

BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

# PROJECT PRESS

IN THIS ISSUE: The Year That Was 2019! World AIDS Day 2019. Meet Our New Director, Dar.

## WORLD AIDS DAY 2019

by Kelly Marble

On December 1, we gathered at The Blazing Saddle to commemorate and remember World AIDS Day. In light of the weather we moved the event inside, and we were all thankful for the warmth.

Thank you to all of our friends and supporters who were able to join us for the event or bingo on the night before. So much has changed since the first AIDS Walk in 1988, and the treatment of HIV/AIDs has progressed to the point where we can see an end in sight.

Thank you to Matt McCoy, Frank Vaia, Courtney Reyes and Roger Lacey for speaking and sharing their stories. We raised awareness about the continued need for support and how the movement is changing.

For a recap of the events, check out the feature article in the Des Moines Register shared on our Facebook page.



## CLINIC HOURS INFO

### University Medical Clinic

8 AM-5 PM Monday-Friday.

### Testing Clinic

For the most up to date testing hours, please visit our website: [phctheproject.org](http://phctheproject.org).

For After Hours assistance, please call 248-1500, and you will be directed to our answering service.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

### HOLIDAY GREETINGS!

It has been a privilege to get to lead our team caring professionals at the Project this year. Many of you may not know who I am, so I would like to introduce myself as the new Director for The Project of Primary Health Care. My name is Darla R. Krom, and I prefer to be called Dar. My pronouns are They, Them and Theirs. I have been with Primary Health Care for 10 years and six months ago I started my new role as the Director of The Project.



It's truly a blessing to have a job that you enjoy and can be enthusiastic about going to every day. I am grateful to have met and listened to many people that are living with HIV. There is an incredible network of people committed to preventing the new transmissions who show their support through donations, volunteering, advocating in their community, and taking personal responsibility for their sexual health by getting tested regularly, and knowing their status.

There are so many things I could share about The Project in 2019, and in this issue we will highlight a few of the incredible accomplishments of our team including:

- ◇ ACHIEVING A VIRAL SUPPRESSION RATE OF 93%
- ◇ A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DES MOINES BICYCLE COLLECTIVE TO PROVIDE SOME OF OUR CLIENTS WITH A BICYCLE TO GET TO THEIR APPOINTMENTS.
- ◇ PREVENTION IS ON TRACK TO PROVIDE MORE THAN 2,200 FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL HIV/STI TESTS.

We have big plans for The Project in 2020 from expanding into more counties in Central Iowa, to fundraising and reaching more people with our message online, and in person. We have set a goal of getting to zero new transmissions of HIV by 2030, and we can accomplish this goal with your help. This will happen as barriers to care are removed and we decrease stigma and discrimination towards individuals and groups that are different from us because of who they love, where they live, how much money they make, or the color of their skin.

As the Director of The Project, I am committed to doing my part and making every effort personally and professionally to bring people together to have serious conversations about what needs to happen to truly make this WORLD great again!

I look forward to leading our amazing team and connecting with all of you about opportunities to volunteer, speak up, and ADVOCATE for people living with HIV!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Dar

## CLINICAL SERVICES

by Theresa Schall, Clinical Services Manager

A government report released in early December shows that clients receiving medical care through a Ryan White medical program had undetectable virus levels far higher than the national average. This is important because people living with HIV who take medication every day and are undetectable have effectively no risk of sexually transmitting the virus to an HIV-negative partner. We also learned that Iowa is #1 in the nation in undetectable rates. As a clinic that has a Ryan White program, we feel that it is a great reason to celebrate! Hats off to all of our patients who work hard to stay in care, remain healthy and live longer than ever before.

Dr. April Winters will be transitioning into one day per week Easy Access appointments starting the first week of March. We will be sad to say goodbye but wish Dr. Winters and her family the best as they move to Mexico this summer.

### NEW CHANGE:

Our University clinic is open 8 AM-5 PM Monday-Friday.

For After Hours assistance, please call 248-1500, and you will be directed to our answering service. If you call The Project's main number, 248-1595, you will be directed to call 248-1500.

## SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

by Jodi Snowden, Supportive Services Manager

Supportive Services at the Project has experienced an incredible year. There have been a few positive changes and many creative minds working together to best serve our clients.

On July 15th I was hired as the new Supportive Services manager. I have over 7 years of experience working in the case management field and four of those years were spent working with people who were HIV positive. I worked at the Project three years ago as a case manager and spent my interim time in Milwaukee working for the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin. Since returning to the Project as the Supportive Services Manager, I have been working very close with the case managers in improving processes ultimately to better serve our clients.

Transportation continues to be a barrier most of our people face in getting into and maintaining their healthcare. We continue to provide transportation to those who qualify through UBER Health, cabs, bus tickets and our bike program. The Bike program has been very successful this year. We have purchased a total of 8 bikes which amounted to 1820.00. This includes a bike, helmet and safety class to get the person started

The Project has received 122 new clients entering case management services. In total we have 757 client enrolled in RW services. The Project continues to maintain viral load suppression rates at a higher percentage than the overall state and nation.

Supportive Services at The Project remains an incredibly important component of maintaining overall health. Many of our clients continue to face multiple barriers. Our case management team works along the clients in identifying and utilizing resources as possible to increase client's medical adherence. Ultimately our goal is to increase access to care and with your continued support we are able to do this, so for that, we thank you!



## PREVENTION TEAM IN 2019

by John Shaw, Prevention Services Manager

2019 was a very successful year for the Prevention Team at the Project of Primary Health Care (PPHC). John Shaw was promoted to Prevention Services Manager in February and brought in Paul Muwan-guzi and Noah Beacom as prevention specialists in April and July respectively. Of course, Mikaela Pedersen, prevention specialist rockstar, is still with the team. Together we have approached HIV education and prevention in new and innovative ways. We set goals early in the year to increase testing in disproportionately impacted communities, increase effectiveness of our outreach testing, and increase the scope of our services through effective marketing. The team's overall mission was to make 2019 the most impactful year for The Project's prevention team yet.

Our first goal was to increase access to our free and confidential testing services to people in need. Communities of Color and people who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community have been disproportionately impacted by HIV in Iowa so it was extremely important that our services were accessible to people in these communities. I am happy to report that the Prevention Team has conducted over 70% of their HIV tests on individuals who identify as high-risk for transmission of HIV or are part of a disproportionately impacted community. Almost 50% of our total number of HIV tests are conducted on individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ and over 30% of our tests were completed on individuals from communities of color. By the end of 2019 the Prevention Team is on pace to conduct 2200 HIV tests.

Outreach and marketing were the next major part of the Prevention Team's 2019 goals and often-times they went hand in hand. We developed new partnerships with organizations all over central Iowa while also maintaining all of our previously established partnerships. The Prevention Team serviced five different counties with help from over 30 organizations. A few highlights for the team were: Bear Necessities, Capital City Pride, and National HIV Testing Day. At Bear Necessities, the Prevention Team was able to test an individual who was living with HIV and didn't know it. We were able to confirm this individual's HIV status, get them tested for HIV/STIs and link them into treatment in less than 3 days. This event was a great reminder of the importance of providing access to testing services within the community. Capital City Pride was another example of a successful outreach or marketing event. Not only were we able to test close to 100 individuals for HIV but we also were able to market the importance of testing with Presidential Candidate Corey Booker. Corey and John were able to discuss the importance of routine HIV testing and how getting regular HIV/STI testing done can decrease the stigma associated with HIV. Finally, on National HIV Testing Day, the Prevention Team had a segment on KCCI to promote the importance of getting tested and knowing your status. All of these efforts, and many more, help increase the breadth of our services in central Iowa.

Prevention is a major pillar in the PPHC's plan to help end the HIV epidemic. With the help of the community, increased access to HIV testing and treatment, and education to reduce stigma 2020 can be even more successful for our program.

