The people we serve are some of the most vulnerable people during this public health crisis. We are anxious about what a significant outbreak of COVID-19 in Southern Arizona could mean for our CarePartners (clients living with HIV). Our goal is to keep people supported and help them stay safe at home.

All of our clients are living with HIV, and may face higher risks of contracting COVID-19 and experiencing life-threatening complications. The majority are over age 55, people of color, have additional underlying medical issues, and are living in poverty (at or below 150% of the federal poverty level, which is $19,140/year for a single person).

In addition to important protections and safeguards, we’ve supplemented some of our support services and added new support to address the needs of people living with HIV, even as we’ve had to defer some of our in-person services that served nearly 400 CarePartners last year.

In the past month, we have augmented our essential services with new support based on the results of our emergency needs assessment. These are services that demand creation of new systems of delivery. Through a limited core of staff and volunteers, we are now offering curbside, minimal-contact pickup of meals, CarePackages, and facial masks, as well as providing home deliveries so that our clients can practice self-isolation (especially the people who would have to take public transportation).

We're experiencing an increase in demand for key support services and also a high utilization of the new and amplified services that we are offering. Here are new additional services we’re providing:

- We are providing an additional 1,800 meals due to COVID-19 (in April and May), funded by a grant from AIDS Healthcare Foundation and discounted meals provided by El Charro, La Cocina, and Eegee’s. These are in addition to monthly Poz Café meals that continue to be distributed (without the social component), courtesy of faith communities and volunteers.

- We are providing enhanced CarePackages, filled with not only the usual toiletry, hygiene, and personal care items, but also additional items needed during the COVID-19 pandemic: disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizer, liquid hand soap, and facial tissue (as available). We are grateful to Target and The Sundt Foundation for the grant funding they provided last year to purchase these items, along with local businesses, faith communities, and individuals who provide the majority of CarePackage items.

- Phones have become more important than ever to CarePartners, some of whom suffered isolation before COVID-19. Some of our CarePartners do not have phones, or may be out of minutes for their monthly phone plan. They rely on increased phone contact: doctor appointments via telemedicine; telephone support groups and 12-step meetings; increased check-in calls with TIHAN; and more requests for support with case managers and behavioral health providers. Through a grant from the Jewish Community Pandemic Relief Fund, we are providing low-cost phones for CarePartners who do not have one, and we are purchasing additional minutes for CarePartners whose plans are being depleted more rapidly than normal.

- Cloth masks help give us peace of mind and reduce the risk of transmission of the coronavirus. Many caring people have created and donated masks for our staff, volunteers, and CarePartners living with HIV. In just a few weeks, we distributed more than 200 cloth masks to our CarePartners.

- A host of additional support services, including telephone check-in calls; information and referral; emergency financial assistance; and emotional support.

The pandemic has also had a substantial impact upon our operations and our fundraising too, as you’ll see in this newsletter. We are grateful for the love and support you are providing so that we can continue addressing the needs of our CarePartners living with HIV, keeping everyone well and staying safe!
Putting Our Stimulus Checks to Optimum Benefit
by Susan Heinrich and Leslie Kahn

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended our lives, and those of everyone we know. There is the uncertainty of managing our own health, worrying about loved ones, and thinking about vulnerable members of our community.

The economy has taken an unprecedented hit, and friends and neighbors are out of work and worrying about meeting financial obligations. As we look around our community, we see healthcare professionals and first responders selflessly helping on the front lines. We see workers in the food supply chain working to stock stores, staff cash registers, provide for food banks, and feed the community from restaurants no longer able to provide sit-down service.

We asked ourselves, “What can we do that pushes us to help the community right now?” We are committing to donate the stimulus money we will receive to the 2-3 charities that mean the most to us. By doing this over and above what we normally contribute, we are focused on helping the non-profits, such as TIHAN, continue their good and necessary works during this stressful time, and making our own sacrifice for the good of the community.

Please Support Local Businesses!

During this time when we are staying at home except for essential reasons, we know that the local businesses that have been at the heart of TIHAN’s support are hurting.

