

Before AIDS

1978 – While working on a medical project in Haiti, Dr. Didier Piot, notices unusual symptoms among some of his patients. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Piot sets up a practice in Houston, Texas and is startled when a young bodybuilder comes to see him with similar symptoms and dies two weeks later. After several more of his gay patients pass away, Dr. Piot reaches out to colleagues, but is generally ignored and considered to be paranoid.

1978 - The Montrose Clinic (now known as Legacy Community Health Services) is established as a grassroots organization to test gay men for sexually transmitted infections.

Founded in 1978 and granted 501(c)(3) status in 1980, The Montrose Counseling Center (currently known as the Montrose Center) is established to provide mental health services to the LGBT community and will later become a critical source of support for people with AIDS.

1981 – 1985

1981 - The first Houstonian is diagnosed with GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency disease, now known as AIDS). In 1981, there are 8 GRID/AIDS diagnoses in the Houston area with only two individuals surviving through the end of the year. Data is sketchy, but it appears as if all but one individual diagnosed that year are MSM (men who have sex with men), and most are white and over the age of 20.

1982 - The Montrose Voice publishes a special supplement titled "Sexually Transmitted Diseases," which focuses on Kaposi's sarcoma (KS). It reports that M.D. Anderson has 53 documented cases of men with suppressed immune systems and four cases of KS. Many AIDS patients are sent to M.D. Anderson because they present with Kaposi's sarcoma. Kaposi's sarcoma is a cancer that causes patches of abnormal tissue to grow under the skin, in the lining of the mouth, nose, and throat or in other organs. The patches are usually red or purple and are made of cancer cells and blood cells. In AIDS patients, the disease moves quickly.

1982 - The CDC introduces the term AIDS, an acronym for "acquired immune deficiency syndrome."

Geo. H. Lewis & Sons is the only funeral home in Houston willing to embalm people who die of AIDS.

Fabian Bridges, a man described by authorities in Cleveland and Houston as a prostitute, by his own admission, has unsafe sex without telling his partners of his illness. His case makes national news and is used as "a working strategy session on what to do about AIDS" on PBS's Frontline.

Local hospitals require visitors and staff to wear protective gear when visiting AIDS patients. Local activist Ray Hill asks physicians to contact him when a patient is near death. When called, Ray goes to the ward without protective clothing and sits with the patient, often holding the person when asked, until they pass away.

1984 – Jennifer Lyne passes away and is later identified as the first known child in Houston foster care to die of AIDS.

1984 – Catholic Sister Kathleen Foster establishes Casa de Esperanza de los Ninos - House of Hope for Children, a residential care facility for children, including those with AIDS, or those whose parents are impacted by AIDS and cannot provide care for their child(ren).

1983 – A group of gay men and women, under the auspices of EPAH (Executive Professional Association of Houston), organize Flashdance, one of the first AIDS fundraisers.

1985 - The ELISA blood test becomes available to see if a person's body is producing antibodies to combat Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS. Until the test becomes available to the public, some gay men donate to blood donation centers so that they are tested.

Local LGBT organizations warn that gay men should not donate blood and should not participate in testing that will leave a paper trail.

More and more gay men are becoming isolated because of the disfiguring purple spots on their face and body caused by Kaposi's sarcoma (KS). Bartender Mac McAdory, starts a support group for people with KS at Mary's Bar.

Montrose Clinic develops a testing strategy that protects identity and offers a Program for AIDS Counseling & Evaluation (PACE), which includes a patient history, physical, testing, and referral.

Houston is the only major city that does not close its bathhouses. Instead, the bathhouses are used as AIDS education distribution points. A number of bathhouses sponsor visits by porn stars and pair their visits with safe sex presentations.

The first Houston AIDS Resource "Directory" begins as a single piece of paper that is handwritten and later typed and reproduced on a mimeograph machine. Distributed among friends caring for people with AIDS.