# STAFFING UPDATES

Job changes and new faces at The Project

## JODI SOWDEN, SUPPORTIVE SERVICES MANAGER

Background (education and/or previous employment):



My education is a B.A in Psychology with a minor in Child, Adult and Family Services. I have worked with HIV/AIDS/Prevention for almost 5 years now. I worked here at the Project as a case manager prior to moving to Milwaukee, WI. In Milwaukee I spent over 3 years working for the AIDS resource center in their case management department and had a specialization in PrEP services. Before working in the HIV and prevention world I worked at a residential facility for people with mental health diagnosis.

What inspired you to work here?

When my family made the decision to move back to Iowa I knew right away I wanted to return to the Project of Primary Health Care. The family of coworkers are very close knit and make even difficult days very enjoyable. I also truly believe in the cause. I believe we will someday live in a world without new diagnosis. In the meantime I want to continue to help and advocate for our clients in need. I am honored to lead such a passionate and powerful team of case managers

## NOAH BEACOM - PPREVENTION SPECIALIST

Background (education and/or previous employment):



B.A. in Catholic Studies and Philosophy, University of St. Thomas. M.Ed. from Notre Dame. I taught high school Spanish and religion for five years in Mississippi and Minnesota. Then I worked in the financial and insurance industries for another six years. Now I'm here!

What inspired you to work here?

After being impacted by layoffs in the financial sector a number of times, I decided to dig deep and go after a job that I was really passionate about. I was a client of the Project when I first came out, and benefited greatly from their services. I wanted to pass on what I received to others, and continue to learn more about myself.

## ELIZABETH MILLER, LMSW - HOUSING CASE MANAGER

Background (education and/or previous employment):



I graduated from the University of Iowa Graduate School of Social Work with a Master in Social Work degree earlier this year. I completed my practicum placement with Homeless Support and Prevention right here at PHC and loved it so much I wanted to stay full-time. Previously, I was the Quality Improvement Data Specialist but now I'm a case manager specializing in housing. I am enjoying continuing to work with our clients in a different capacity while learning new skills.

What inspired you to work here?

I love PHC's commitment to its clients and passion to serve the community! PHC's mission to improve the quality of life of the people we serve really resonates with me.

**HIV SUPPORT GROUP - AMES**

Monthly, last Thursday of the month, 6:00 PM | PHC Ames Clinic

Facilitated by Case Manager Sunny Thompson, and Behavioral Health Consultant Anneke Gustafson, Dinner is provided.

CONTACT: Sunny to sign up at (515) 664-8500. Transportation assistance may be available.

**HIV SUPPORT GROUP - DES MOINES**

Weekly on Wednesdays, 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM | New Location!

Facilitated by JaCarie Owens. Located at 1200 Valley West Drive in the 3rd floor conference room.

CONTACT: JaCarie at (515) 901-9416 or your case manager to sign up.

**NUTRITION AND WELLNESS EVENTS**

Quarterly Cooking Classes | Facilitated by a Registered Dietician | HyVee on Euclid

These fun, informative and tasty events take place at HyVee four times a year. The next one will be Monday, March 9th.

Begin Program | Facilitated by a Registered Dietician | PHC

This healthy lifestyle and weight management program is held at PHC weekly over the course of 7 weeks. The next group will start on March 31st and will run through May 12th. This program can also be individualized.

CONTACT: Camile at (515) 248-1593 or your nurse care manager or case manager to sign up.

**WELLNESS FOR WOMEN**

Monthly, Days varies | 5:30 - 7:00 PM | Harkin Wellness Center, PHC East Side

Wellness for Women-continues to meet monthly, day varies each month. This group supportive and educational group is open to women or female identifying people living with HIV. It meets from 5:30-7:00pm at the Harkin Wellness Center located next to PHC's East Side Clinic.

To receive the monthly flier or for questions about the group contact the facilitator, Anneke Gustafson, LISW at (515) 248-1825.

**FREEDOM FROM SMOKING**

Next group starts January 2020

Are you ready to be smoke-free in 2020? You can do it and we can help!

This 7 week group will address the struggles associated with quitting smoking like finding the right medications that can help and how to avoid weight gain.

Meeting on Mondays starting in January. Call Megan Campbell (515) 248-1590 or Anneke Gustafson (515) 248-1825 to sign up. (Actual start date and time to be determined later.)