We encourage all who care about TIHAN to do what you can during this crisis to support the local restaurants, artists, and businesses that have been so good to TIHAN. Shop at them, order from them, buy gift certificates from them, support local businesses in whatever ways you can. Thank you!
Ophelia’s door opens onto a pleasant courtyard with trees, flowers, and painted rocks lining walkways for the residents to stroll on. “I’ve lived here for thirteen, fourteen years,” Ophelia says. (She asked that we not use her photo or real name because of fears of discrimination based on HIV stigma.)

“The yard’s kept up nicely by one of my younger neighbors. I can’t do that kind of work anymore on account of my arthritis and neuropathy,” she tells me. “But I do have my flower box here…” She points to spring green shoots in the box. “And lots of house plants. It’s a nice place to live,” she says. “I have PTSD and anxiety attacks. So I need it to be quiet and peaceful like it is here. Come on in.” Traviesa, Ophelia’s constant 15-year companion, greets us with a bark. “Her name means ‘mischievous,'” Ophelia says with a chuckle.

I asked Ophelia to tell me some of her history. “I lived in dire straits when my husband threatened to kill me. I lost all interest in life – lost weight – got into drugs and addicted to opium. Then in 1995 I tested positive for HIV. I was living on the streets. I had to get clean, so I got off drugs the hard way – cold turkey.”

But where was she going to live? She found her way to the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF). “They were great – got me straightened out and into a home.” Her SAAF Case Manager urged her to contact TIHAN for day-to-day support, and to have someone to talk to when she needed it, and she’s very glad she did.

Over time, Ophelia has reduced her medications. She is now completely off morphine. She keeps in communication with her family, most of whom live in Tucson, including grand- and great-grandchildren. “I care about my life again – live for each day.”

I asked Ophelia about the role TIHAN plays in her life now, all these years later. “Oh, they are always my friends,” she says. “Everyone is so friendly and of course the CarePackages help me when things I need are running out.” What about the events that TIHAN offers for people with HIV, I asked? “Well, I can’t go to Poz Café or any of the classes on account of my physical condition and the PTSD. But I get all the information TIHAN sends out. It’s good information.” With the resources TIHAN shares with her, and the check-in phone calls that Ophelia gets from TIHAN, she sums it up: “TIHAN makes connections.”

Honored to be here, helping to provide support and being able to hear her personal story, I couldn’t agree more. Traviesa lends an enthusiastic “Yip!” as Ophelia and I start to unload the contents of her CarePackage and the items that help her stay safe, supported, and connected.

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We are grateful to these foundations providing emergency funding to support people living with HIV during this pandemic:

**STONEWALL FOUNDATION**

**AHF**

**Jewish Community Pandemic Relief Fund**

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**Claim Your Arizona State Tax Credit When You File Your Taxes!**

Since TIHAN is a Qualifying Charitable Organization providing assistance to low-income Arizonans, your donations to TIHAN in 2019 and up until April 15, 2020, entitle you to a state tax credit.

Your contributions to TIHAN can reduce your Arizona state tax liability with a dollar-for-dollar reduction (up to $400/person, or $800/married couple filing jointly). **Put your tax credit dollars where your heart is!** Invest in TIHAN and our programs and services, and direct some of your state tax dollars to TIHAN.

TIHAN’s QCO Code is 20359, which you should include when you file your state tax return and claim your credit. Please contact your tax advisor for more info. Thanks for giving to TIHAN, and for claiming your tax credit and directing funds to support our programs! And remember you can donate now and claim it as a tax credit for 2020!
The COVID-19 pandemic presents critical funding challenges as we work to provide enhanced support for people with HIV. With its profound economic fallout, this crisis presents the most significant challenge in our 25-year history.

We have had to cancel our largest fundraising event, Treasures for TIHAN, which was scheduled for the end of May. Some expenses for that event cannot be recovered.

We also had to cancel our March Swinging@AIDS benefit, our fourth-largest fundraising event.

