



Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network
Helping People with HIV to Live Well



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Tucson, Arizona

August 2023

Vol. 28, No. 2

An Update from Our Executive Director Scott Blades

As we emerged earlier this year from three years of pandemic life, the transition has been a challenge, but still it is so much better than the stress of isolation. As TIHAN returned to in-person support services, in-person fundraising events, and in-office operations, we realized that much more work is required! Poz Café lunches in person require much more work, people, and communication. In-person fundraising events require much more coordination! Doing all this, in ways that we haven't done for the past three years, has presented new challenges and forced new ways of thinking and acting.

It requires much more organization to manage all the moving parts. We've had to re-learn lots of skills that we might not have used much in the past three years. And it all requires more volunteers and staff efforts, and some folks were already stretched too thin after three years of pandemic stress. And of course in-person services and events also have higher costs. Change, even when we know it's positive and needed and for the best, can still add stress. And we've felt it!

Even as we've faced new challenges as we emerge from pandemic stresses, we have been so blessed and appreciative of all of you who have stood with us and provided your added support over the past 3+ years, and into this new period of transitioning back to a "new normal."

Well, we're still standing, and we're taking on the challenges in front of us, using the opportunity of change to review and revamp. We're re-assessing everything in our programs, office space, fundraising events, staffing, partnerships, and operations. One thing remains clear and steady: our mission of caring support and building networks to help people with HIV live as well as possible.

Our CarePartners, as well as our volunteers, are finding ways to come out of what U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy referred to as the "loneliness epidemic" facing our society. Stress, anxiety, loneliness, isolation, inflation, financial instability, illness, grief—all these things have affected our mental (and physical) health, and contributed to a sense of overload, paralysis, and burnout.

But through working together in our social groups, faith communities, and nonprofits like TIHAN, we are finding new ways to connect and serve—ourselves, our families, and vulnerable folks in our community.

Poz Cafe Returns to In-Person, Serves 35,000th Meal!

Earlier this year, we transitioned our Poz Cafe lunch program from a COVID-necessitated, drive-by grab-and-go event in the parking lot to an in-person lunch and social gathering where our CarePartners (clients living with HIV) can break bread together and meet their peers with HIV. The excitement was palpable as people were looking forward to making connections and building upon their support system!



"I love seeing my peers in person again, and the camaraderie. It's so great to socialize again!"

"It's a nice social event for those of us living with HIV, especially some of us who are a bit more isolated as we get older. Some of us don't get out much, so it's good to be active. Anything that brings us together is worthwhile, and we have TIHAN to thank for that."

Due to the challenges of CarePartners without transportation trying to get to St. Francis in the Foothills, where Poz Café has been held since 1999, we had to seek out a new location that would fit 100-175 people for a sit-down meal. Fortunately, St. Mark's Presbyterian Church stepped up, and we set about making all the changes necessary to re-start our in-person lunch and social event.

We started rebuilding this program slowly, first offering a social hour followed by distribution of to-go meals. Then we began holding the gathering outdoors in the private courtyard; eventually moving it indoors and having onsite meals; adding in small group discussions before lunch to get people mixing and mingling again with their peers; moving from online bingo to in-person bingo; adding in some fun lawn games on the private patio; moving back to a buffet line for serving the meals; holding raffles again; and initiating our new culinary team to new adventures. Now we're fully back in the groove!

In April, we served our 35,000th meal at Poz Café, with Jose the lucky recipient of that milestone meal.



It's been a wonderful challenge to be able to re-gather our volunteers, faith communities, and other sponsoring groups, and to provide the setting to reconnect our CarePartners for mutual support and socialization. Thanks to all of you who make it possible!



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Treasures for TIHAN 2023 A Huge Success!

Thanking Deirdre Demers for Nine Years of Service

A Return to In-Person Programs and Events

Poz Café Serves Our 35,000th Meal!

Amazing people, fun events, life-affirming programs!

To make a contribution in support of our programs and people living with HIV, please send a check to the address on the left, or visit our website www.tihan.org and click on the “DONATE TO TIHAN NOW” button. Only with your support can we continue. Thank you!

THE RED CONCERT



More than 150 people gathered under the cabanas at Three Canyon Beer and Wine Garden for a beautiful afternoon at the Red Concert, coming together to enjoy music from the band Good Trouble while supporting HIV programs both locally and globally.

