



HORIZONS FOUNDATION MARKS 25 YEARS OF FIGHTING AIDS

The GLBT foundation has been in the forefront of the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Bay Area.

— MATTHEW S. BAJKO

The Kaposi's Sarcoma Clinic at the University of California San Francisco was overwhelmed with patients when AIDS first emerged in 1982. Helen Schietinger, a nurse-coordinator at the clinic, was desperate to find additional funding to care for the swarm of gay men who needed treatment.

The university and other financial sources turned down Schietinger's request for funding. With no where else to turn, she called the two-year-old Horizons Foundation, an agency focused exclusively on funding community-based groups in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community.

Since its inception in 1980, Horizon's had doled out money to legal groups and social agencies. Its first two grants were \$500 to both Community Transitions Job Power and the Lesbian Rights Project, the precursor to the National Center for Lesbian Rights. Then suddenly, a deadly disease invaded the gay community, requiring an unexpected high demand for funding and attention.

"At the time, the LGBT movement was still quite new and funding was nearly impossible to find for the work that needed to be done," said Roger Doughty, Horizons executive director. "Horizons provided a way for our community to take care of our own when no one else would."

Schietinger received the funding she needed from Horizon to help treat men who were suffering from AIDS, and the foundation took it a step further and donated money to the Kaposi's Sarcoma Research and Education Foundation – which later evolved into the San Francisco AIDS Foundation.

The grants were the first of any foundation in the country to support an AIDS service provider. From those first steps Horizons would become a leader in supporting other agencies dealing with the impacts of AIDS.

In the last 25 years, Horizons will have doled out about a total of \$6 million for HIV/AIDS causes. That's about half of the \$12.8 million the foundation granted during the same time period. In 2006, the foundation expects to distribute more than \$500,000 in

HIV-related grants out of a total giving this year of \$1.7 million.

One early Horizons grant went to the Legal Aid Society, which took on early AIDS discrimination cases. In one landmark victory, the society sued an insurance company that required unmarried men who worked as "restaurant employees, antique dealers, interior decorators, consultants, florists, or in the jewelry or fashion business" to answer discriminatory health questions.

Project Open Hand also received its first grant from Horizons. Ruth Brinker, a retired grandmother, had started cooking meals in a local church basement for seven men with AIDS, using food donations and her own money. The foundation not only gave Brinker's group the maximum grant award, but also found it a fiscal sponsor and helped it secure its nonprofit status.

"Ruth was the kind of person who saw a need and tried to fill it. And now, Project Open Hand is a spectacular success," said former Horizons board member Mark Hetts, who recalled the grant as one of his proudest Horizons memories.

Other early grants supported a free five-day workshop with renowned author Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross for men with AIDS; a helpful brochure for friends of people with AIDS; and training videos for healthcare workers.

"The AIDS crisis brought our community's compassion and generosity into sharp relief as we came together to care for our sick and our dying," said Doughty. "And Horizons was there, every step of the way. The history of AIDS reminds us that our own willingness to give can have an impact far beyond our borders — just look at what UCSF and the San Francisco AIDS Foundation have been able to achieve.

"That's why Horizons' mission remains as critical as ever. None of us can know what's around the corner, but we've proven that our community can face any issue—even something as devastating as AIDS — with compassion and generosity." **ON**

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