

AROUND THE BAY

SANTA CLARA COUNTY HIV ADVOCATES GRAB BIG WIN

In June, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors approved \$375,000 in one-time funding to expand the number of HIV testing sites in the county. This was done at a time of budget reductions.

"This funding will ensure that the community has the necessary tools to prevent further HIV infection amongst at-risk populations," said Aejaie Sellers, executive director of the DeFrank Center.

The money will be used to establish six or seven new HIV testing sites in strategic locations to reach high-risk populations – such as gay and Hispanic men. Currently, the county public health department has one HIV testing site in an area with nearly 2 million people, compared with San Francisco, which has about 40 testing sites in an area with less than a million people.

The Santa Clara County Public Health Department plans to issue a request for proposals to community agencies in July and have the testing sites in place later this summer or early fall, said Sil Reyes, testing coordinator for the county of Santa Clara.

"This is a process," said Reyes. County officials need to find the best-qualified sites, and then train HIV testing

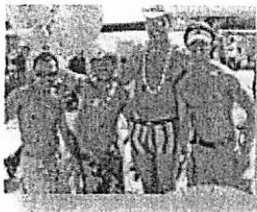
counselors to staff the testing facility.

In addition to new testing sites, the public health department plans to take HIV testing to the streets. County health professionals will fill a backpack with rapid oral testing kits, and walk the streets and cruise through bars in high-risk areas to offer HIV testing, said Reyes.

This system of HIV testing was done late last year as a pilot project and was determined successful. "It's a different dynamic," said Reyes. But it's part of the mission of taking HIV testing to the people, rather than waiting for them to walk through the clinic doors to request a test.

It's important on many levels to have an accurate count of the number of HIV positive people in the county. The number affects federal HIV funding levels and forecasting potential demand for services. In addition, studies have shown that if someone knows they are HIV positive, they are likely to change their sexual behavior, which could prevent the spread of this disease. HIV positive people can also get into treatment programs early, which can hopefully prevent serious illness.

SAN JOSE GAY PRIDE A SUCCESS, CHANGES EXPECTED NEXT YEAR



The final numbers for San Jose Gay Pride were not available before press time, but organizers claim the festival was a success. "Overall participation was up 15 percent over 2005," said Joe Colligan, San Jose Gay Pride board member. There was a 10 percent increase in floats, and 20 percent increase in participation of church and religious groups.

This year, San Jose Gay Pride started out \$10,000 in the red. "The goal was to be in the black this year, and we may be there," Colligan said. The community can expect changes next year. "This isn't just a gay day, but a day for the community," Colligan said. "We are considering making it more of a community event."

The first step will be to reevaluate the Oscar Party, which is the first Pride fundraising event of the year held at the San Jose Athletic Club. "It's been in the same venue and format for eight years, and we'd like to freshen it up," he said. Which means it could end up in a different location.

Later this year the San Jose Pride board will add new members and start the conversation to discover the best changes for the event that will draw a larger crowd.

SANTA CRUZ DIVERSITY CENTER GETS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Amy Wirth has been appointed as the new executive director of the Diversity Center in Santa Cruz. The Center provides services to the GLBT community and organizes the annual Gay Pride festival in Santa Cruz. Amy is a lesbian mom and longtime activist who brought passion and practical experience to the Diversity Center.

Amy is a graduate of Smith College, a seasoned freelance writer and project manager, and a committed community activist. She has written for many publications and provided project management for education and health care organizations.

Amy supplied writing expertise and project support for numerous foundations and non-profit

organizations throughout the southeast. In Atlanta during the 1990s, Amy was the treasurer of the Gay and Lesbian History Project, and a member of the local lesbian business organization. She has volunteered at the Homeless Garden Project and is currently an active parent member of the Diversity Task Force at Santa Cruz Montessori.

The nonprofit Diversity Center opened its doors in 1990. The current budget is \$250,000 and Amy's salary is \$45,000 a year.

CALIFORNIA COURT OF APPEAL RULES IN FAVOR OF LESBIAN PARENT

The California Court of Appeal ruled in June that Charisma R., a non-biological mother represented by the National Center for Lesbian Rights, could get visitation with the child born to her former female partner through alternative insemination. The case, *Charisma R. v. Kristina S.*, is the first appellate decision to apply the California Supreme Court's groundbreaking trio of 2005 decisions involving lesbian parents. Deborah H. Wald, chairperson of Chair of the National Center for Lesbian Rights' National Family Law Advisory Committee, argued the case for Charisma on behalf of NCLR.