An April benefit concert for TIHAN by Dove of Peace Lutheran Church has been canceled.

Amid this uncertainty, we are hoping that our two major fundraisers planned for the fall will enjoy the success they did in recent years.

Many foundations have suffered tremendous losses in their assets, and are overwhelmed with applications for funding, requiring them to limit their giving to emergency funds restricted for new/increased services. Some businesses that have been very generous in their support of our programs are closed or facing decreased income. Faith communities are unable to gather for worship services, and the weekly offerings they are receiving are often substantially lower, impacting their giving to TIHAN.

The pandemic has impacted the jobs, retirement income, and investment portfolios of many individual and family donors who make up the heart of giving to TIHAN. Many donors and families are hurting financially, and face uncertainty regarding their employment.

On the brighter side:

Many are blessed to have stable financial status, and are giving generously. In addition to the grants of $2,000-$10,000 noted above, we received a generous grant of $30,000 from The Stonewall Foundation to support us during these financially challenging times to help us retain our bare-bones staff of four during this time.

We’re asking foundations, businesses, and individuals who usually support our Treasures for TIHAN fundraising event to consider contributing the amount they might have spent in event tickets, item purchases, and sponsorships. (To do so, visit www.tihan.org and click on Treasures for TIHAN to donate online.) Our friends at Speedway Veterinary Hospital donated their $1,000 sponsorship to support our programs right now. Aunt Rita’s Foundation is carrying over their $5,000 sponsorship to be used for next year’s event.

An anonymous donor gifted us with a $5,000 donation, which had been designated as matching funds for the Swinging@AIDS concert. Even though the event was cancelled and the donations didn’t meet the $5,000 match, they still gave us the funds!

Some donors are sharing part of their federal stimulus checks with TIHAN to keep our programs going. Many are continuing or increasing their giving as they are able. And people continue to contribute needed items—toilet tissue, masks, adult coloring books and color pencils for our CarePartners, and more.

Working together, you are showing us, again, how we can be part of the health, recovery, and collaborative spirit of our community as we ensure people with HIV receive critical support.
Acknowledging Gifts Made to TIHAN in Honor of and in Memory of Loved Ones
(Gifts received January 1—April 15, 2020)

**Gifts Received in Honor Of**
- Jacob-Wayne Abell *
- Anthony Altamirano *
- Curt Beall *
- Scott Blades *
- Rose and Roger Carmichael
- Arlan Colton
- Deirdre Demers *
- Zachary Giles *
- Oray Housley
- Barbara Kaller-Cohen & Kenny Cohen*
- Dr. Tracey Kurtzman
- Jess Losoya *
- Maggie McCann
- Brenda Molina
- Tom Muller
- Vivika Steele
- Claudia Svarstad and Beckie Harkey *
- Donna Van Nostrand *

**Gifts Received in Memory Of**
- Stephen Andre
- Debbie Barnette *
- Guenther Braun
- Bill Carlson
- Gene Carlson *
- Richard Elias*
- Claudia Ellquist
- Derek Fowler *
- Bill McManus *
- Myron Morris *
- Butch O’Daniel
- Kristin Rahn
- LaVerne Rahn
- Ronald Schuyler
- Jim Thomas
- Michael Vining
- Sister Patricia Marie Walsh, OP *

* denotes those for whom multiple gifts have been received during this period of time

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**TIHAN’s Top Thirteen Needs to Meet Increased Demand for CarePackages**

As the coronavirus crisis continues and our daily lives change, needs also increase and change for many people living with HIV. Requests for CarePackages have skyrocketed over the past few months. These bags filled with toiletry, cleaning items, and personal care items are always essential to many CarePartners living with HIV who operate on a low income or fixed budget.

As more people are economically impacted by the current state of events, and many are trying to stay at home and minimize any trips to the stores, more CarePartners are needing these supplies from TIHAN.

In addition to items we can purchase from small grants from Target and The Sundt Foundation, we count on faith communities, businesses, and individuals to donate items for our CarePackages.