Our event sponsors and attendees made sure we met and exceeded our income goal, bringing in almost \$25,000, divided equally between TIHAN and the Center for Health and Hope, designed to support programs here in Tucson and an addiction treatment program in Kenya for people at risk of HIV.

Anonymous donors offered a \$10,000 challenge match, and our community stepped up. With your love and support, we exceeded our goal! Our 50/50 raffle was a great success, and the winning ticket was worth more than \$2,000—and the winner donated all the proceeds back to the event beneficiaries!

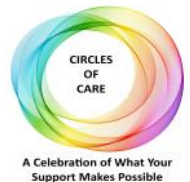
We honored Pat Fox with the Leadership Award, and dedicated the event to the memory of Roy DeBise-Loomis. Thank you to our event planning team and chair Jess Losoya, and all who attended or contributed in any way, for a very successful fun-raising and fund-raising event!



TIHAN's Annual Meeting Celebrates You and Your Impact!

TIHAN's Annual Meeting on March 28 was a celebration of community and impact. With the theme “Circles of Care,” we gathered attendees at round tables to connect with each other. After introductions at each table and then enjoying an astounding array of delicious food, we participated in three activities focused on engagement, impact, and gratitude.

Each participant left with new information about TIHAN and our impact, new connections with other volunteers and donors, and a note from a CarePartner thanking them for the circles of care they create through TIHAN. The food catered by SiCharro! was outstanding. Leslie Kahn and our Board of Directors did a fantastic job, and it was so great to gather and reconnect.



Steve Shares His Story of Living with HIV

"People seem to think of me as a strong, vibrant person—probably because of what I have been through and fought back from. The friends I went to school with, danced with, partied with, made memories with—they are all gone now. I should have died in that first wave in the early days when they all died. That could have been me. We lost some really fine people. I was supposed to grow old with them," he says, his voice growing softer.

Steve was born and raised in a small town in North Carolina, a popular kid, but he was bullied because he was different. His family moved to Douglas, Arizona, when he was 16, and after graduating from high school and the University of Arizona (with a degree in theater), Steve moved to New York City. He lived in lots of big cities—Atlanta, New Orleans, Ft. Lauderdale, Raleigh, Phoenix, Washington DC, and San Francisco.

Steve was in North Carolina visiting family when he got sick. Very sick. He was told he had HIV, but also advanced AIDS, and spent three weeks in the hospital. He soon moved back to Arizona to be nearer his family and focus on getting well. He quickly connected with El Rio Health and their HIV clinic, where they were prescribing the new anti-retroviral medications that would change the trajectory of HIV. Steve's viral load, the amount of HIV in his system, quickly decreased, and his T-cells, a marker of immune strength, skyrocketed. He thanks the staff of El Rio for taking good care of him since that day in 1997.



*"I have no shame, no stigma.
I am here for a reason.
I tell myself that every day:
I am here for a reason."*

Steve then moved back to Washington DC, and eventually returned to Arizona to be closer to his mom and family. With lots of support from his mom, Steve stopped using recreational drugs 12 years ago, and he's been sober from alcohol for six years. He remains undetectable for HIV, meaning the amount of virus in his system is so small that it can't be measured. He's got his diabetes under control, and says that he continues to deal with the issues of being overweight and aging. However, through finding the right medications and the right mental health therapist, Steve's challenges with depression are much better.

Steve shares that, when he got sick, "my white, Southern, Christian family members were some of the most supportive people I've ever had in my life." Unfortunately, he's experienced some stigma from members of the LGBTQ+ community. "It's been eye-opening and sometimes maddening to experience ignorance and prejudice from some folks. It's hard to believe that so many gay men on the dating apps still don't know what U=U means!"

Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, Steve wanted to get involved in his community. "I knew Scott and a few TIHAN volunteers. I had some connections with Aldea Spiritual Community. I had occasionally reached out to TIHAN for support. I knew TIHAN was providing good support services, and there was a big demand. I was in a place that I wanted to give back to the community. I believe in TIHAN and what they do. It's small enough that I can get involved on a personal level, hands on, and make a difference."

Volunteering is rewarding, Steve says. "It gets me out of the house," he jokes. "I love seeing a smile on someone's face, knowing that you are making someone's life a bit easier at that moment, taking a bit of the stress off of someone. It makes me feel good that I am doing something positive, giving a bit of help."

Steve volunteers once a week as a Link Specialist, meeting with people living with HIV. "I want to make sure people have someone to talk with. As a person living with HIV myself, I want to make sure people who are newly diagnosed know that this is not the life sentence they might think it's gonna be. You may need time to adjust, but the support exists—medications, practical support, emotional support is there. HIV will teach you a lot about your life.

