

RAINBOW COMMUNITY CENTER SALVAGES DIABLO VALLEY AIDS CENTER'S FOOD PROGRAM

The financial crises in today's non-profit social sector claimed another victim in our community in June 2006.

The *Diablo Valley AIDS Center (DVAC)* closed 30 June after eighteen years of providing vital nutritional support and social interaction for HIV/AIDS people (POZ) in Contra Costa County. The closure was inevitable as governmental funding, especially the *Ryan White Funds*, shrunk in urban areas. DVAC made major internal adjustments in 2005 and 2006 which were insufficient to sustain the program in 2007.

The RAINBOW Board of Directors had authorized in early 2005 exploratory searches for area agencies which might be synergistic financially and programmatically in a merger arrangement. Discussion between DVAC and RCC commenced in the 4th quarter of 2005 with the focus on DVAC's core program – food pantry service for ambulatory and home delivery service for frail, home bound POZ people. A merged arrangement demonstrated no benefits for either agency so transfer of the program became the focus. Protracted negotiations with multiple area agencies produced a coalition that gave the concept momentum.

This coalition includes: the RAINBOW as the owner agency providing space, administration and development; *Contra Costa-Solano Food Bank* providing food supplies thru their *Extra Helpings Project*; *Martinez Loaves and Fishes* – fresh produce; *CoCoCo AIDS Program-HIV/AIDS* case management; and *New Connections* – rental pantry space, HIV/AIDS case management and chemical rehabilitation programs. Three volunteers transferred from DVAC with the program. An eight hour per week DVAC employee was hired to coordinate the program which was given the name – KIND HEARTS PROJECT – to reflect the outreach of concern from volunteers, agencies, commercial vendors, and financial supporters. The DVAC employee has been comparably replaced by **Len King**, a long time RCC friend. **Kent Sack, MD**, is serving as KIND HEARTS PROJECT supervisor and liaison to the RCC Board of Directors.

The KIND HEARTS Project faced a remaining major hurdle after the coalition of agencies had been organized – operating funds. The RCC Board of Directors had established early during the negotiations the guideline that the program transfer would be accepted only if the operating budget for the first twelve months was in place. Bob Hamilton, Executive Director of DVAC, and Kent Sack, Interim ED of RCC successfully secured the \$13K budget. Significant contributions and grants were received from the following:

F. Joyce Marline, Martinez (long time DVAC Patron).....	\$7K
Until There's A Cure Foundation.....	\$3K
Y&H Soda Foundation, Orinda.....	\$2K
Horizons Foundation/San Francisco AIDS Foundation.....	\$1K

Development of the 2007 fundraising plan for \$16K is currently in design. Chevron, a past DVAC supporter has shown some preliminary interest; a gift campaign among past DVAC loyalists, grants from HIV/AIDS foundations, increased corporate support and the development of a donor base within the region's LGBT community are projected in the plan. The uncertainty of government funds has forfeited any plan to utilize these monies, which are touted as available for nutritional programs. The RAINBOW welcomes any suggestions as to donor resources, ideas for annual budgeting or individual gifts from friends recognizing the vitalness of this Project.

Area businesses are crucial to the success of the KIND HEARTS Project and give "specialness" to the weekly gifts of basic food stuffs provided by and purchased from the *CoCo-Solano Food Bank* for POZ people below the poverty line. *Sweet Affairs* of Walnut Creek provides large quantities of breads and pastries. *Trader Joe's* of Lafayette is generous in sharing pound bags of coffee. ARP recently started gifting cat and dog food. Negotiations with *Albertsons'* – Martinez (a long time provider of fresh meats and cheeses) will resume in the near future. Most recently, Manager **Vince Scalise** (a long time RAINBOW supporter) has aligned the *Concord Farmers' Market* with KIND HEARTS to supply nutritionally rich fruits and vegetable. Staff will be searching for additional area businesses to help increase the "special" additions we make available. Again if anyone has contacts that would help us with this development phase, please provide the information to Raul at the RAINBOW. Please compliment these businesses on their support when shopping.

Volunteers are the "soul" of KIND HEARTS. **Miriam Mellen** and **Peter Johnson**, transfers from DVAC, continue to faithfully work weekly runs to the various merchants involved with the Project. Recently, **Dave Brown**, (RCC Board of Director) and **Kent Sack, MD** (Project Supervisor) have volunteered to manage the twice-monthly home deliveries to the ten frail POZ enrollees. **Angel Miranda** has volunteered to assist Len King in the twice weekly pantry operation from 11:00 to 3:00 p.m. which currently serves about twenty people weekly with another twenty-five people eligible but lacking completion of their certification with case managers. *Raul Mangubat*, RCC Administrative Assistant, has been the utility support man from the beginning. The Project would like a cadre of ten volunteers to diminish the burden on the limited numbers now and to have people in reserve for emergencies. If interested in volunteering for this "fuzzy feeling" project, contact Len at (925) 692-0090, X303, or Kent at (925) 692-0090 X301.

The RAINBOW has the capability of expanding the services for participants. Existing HIV/AIDS programs will soon be available to KIND HEARTS enrollees. Included will be: RCC's professionally facilitated HIV/AIDS support group; sliding scale psychotherapy support at the *Pleasant Hill Counseling Center* funded by a grant from *HORIZONS Foundation/San Francisco AIDS Foundation*; specialty health testing; second opinion health consultations at the *RAINBOW Free Clinic*; a limited expense fund; *RCC's Resource Library*, social opportunities and community educational forums.

Currently, the LGBT senior in the RAINBOW's twice-monthly luncheons and teas, supported by a grant from *St. Anselm's Episcopal Church* in Lafayette, receive perishable foods from the KIND HEARTS Pantry. A mechanism will be developed to identify frail LGBT seniors and offer them home delivery services. Currently, staff is reviewing the mechanisms of offering "brown bag" support from the Food Bank to those meeting eligibility criteria. Recently initiated is the process to share weekly perishable foods including produce, dairy, fruits/vegetables and breads with *New Connections's Reunion Program*. This program for young women, recent mothers and pregnant young women below the poverty line includes nutritional training and KINDS HEARTS helps provide the basics to further this objective. Currently, six to ten young women are enrolled. It is projected that the frail LGBT senior and the Reunion Program will expand and quietly help meet one of society's hidden disasters. By expanding participants, KIND HEARTS is successful in decreasing waste from the many donated items from the area merchants.

The RAINBOW is proud of its history of meeting the needs of our greater community, especially those of the "less people", and its energy and commitment to make this a better world when the priorities of the times work counter to its philosophy. The KIND HEARTS Project welcomes your questions, comments and suggestions; your volunteerism, and your gifts of support. Kent Sack, MD and Len King are available at 925-692-0090 extensions 301 and 303 respectively.

Kent L. Sack, MD

KIND HEARTS Project Supervisor
Development Committee Chair