In speaking with our CarePartners, we’ve identified the priority items that we’ll need to help us fulfill the expected requests through the next two months: toilet tissue (2-ply), paper towels, bleach or any household disinfectant cleaner, hand sanitizer, dish detergent, liquid hand soap, disinfecting wipes, latex/nitrile gloves, facial tissue, shampoo, laundry detergent, bar soap, and toothpaste. While some of these items are hard to come by right now, various individuals collecting a few here and there will help us gather a lot.

Please bring donations to the TIHAN office at 2660 N 1st Ave during business hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30am-4:30pm. We have a table set up outside for you to leave donations and complete an in-kind donation form, and you can give us a call so that we know to bring your donation inside once you’ve left. Thank you for helping us to support some of the vulnerable in our community during these difficult times!
A Message from TIHAN’s Board of Directors to Our CarePartners, Staff, Volunteers, Donors, Partner Agencies, and Community Partners

We extend our love and concern to our CarePartners during these challenging times. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we continue efforts to provide supplies and support under difficult circumstances for us all. Please continue to stay sheltered, stay safe, and live well. Reach out when you need additional support.

To our TIHAN staff, every day you give your service for our community. We extend our gratitude for your determined support of our Care Partners, our organization, and each other. We know that, even with our operational adjustments, it is more stressful to provide needed services while staying safe for both yourselves and your families. We appreciate each of you for your love and commitment.

To all our volunteers, we appreciate your unrelenting dedication, your service, and your time, to give of yourselves for our CarePartners, not only during these trying times but throughout the years. TIHAN is as strong as our volunteers, and we want you to stay safe now so that, together, we can continue our work for our collective mission for a long time to come.

To our donors, we thank you for your understanding that, given the inability to gather together as we shelter at home, we have had to cancel some mainstay fundraising events like Treasures for TIHAN and Swinging@AIDS concert that we all look forward to each year. Because our service needs remain ever strong, we hope to be able to go forward with events, having you with us later this year and next.

To our partner agencies and faith community partners, we know you are all working hard to be as creative as possible to make your services, worship, and other activities meaningful in the age of Zoom and six feet of separation. We thank you for hanging with us, and for your continued support of TIHAN and helping people with HIV in our community to live well.

We will get through this trying time. We appreciate each and every one of you and we look forward to the day we can gather together in the same place at the same time, providing the best possible support for people living with HIV in our community. We are all stronger as we work together. Keep well. Thank you!

Be well, stay well, live well.

Remembering Richard Elías

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Richard Elías, Chair of the Pima County Board of Supervisors.

Richard was a consistent champion for the HIV and LGBTQ+ communities in Southern Arizona. He was unfailing in his advocacy for a robust response to prevent and treat HIV, especially in our communities of color.

He was a strong champion of the work of TIHAN and our partner organizations and a tremendous supporter of local National Latino AIDS Awareness Day efforts. He was present as TIHAN served our 20,000th meal at Poz Café; he sponsored a county proclamation of thanks to TIHAN and our faith communities, volunteers, and donors for our 20th anniversary, and he was the proud recipient of our 2016 Stonewall Award for his many years of advocacy and support.

Richard Elías was an ally in every sense of the word—an ally for us, for his beloved Sonoran desert, for youth and seniors, for social justice, for Southern Arizona. We are honored that Richard’s family chose TIHAN as one of the nonprofits for memorial donations. Our hearts are broken, yet filled with gratitude.

Remembering Supporters We’ve Lost

Gene Carlson  Rusty Garrett  Wayne Johnson

TIHAN thanks AIDS Healthcare Foundation for a grant of emergency funding for food support!

The Los Angeles-based AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) is a global nonprofit organization providing cutting-edge medicine and advocacy to over 1,000,000 people in 43 countries. AHF is the largest provider of HIV/AIDS medical care in the U.S.