"I have no shame, no stigma. I am here for a reason. I tell myself that every day: I am here for a reason. Sometimes those days are cloudy, but you work through those days. All my diseases and challenges and frustrations—I am growing into myself and will not suffer fools gladly. If there is anything positive coming from having HIV, it's that, at age 65, I am proud of myself."

\$25 Gets You a Chance to Win Three Great Prizes

Every ticket we sell will help fund our programs!



2023 Ford Bronco Raptor

**Two First Class Airline
Tickets to Anywhere**



"Millions for Tucson" Raffle

Buy your tickets online at tihan.ejoinme.org/win
or call us at 520-299-6647

**100% of proceeds from our ticket sales benefit TIHAN's programs
and services for people living with HIV**

Purchase your tickets and we will fill out your ticket entry and then
mail the ticket stub(s) to you.

Tickets are available through December 8, 2023, and the drawing will be held on
December 14, 2023. You must be 21 years of age to purchase raffle tickets.
You do NOT have to be present to win.

Citi Supports TIHAN During Pride Month

We are grateful to partner with Citi (Citibank/Citigroup) in multiple ways during Pride Month. With more than 1,500 employees in Tucson, Citi is one of Arizona's largest employers. And they celebrate their LGBTQ+ employees and allies.

For Pride Month, they encouraged their employees to be part of one of three community service projects for TIHAN: putting together CarePackages to distribute to TIHAN's CarePartners living with HIV, helping with our Poz Cafe lunch program, and participating in a presentation at their Tucson headquarters with an update about HIV and then putting together more than 300 snack packs for our CarePartners and decorating CarePackages.

Thank you, Citi leadership and staff, for honoring and valuing your LGBTQ+ employees and their allies, and encouraging them to learn and connect with the community in which they work, love, and serve.



Honoring the Lives of Key Supporters Who Have Passed Away in the Past Few Months

Dr. Audrey Holland was a longtime TIHAN supporter, having served on our Board of Directors, including serving as the President of our Board from 2004-2005. Although she made a tremendous impact as a pioneer and world-renowned leader in the field of aphasia research and services, we will best remember Audrey for her love of life and service and her decades of support for people living with HIV and members of the LGBTQ+ community.



Randolph Weese was a newer supporter of TIHAN, but he made a huge impact. Randy, along with Joe Benanti, his partner of 55 years, began contributing to TIHAN in 2012, and then really increased their support to major levels in 2020 as the pandemic descended on our world. Randy's care and concern for our CarePartners and his strong passion for supporting TIHAN in the final years of his remarkable life will never be forgotten.



Doug Noffsinger was a leader with the LGBTQ Alliance Fund of the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona, and a major philanthropist supporting Wingspan, TIHAN, and many other organizations. He was active in advocating for political candidates and issues working for diversity, justice, equity, and inclusion. Our hearts go out his husband Roger, with whom he shared the past 58 years.



Thanking Deirdre Demers!

Deirdre Demers, TIHAN's Program Manager for over nine years, was both excited and sad to finish up her tenure on staff at TIHAN. Deirdre has had incredible experiences in our community, and leaves TIHAN stronger and serving more people than when we hired her in 2013.

"I look forward to what the next phase of my life will bring, and I know that TIHAN will always hold a special place in my heart. Thank you so much for everything over the years."

We celebrated Deirdre with a going-away party and thank-you gifts.

TIHAN and the people we serve will always be grateful for Deirdre's work and her contributions. She's on to new adventures with our love, and TIHAN too embarks on new adventures as we transition into the future and build upon the foundation that Deirdre helped build.



VOLUNTEER WITH TIHAN

Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network

Together, our diversity of hearts and hands make a difference!



For current volunteer opportunities with TIHAN, visit tihan.org and click on Volunteer, then Current Volunteer Opportunities.

If you are interested in getting involved, contact us to start our volunteer onboarding process!

TIHAN in the News!

TUCSON GIVING

TIHAN makes groovy return to hosting in-person fundraiser

LOWE'S

Similar to the Arizona State Fair, TIHAN is about to become family time.

If you are looking for an opportunity to help, you will find it at the Desert at 7 p.m. on Saturday, June 3.

The Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network (TIHAN) will celebrate the return to an in-person signature fundraiser with groovy dancing, food, fun and music at Desert Diamond Casino.

