quick and easy:

1. Go to www.aidswalktucson.org.
2. Click on the Register Now button.
3. Pay for your registration online by August 31, 2012 using a major credit card. (Online registrations are processed through a secure, encrypted site to insure privacy.)
4. Set up your AIDSWALK fundraising page.



Aretta Hubbard, SAAF Accounting Associate

Staff Spotlight - Aretta Hubbard

By Ethan Smith Cox, Development Director

Aretta Hubbard is SAAF's Accounting Associate and is one of 2 members of the SAAF Finance staff including Director of Finance Tabitha Fox. Aretta came to SAAF a year and a half ago as a temporary employee and was hired on as a SAAF employee in July 2011.

Aretta's job entails a lot of number-crunching and helping keep track of multiple grants, check requests, payroll for a staff of 55, and much more. Aretta finds one of her biggest challenges in her job, not surprisingly, is finding enough time to get everything done. Before coming to SAAF, Aretta held finance positions with Misys and San Xavier Coop Farm.

Aretta loves working at SAAF, in part, for the fundraising events. She states, "Each event has been great to witness from preparation to break-down. It is amazing to see the volunteer and participant turnout."

Aretta has an 18 year old son, Alex, who just graduated from Palo Verde High School in May and will be attending Pima Community College in the fall. She is also the Mother to 2 adorable dogs- Yogi, a Poodle/Chihuahua mix and Butter, a miniature cream-colored Dachshund.

Aretta's unique name is a combination of her parent's names, Arthur and Rosetta, and she is 7/8 Navajo and 1/8 Tohono O'odham.

When she's not keeping the books at SAAF, you can find Aretta shopping at her local Starbuck's or reading books on her Kindle.

Foundations for SAAF's Mission

By Evelyn Rens, SAAF Grants Coordinator

Tohono O'odham

T-we:m Hihim c Cipkan means "walking and working together" in the language of the "desert people", the Tohono O'odham.

This phrase describes the ongoing relationship between SAAF and the Desert Diamond Casino. Walk along the hallway on the north side of the SAAF office building, where the framed t-shirts from every AIDS WALK hang. The names of each year's sponsors adorn the shirts. Desert Diamond Casino has been on every shirt as a title sponsor since 1996. Its contributions total more than a quarter of a million dollars and have enabled SAAF to raise millions to support programs and services for people living with HIV and AIDS. In addition to cash contributions, Desert Diamond Casino supplies gifts for walkers such as nalgene water bottles and tote bags. In 2010, when SAAF had a significant increase in its need for the Food Program, the casino once again stepped up.

Gaming has been part of the Tohono O'odham history and culture for hundreds of years. Its first modern gaming enterprise, Papago Bingo, opened in 1983 and a decade later the tribe inaugurated the Desert Diamond Casino. In 2002, through an agreement with the



State of Arizona, the tribe shares 12% of its revenue from Indian gaming to local governments and nonprofit organizations.

Through a competitive grant process, the Tohono O'odham Nation tribal council distributes gaming revenue. SAAF has received two of these grants: one in 2005 to support the Voz Youth Prevention Program and one in 2007 to support the Food Program for People Living with HIV/AIDS. SAAF is thankful for our continuing partnership with Tohono O'odham Nation and is proud that Desert Diamond Casino has been the AIDS WALK title sponsor for 15 years.



Prevention Services for Gay Men End in Pima County

By Luis Ortega, Director of Prevention Services

Due to shifts in funding priorities from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), for the first time in nearly two decades, the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF) will no longer offer Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) prevention programs in Pima County to Men Who Have Sex With Men (MSM). This is in spite of the fact that MSM still accounts for the largest number of new infections in Pima County, as well as across the United States.

This cut in funding will mean an unprecedented lack of prevention services in Pima County for those at highest risk for contracting HIV and will seriously jeopardize the health of our entire community. SAAF is working diligently, in collaboration with the Southern Arizona HIV Prevention Planning Group (SAHPPG) and the Pima County Health Department to identify solutions for bridging this gap in services. SAAF's Director of Prevention Services, Luis Ortega, comments on the CDC funding change:

"SAAF has always been and continues to be committed to ensuring that gay and bisexual men in Southern Arizona have the support and resources they need to remain HIV negative, and, if they're positive, to make sure they and their partners are safe and healthy. We are working with our community partners to develop a comprehensive approach to short-term and sustainable solutions. These will include: income from private foundations, the help of volunteers, and federal funding."

Jell-O Wrestling 2012 a Big Success

By Ethan Smith Cox, Development Director

The 25th Annual Reno Gannon Memorial Jell-O Wrestling Extravaganza and Benefit Auction was held on Saturday, May 12, 2012 at Kennedy Fiesta Park. This year's event raised nearly \$50,000 for SAAF programs and services. We could not have done it without everyone's support. Highlights included a performance by comedian Bruce Vilanch, a superhero Jell-O Face-Off featuring Wonder Woman, The Incredible Hulk, Captain America, and Catwoman; and performances by Jell-O's mistress of ceremonies Lucinda Holliday and her girls.