AHF funds its mission to rid the world of AIDS through a network of pharmacies, thrift stores, healthcare contracts, and other strategic partnerships.

www.aidshealth.org
Volunteers Serving HIV Community Locally and Globally Receive 2020 Leadership Award

Claudia Svarstad and Beckie Harkey of Tucson, Arizona and Denver, Colorado, have been selected to receive the Center for Health and Hope’s 2020 Leadership Award for their extraordinary volunteer service in Tucson, Denver, and around the globe.

“Their inclusive love of humanity is infectious,” stated the Rev. Dr. Donald E. Messer, Executive Director of the Center for Health and Hope. “Through Beckie and Claudia, people connect with a vision of humanitarian service that knows no discrimination and abounds with compassion.”

Scott Blades, Executive Director of the Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network (TIHAN), commented, “Beckie and Claudia have a long history of advocacy and support for people with HIV, and we are so fortunate that they’ve continued those efforts here locally since they moved to Tucson. They have such a heart for giving, and we’re so happy to help celebrate their impact.”

Beckie Harkey and Claudia Svarstad met in Denver 42 years ago as they were both working in the insurance industry. They were married in 2015.

For the past 15 years, three matters have been constants in their lives, intertwined in various ways: community, golf, and HIV/AIDS. Svarstad’s concern about hunger issues led her to a book about world hunger, which she discovered was written by a fellow Denver resident, the president of nearby Iliff School of Theology. Moved by those writings of Rev. Dr. Donald Messer, Svarstad set out to meet him and become engaged in the work. In addition to his leadership on hunger issues, Rev. Messer was also a leader in the global effort to address the growing AIDS crisis. Within a year of their initial meeting, Svarstad joined a mission trip to India through Dr. Messer’s non-governmental organization, the Center for Health and Hope.

“Seeing women with AIDS, abandoned in front of a hospital that would not accept them, was a profound experience for me,” Svarstad shared. “When I returned to the US, I couldn’t erase that memory of discrimination and suffering from my mind. I knew that people with AIDS locally and globally faced stigma and isolation, but it seemed overwhelming, and I wasn’t sure what to do. And then I remembered a saying: ‘When you don’t know what to do next, just do the thing in front of you.’”

Filled with passion and a desire to make a difference to support people with HIV, Svarstad recalls looking around and noticing what was often in front of her: a golf ball. Golf was among their favorite activities. One of the factors for their career success in the insurance industry was Svarstad and Harkey’s love of golf and the relationships they built with their work colleagues on the golf course. Exploring how to make a difference in the lives of people with HIV, they proposed a golf tournament to benefit the Center’s programs and services.

Their first “Swinging@AIDS” golf tournament in Denver raised $10,000, and became an annual tradition that grew and thrived. When Svarstad and Harkey moved to Tucson in 2013 to spend part of the year here, they also brought their passion for golf tournament fundraisers for HIV, and connected with the work of the Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network, which would become a partner with the Center on a Tucson-based golf tournament and concert, jointly benefiting the programs and services of TIHAN and Center-supported programs for children impacted by HIV in Kenya.

This year, the Center will hold its 25th golf tournament benefit. These events have now raised more than $600,000 for HIV support services in the US and in Kenya. In Tucson, the Swinging@AIDS golf tournaments and concerts have raised over $90,000 to benefit programs supporting people with HIV in Tucson and orphans in Kenya.

“Participating in a benefit—whether it’s a golf tournament or a concert—can open people’s eyes and introduce them to challenges and opportunities, to injustices and ways to get involved and make a difference,” Svarstad related. “Whether it’s women in India, children in Kenya, or gay men here in the US, everyone with HIV deserves to have love and support.”

“Through our involvement first with the Center for Health and Hope, and now also with TIHAN, we have met so many incredible people with a passion to help address the stigma of AIDS and help build support networks for our neighbors in need,” Harkey shared. “Both Claudia and I have had our share of experiences of seeing discrimination—whether based on gender, race, sexual orientation, HIV status, poverty. We’ve also experienced how our hearts can be touched and how deeply people can care for each other. We have been fortunate to have the opportunity to be able to give back and help others see how they can make a difference in simple yet impactful ways.”