"What we really wanted to do is get the community, TIHAN folks, volunteers and donors together in a fun, social atmosphere."

Whether you want to dance or just enjoy the atmosphere, Disco in the Desert at Desert Diamond will lead the way to an amazing celebration," said Scott Blades, executive director of the nonprofit.

Composed of about 50 faith communities dedicated to providing support for those living with HIV/AIDS.

TIHAN is focused on creating social connections between people while providing services and support for Carpenters, a member of the faith community.

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"Like many nonprofits, it has been challenging trying to serve more people with fewer funds under stressful conditions, but we made it through and are gradually moving toward in-person events and programs. Our Carpenters and Link Specialists are integral to our work."

Blades said. "Confronting loneliness is a priority for TIHAN, according to Cheryl Muller, who has volunteered on several Carpenters and Link Specialists."

"Individuals living with HIV still tend to have a stigma surrounding them and sometimes they don't get the type of family support or other support they might need. The support, education and outreach by TIHAN is really important and valuable work," Muller said.

That outreach continues through fundraising events, programs and faith communities. Arlan Colton, a member of the faith community, is treasurer of the board of directors for TIHAN. He said that his synagogue has played an active role in supporting the POC Canteen in partnership with other congregations.

"It is so rewarding and generous to see another congregation show up to TIHAN. The cool thing is that you do this because it is the right thing to do, not because anyone says it or because of some kind of obligation."

Colton said. "The sense of community also appeals to volunteer Jean Lawrence, vice president of the Foundation, whose cultural arts team prepares meals for the POC Canteen."

Lawrence, who is married to Blades, began volunteering with TIHAN while searching for an opportunity to give back.

"It was really uplifting and I knew this was a place I wanted to be involved in."



TIHAN volunteers Arlan Colton, Cheryl Muller and Jean Lawrence (pictured left to right) are among the supporters assisting to stage Treasures for TIHAN. Disco in the Desert at 7 p.m. on Saturday, June 3 at Desert Diamond Casino & Entertainment, 7550 S. Nogales Highway. The signature fundraiser will feature music, dancing and entertainment along with a silent auction that launches on Friday, May 26 and ends on June 3. For tickets and more information, visit <https://tucsoninquiry.com/hands-in-diamond-54600000>.

if you go

What: Treasures for TIHAN: Disco in the Desert
When: 7 to 9 p.m. on Saturday, June 3
Where: Desert Diamond Casino & Entertainment, 7550 S. Nogales Highway

Special rate packages are available on Friday or Saturday night. Visit <https://tucsoninquiry.com/hands-in-diamond-54600000> for information.

Cost: \$500 per person, \$100 for two people

More information: <https://tucsoninquiry.com/hands-in-diamond-54600000>

TIHAN always puts an emphasis on encouraging people to know their HIV status. In the past, when people were diagnosed with HIV, they looked at it as a death sentence. Today there are advanced treatments and care that allow people to live long and productive lives with HIV. The support that TIHAN provides pushed me to want to be tested myself. Even though the test turned out negative for HIV, it is reassuring to know that there are places like TIHAN where people can find support during moments like this," Lawrence said.

TIHAN provides a shoulder to lean on for those who might not otherwise have that while facing the fear of HIV testing and possible diagnosis.

"It is not just about knowing the facts, but about being there and offering a listening ear. It is a difference in our way of thinking about welcoming a community that is already feeling ostracized. We all have a role to play in improving our corner of the world. We may not be elites or celebrities with resources at our disposal, but each of us can make a difference in our way of thinking about welcoming a community that is already feeling ostracized. We all have a role to play in improving our corner of the world."

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Acknowledging Gifts Made to TIHAN in Honor of and in Memory of Loved Ones

(Gifts received February 16, 2023—July 31, 2023)

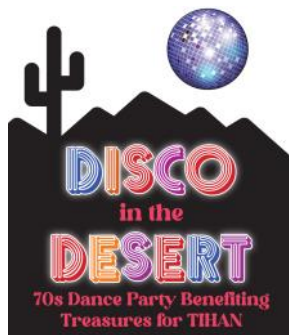
Gifts Received in Honor Of

Scott Blades *
Scott Blades and Jess Losoya
Jeffrey Scott Brown
Msgr Tom Cahalane
Arlan Colton and Jeff Ramos *
Deirdre Demers *
Jenny and Mike Hartung
Leslie Kahn *
Jess Losoya *
Maggie McCann
Jill Rich
Andrew Thorne
TIHAN Volunteers
Susan Tiss
John Wilson