Weren't able to make it to this year's event? Look at the photos by visiting the Jell-O website at www.jello-wrestling.org.

See you next year on Saturday, April 27, 2013 for another great show.



Photos by Creatista



SAAF's Glenn Street Housing Gets Much-Needed Facelift

by Jerry Anderson, Housing Services Property Manager

Picture this. The year is 1980. Two stucco buildings housing eleven apartments are completed. An asphalt parking lot separates the two buildings. Evaporative coolers are running on high speed throughout the summer, working to moderate the heat generated by the same blacktop asphalt. Summer after summer the exterior non-insulated stucco walls and the single-pane sliding windows battle the afternoon sun. The mild winters offer some reprieve, except for those periods of sub-freezing temperatures that periodically bless the Old Pueblo, when the gas powered furnaces run overtime. This describes the Glenn Street Apartments. For almost 20 years SAAF has owned these properties, which have provided safe, pleasant, healthy living spaces for its clients and their families.

the housing has been enhanced. Lerew Development and Design staff and subcontractors completed a challenging five-month process of important home and community upgrades. These included: a monitored interior fire suppression system, high energy windows, secure shade screens, exterior wall insulation, multiple layers of stucco, new exterior color design, landscaping, demolition of a dilapidated carport, improved roadway surfacing, and several other changes that invigorate the living spaces.

Thank you to the many people who made Phase One possible. They include Albert Elias, Mike Czechowski and Joyce Alcantar, City of Tucson Housing and Community Development; Charles Pifer and Corky Poster, Poster Frost Mirto Architects; Tom Lerew, Lerew Development and Design; Marilyn Robinson, Drachman Institute; and City of Tucson Ward 3 staff.



Glenn Street Housing Before



Glenn Street Housing After

It is now 2012. SAAF staff recognized that the apartments were not energy efficient, so when the opportunity arose to work with the well-recognized Drachman Institute (the research and public service unit of The College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, The University of Arizona) to design a more livable, sustainable, comfortable and expanded multi-family development, SAAF staff and residents jumped on board. Thanks to a Community Development Block Grant from the City of Tucson, the Drachman Institute initiated the new property design, and the well-respected architectural firm of Poster Frost Mirto, Inc. completed the architecture and engineering plans.

Through this collaboration, Phase One of the Glenn Street property improvements – renovation of the eleven existing two-bedroom apartments and grounds – is now complete. Utilizing federal HOME program funds through the City of Tucson,

In complimenting SAAF and the contractors on how smoothly the process went, one of the Glenn Street residents talked about how much he likes the improvements, especially the new windows and shade screens, as well as the increased safety from the fire sprinkler system.

SAAF is now seeking funding to support the next phase of the Glenn Street improvements – the addition of a three-bedroom family housing unit and a residential community center. Because of the efforts of everyone involved, we have a beautiful, energy efficient, livable multi-family community that the residents and SAAF will enjoy for many years.

Support Groups

Wednesdays

SAAF Haven Support Group
(lunch included)
11:00 am - 12:30 pm @ SAAF

Thursdays

Heterosexual Support Group
(lunch included)
11:00 am - 12:30 pm @ SAAF
(except for third Thursday of the month)

Third Thursday of Every Month

Friends and Family Support Group
An educational support group for friends and family of people living with HIV/AIDS
5:30 am - 6:45 pm @ SAAF

Support Group schedules may vary. Please call SAAF for more information.

Volunteer Training

Get involved with SAAF. Join us for an upcoming volunteer orientation. This is the first step for anyone wanting to volunteer at SAAF*.

Orientations take place from 5:30 to 8:30 pm at the SAAF office building, 375 South Euclid Avenue, Tucson, on:

Tuesday, August 21, 2012
Tuesday, September 18, 2012
Tuesday, October 23, 2012

To sign up for Volunteer Orientation, contact Courtney Kelly, SAAF Volunteer Coordinator, at (520) 628-7223 or ckelly@saaf.org.

*(*No orientation is necessary for volunteers at fundraising events and Walk-in Wednesdays.)*

Travis Wright Memorial Buyers' Club

Purchase vitamins and supplements for HIV/AIDS care and general health at the lowest possible cost. Located at The Medicine Shoppe 305 S. Euclid Ave, next to SAAF

Monday - Friday
9:00 am to 6:00 pm



Scott Sirols and Wendell Hicks at AIDS Walk 2008



Lead Gift for 2012

Dr. Kayla Boyer, DVM of Speedway Veterinary Hospital is the first sponsor for AIDS WALK 2012. Her hospital has been a contributor to SAAF and to AIDS WALK since 2000.

Thank you Dr. Boyer. Whenever possible, please support the businesses that support SAAF