After leading 20 golf tournament benefits in Colorado and Tucson, Svarstad and Harkey have turned over leadership to others, but they continue volunteering and supporting the efforts of new leaders. Their gratitude overflows. “We are deeply, deeply grateful to our family, friends from Tucson and Denver, our Women’s Golf League at The Views, and the co-chairs, volunteers, staff, and board at TIHAN and the Center,” said Svarstad. “Without all of these folks, nothing would have happened.”

The award was scheduled to be presented during the annual Swinging@AIDS benefit concert featuring the award-winning Heather “Lil’ Mama” Hardy Band on March 20, 2020. Unfortunately, the concert had to be cancelled due to COVID-19.

Past recipients of the Center’s Leadership Award include Rev. Charlie Arehart, Kevin Carmichael MD, Linda Girard RN, and Jon Stetson and Noel Floresca. Congratulations and thank you, Beckie Harkey and Claudia Svarstad!
Working Together to Make a Difference
by Rachel Briggs, Program Coordinator

“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.” – Edward Everett Hale

TIHAN relies on the coordination and cooperation of many individuals, groups, and faith organizations, making a difference in the everyday lives of people living with HIV/AIDS. In times of uncertainty and fear like we are facing now, people continue to do what they can in whatever ways they can, big and small.

Some of our CarePartners who count on TIHAN for hygiene supplies each month are requesting fewer items, wanting there to be enough for others who might have greater need. Community members are bringing us what they find from their trips to the store: sometimes a single container of cleaner or hand soap, sometimes a family pack of toilet tissue. These donations and kind acts continue to add up and allow us to serve the HIV community during this pandemic with items needed now more than ever.

One of the elected officials who represents TIHAN’s district in the Arizona legislature, Rep. Andres Cano, raised funds for food for people in our district who are in need. He reached out to TIHAN, and other groups, to identify people in need. We identified two families with HIV, and asked them for their list of needed items from the grocery store. Rep. Cano did the shopping and then delivered it to one of our volunteers, Pat Small, who then delivered the food to a grateful family. A case manager from the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF) delivered the requested food items to another appreciative family with HIV.

We are grateful to Rep. Cano and so many more people in our community who are stepping up and offering whatever support they can. As one of our CarePartners told us: “Thank you, thank you, thank you. You’re doing a great job, during a difficult time. Thank you for your efforts!”

How We’re Responding to COVID-19: TIHAN Operations

Like all responsible businesses, TIHAN quickly implemented actions to protect our CarePartners, staff, volunteers, and donors: minimizing contacts, social distancing, extra sanitizing efforts, hand-washing, reduced number of staff and volunteers in office, using masks, having staff working remotely from home more than 50% of the time.

Meetings are now being done by phone or video conferencing. All communications with CarePartners are done by phone, and all items are dropped off/picked up in new ways that minimize contact.

The TIHAN office is open 8:30am-4:30pm Monday-Friday, but access is limited. We have set up curbside space for you to drop off donations safely. Our staff of four is taking turns staffing the office—we continue taking phone calls, responding to emails, and maintaining basic operations in a safe manner.

We need your support and ongoing donations, and we are set up to allow you to continue to give in safe ways. And if you prefer that we to pick up your donation, please contact us at 520-299-6647.

Our Wish List

Visit www.tihan.org and go to the DONATE tab, then drop down and select “Wish List” and you’ll see our full wish list of needed items.

Here are a few select items on our wish list:

* Hand sanitizer, Clorox wipes and Lysol spray
* Latex or nitrile gloves
* Facial masks
* 8.5” x 11” multiuse copy paper, white or colors
* Postage stamps (first-class and postcard )
* Facial tissues, toilet tissue, paper towels, cleaning supplies
* Convertible hand truck / platform dolly
* Adult coloring books, color pencils, puzzles (new and unopened)

Through Amazon and AmazonSmile, you can easily support TIHAN with our administrative and direct support needs by ordering wish list items and shipping directly to the TIHAN office. If you are an Amazon Smile shopper, you can also select Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network to receive 0.5% of the price of your purchase too!