Gifts Received In Memory Of

Cal Anderson
Stephen Andre'
David Arnot
Debbie Barnette *
Jerome Beillard
Bill and Tony Burroughs
Ethel Coddie
Roy DeBise Loomis
Fr Bill Doherty
Jim Girard *
Steve Hall
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Barbara Kaller-Cohen *
John Klinger *
Lacey Laws
Jeffrey Lawrence
Richard McLean *
Bill McManus *
John X and Betty Faison Miller
Myron Morris *
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Ronald Schuyler *
Janet Smith *
Karen Sparks
Earl Thomas
Steve Trujillo
David and Anita Wade
Don Wenig *

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



Disco in the Desert: Treasures for TIHAN 2023 Sponsors

DESERT DIAMOND CASINOS

Morris A Hazan Family Foundation

GILEAD | HIV

Barbie Adler and John Nemo

Amity Foundation

Colette Barajas CENTRA REALTY

LONG REALTY CARES Foundation

Tina MacBeth

NORTHERN TRUST

Desert Leaf

Dr. Seth Dubry and Mr. Todd Colwell

EL RIO HEALTH

Five Sisters of TIHAN!

Donita Stobaugh Gross

Joe Heller and Frank Ptak

Stuart Meinke

Palo Verde BENEVOLENT HEALTH

Jill Rich, Long Realty

SAAF Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation

TMC HEALTH

6150

Scott Blades and Jess Losoya

Kevin Carmichael, MD, and Tejal Parikh, MD

Arlan Colton and Jeff Ramos

Eclectic Cafe

EQUALITY HEALTH

Roger Funk

Max McCauslin and John Smith

Cheryl and Tom Muller

Speedway Veterinary Hospital

TIHAN Board of Directors

Is Your Faith Community Interested in Being Part of TIHAN?

Over the past few years, we've lost the participation of several faith communities, either through closure or merger, new clergy who are not as supportive of our mission, declining membership, or lack of a strong point person to be the champion and liaison between TIHAN and the faith community. The pandemic has had major impacts on faith communities as well as nonprofit organizations, but we know that there are many faith communities seeking new ways to involve their members to serve the community and carry their mission into the community.

If you are interested in finding out more about TIHAN and getting your faith community involved, the first step is to reach out to us, and we can talk about how to best provide awareness about the needs and opportunities to serve our community, and how just a few volunteers and a strong leader can make a difference in the lives of people living with HIV in our community!

Please contact Scott Blades at scott@tihan.org or 520-299-6647.

Thanks to our Treasures for TIHAN sponsors and supporters, people will live better, and receive more support.

We appreciate our sponsors for making our event a great success that raised thousands for our programs and services.

Thank You to Auction Item Donors to Our 2023 Treasures for TIHAN

Please support our donors,
as they support our community!

A Healing Grace PLLC
Anonymous Donors
Arizona Diamondbacks
Ariztical Entertainment
Arte de la Vida
Arizona Friends of Chamber Music
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Kathy Bell
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Orchestra
University of Arizona
Biosphere 2
Unscrewed Theater
Verde Canyon Railroad
Vosilo
Randolph Weese and Joseph Benanti
Westward Look Wyndham Resort & Spa
Don Womack
Zio Peppe

THANK YOU!

Your support of our Treasures
for TIHAN benefit created
helped make this a very
successful event that will help
people in need in our
community!



We are so grateful to all
who made our 2023
Treasures for TIHAN
Benefit—"Disco in the
Desert"—one of the most
successful fundraising
events in TIHAN's history!
It was 10 fun days of
bidding via an online
auction, plus our long-
awaited return to an in-
person event to celebrate
impact together!

Fantastic sponsors and
donors, generous bidders,
great businesses and
individuals contributing

auction items—it all added up to a successful event to
support people living with HIV here in Southern
Arizona.

Because of your support, it was the most important
evening of the year for our CarePartners living with
HIV as you gave generously to fund vital programs
and support services. Thanks also to our emcee
Lupita Murillo, DJ Michael Lopez, and some fun
disco party themed entertainment and dancing!

Thank you to our great team of volunteers who pulled
together our first major live event in four years, and
to everyone who joined to make it a wonderful
success!

For the list of sponsors, major supporters, and
planning team members, visit <https://tihan.org> and
click on Treasures for TIHAN!

