

LOCAL PEOPLE MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS

— Troy May

June marked the 25th anniversary of the Center for Disease Control's report of five cases of *Pneumocystis* pneumonia in Los Angeles gay men, which is now known as the first official reporting of AIDS cases. In July of 1981, the *New York Times* published the world's first mainstream media story about the "rare cancer" in gay men. The HIV virus wasn't discovered by scientists until 1983, and two years later, a test for the virus was available. By 1986, 42,000 Americans, mostly gay men, had been diagnosed with AIDS and about 27,000 had died. Since the early 1980s, there have been a countless number of people who have dedicated their lives to fighting this disease.

This section highlights a few local pioneers in the fight against AIDS. While we don't have enough space to recognize everyone, we at ON Magazine want to thank the many people who have made a difference in the fight against this brutal disease.



Jerry Larsen, 52, moved to San Francisco from Montana in 1983, right at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. "In those first years, I watched fifty of my close personal friends pass from the disease," he said. Jerry has been HIV positive for 21 years, surviving through the black cloud of a death when there were few treatments for

the disease. Through the years, he worked hard to help those suffering from the disease.

Jerry has been working as a volunteer at the Food Basket, which provides food and supplies for people living with AIDS. He started there in 1998, when he was a client.

As a member of the HIV Planning Council of Santa Clara County, he offered guidance on where to allocate \$2.4 million in federal funding for medical care, pharmacy, case management, food, housing, dental services, mental health, substance abuse and more.

In 2003, the county honored Jerry with the David Burgess Award, which is given each year for outstanding contribution in service to work in the field of HIV and AIDS in Santa Clara County.

And during the last decade, Jerry has worked with the HIV positive incarcerated population, helping them with medical care and legal issues.



Marianne Gallagher, program coordinator of the Neil A. Christie Living

Center, 62, is well known in the San Jose community as a tireless worker in the HIV/AIDS community. The Living Center is a safe place for those living with the disease, a place where

they can visit, meet others living with the disease, be fed and attend health education classes.

Marianne became a registered nurse in 1964, and over the years she has witnessed a lot of death. She started to work with the HIV/AIDS community in 1989 as a volunteer at the Center for Living with Dying. "I really wanted to have a roll in being part of this sad thing in our community. At the time, I didn't know anyone who had HIV, but eventually, my life became full of people with AIDS."

Marianne has spent countless hours at the bedside of people dying from complications with AIDS. "I consider the death bed an altar, a very scared place." After her many years of dedication to the HIV/AIDS community, she doesn't want any special recognition.

"Don't make me out to be better than anyone else. There were many people in the community who did just as much. I did this out of love. I did nothing extraordinary."



Norbert Bischofberger, Ph.D., is the head of research and development at

biopharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences, based in Foster City. In this role, Bischofberger leads a team of research and clinical scientists who are working to develop

new, improved therapies for the treatment of HIV.

Under the leadership of Bischofberger, Gilead has launched three new once-daily HIV medications in a remarkably short period of time, including . These new treatment options have helped to simplify treatment regimens for some patients to as few as two pills taken once a day.

Now, Gilead is taking the crusade for simpler HIV treatment to the next level. The company has joined forces with another drug company, Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS), to create the world's first one-pill-a-day treatment for AIDS. The new single tablet regimen is a combination of Viread, Emtriva and BMS' Sustiva and could receive FDA approval later this year.

Bischofberger notes: "Science is a long-term effort. Projects can take 10 or more years. You can't pay attention to where the wind is blowing at one particular moment. If you believe in something, you have to keep moving toward your goal."



Dr. James W. Dilley is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, at the University

of California San Francisco and Executive Director of the UCSF AIDS Health Project. He was one of the founders of the AIDS Health Project (AHP) in 1984 and has been Executive Director since its inception.

AHP was born of the recognition that the AIDS epidemic has a tremendous emotional and psychological impact both on individuals and the community.

Dr. Dilley was one of many staff members at San Francisco General Hospital in the 1980s that watched

anxiously as young gay men were admitted with a fearsome and totally unknown disease. They stood by uncertainly as patients died within a few days of admission.

Dr. Dilley has published three books, serves on the editorial boards of two leading AIDS-related academic journals, and has served on boards to advise the state, city, and national professional organizations about HIV and mental health.

In June 2005, Dr. Dilley was selected as the faculty recipient of the UCS Chancellor's Award for Gay Lesbian Bisexual and/or Transgender Leadership. In April 2005, he received the Richard L. Schlegel National Legion of Honor Visionary Leader Award from American University in Washington, DC for his contributions to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities in their fight against HIV and AIDS.



Dr. Robert Shafer, associate professor of medicine and an AIDS specialist at Stanford University School of Medicine, manages the Stanford HIV Drug Resistance

Database, which he created in 1998. It is a unique resource that provides unfettered public access to information about drug resistance.

HIV drug resistance data is critical to the design of new AIDS drugs, for managing people with HIV and for surveillance purposes. The database, which is publicly available, stores and analyzes information about drug resistance and makes it available to a broad community of physicians and clinicians. It helps clinician/scientists identify gaps in drug resistance knowledge that could be filled by retrospective or prospective studies.

The database is constantly updated and contains information from more than 600 references, including data on more than 15,000 anonymous individuals with well-characterized treatment histories. The database also sequence analysis programs that are run more than 20,000 times a month, as well as a Web service that is used by more than 30 institutions. The large number of literature citations and frequent references to the database by clinicians and scientists suggest it has become a critical resource that helps bridge the gap between published HIV drug resistance data and drug resistance testing in clinical settings.



Jim Beall, 54, is on the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. He was on the San Jose City Council in 1980, right before HIV/

AIDS emerged in the local gay community. He's been an advocate for funding to fight the disease for years. In June, he was successful with getting approval for \$375,000 to fund more HIV testing sites in the county. This

was done at a time when the county doesn't have an extra dime to spare. Beall was also instrumental in getting funding for the Neil A. Christie Living Center, which opened in 2002. **ON**

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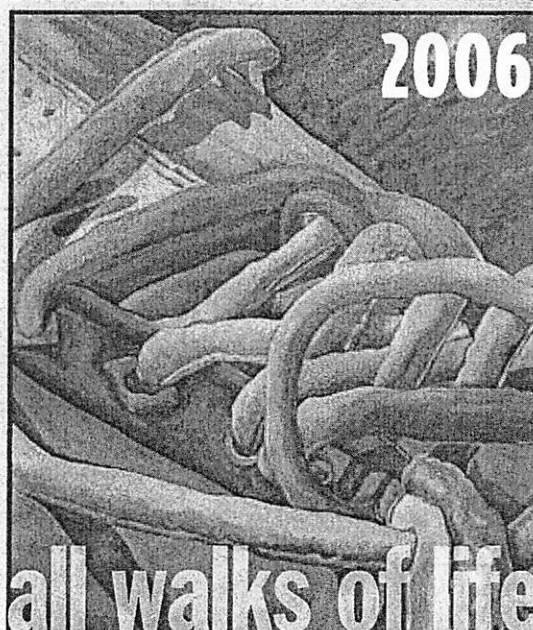
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