Board members of the Montrose Clinic and Montrose Counseling Center establish the KS Foundation, now known as AIDS Foundation Houston, to provide support services to people with HIV/AIDS such as Stone Soup, a food pantry and McAdory House*, a residential facility. One of the Executive Directors was quoted as saying that until the late 1980's, 80% of the agency's budget came from passing a hat at local gay bars. It is rumored that staff raided the soda machine on at least one occasion to help make payroll. The Foundation hires one case manager to provide case management services to over 600 clients. Today, a case manager typically manages a case load of 150 clients.

It is not uncommon for an individual to quickly become sick, lose their employment, become evicted from their home and lose all personal possessions, frequently while in the hospital. Some say that AIDS causes incarceration because AIDS causes poverty which results in a number of individuals writing "hot checks". Hence, in 1988 COLT 45's AIDS Trouble Fund is established by a group of gay men to help individuals pay for rent, utilities and more.

Gay men's social events, organized by groups like Miss Camp America, The Diana Foundation and others, file for IRS 501(c)(3) status so that their parties can raise critical funds for local organizations.

This Week in Texas, a gay magazine published in Houston, begins to dedicate multiple pages every week to AIDS-related obituaries.

Local Houston activists produce the first in the nation Safe Sex Guide.

Omega House, an AIDS hospice, is established with startup assistance from Christ Church Cathedral and the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. Because the hospice has only three beds, many clients pass away either at Jeff Davis Hospital, in their own homes or in the home of a friend or a kind stranger, often alone and sometimes on the street.

1981 – 1985 ...continued

Eventually, when Houston receives federal funding for case management services, distrust among agencies is so high that instead of placing case managers in one organization, Houston designs a “decentralized system” that placed case managers in agencies throughout the geographic area.

AIDS Interfaith Council* (now known as Interfaith Care Partners) is founded and quickly becomes the largest religious response to AIDS in the country providing Care Team support with volunteers recruited from over 120 churches and synagogues. Annually, Care Teams provide in-home assistance to between 400 and 600 individuals. It is not uncommon for half of the clients to pass away during a 12 month period.

1985 - Movie super star Rock Hudson dies of AIDS. Montrose Clinic is inundated with testing requests, and begins processing 600 to 700 tests a month.

Mayor of Houston, Kathy Whitmire, reluctantly agrees to support a referendum that prohibits the City from discriminating

against gay and lesbian individuals in their hiring practices. The referendum is soundly defeated and gay and lesbian leaders begin to feel that key political leaders are distancing themselves from the gay community. This begins a long period of distrust and finger pointing among local politicians, gay and lesbian leaders and social service providers. Mainstream service providers become nervous about working with AIDS Service Organizations, like the Montrose Clinic and AIDS Foundation, for fear of losing their creditability with political leaders. Even gay grass roots organizations do not trust each other for fear of being dragged into the political quagmire.

The County Judge and the Mayor jointly appoint at least 4 different task forces to study the problem of AIDS. The task forces end with few recommendations and no action. In Texas, City government is responsible for disease prevention and surveillance and County government is responsible for providing care once a person becomes ill (i.e. Harris County Hospital District)

1986 – 1990

1986 - The Bering Spiritual Support Network (BSN) is established by Bering United Methodist Church and continues to this day to be one of the longest-running HIV/AIDS support groups in the country.

1986 - Houston’s “first lady of philanthropy” Carolyn Farb organizes “An Evening of Hope”, the first mainstream fundraiser which raises \$100,000 for the Bering Foundation, another organization founded by Bering United Methodist Church to provide dental care* and adult daycare to people living with AIDS.

1986 - The Pet Patrol* is founded to help people with AIDS keep their pets as long as possible and to find new homes for these pets when their owners passed away. At the end of 1990, the organization has approximately 400 clients and their 800 pets enrolled in the program.

1987 - Designers Michael Dale, Betsie

Weatherford, and Lynn Billings Etheridge start a local chapter of the Design Industries Foundation for AIDS (DIFFA). Local foundations and corporations feel more at ease channeling donations to AIDS organizations through DIFFA. From 1987 to 1996, DIFFA raises over \$2.7 million and becomes the largest source of private funds for local AIDS organizations.

1987 - AMI, a privately owned hospital corporation opens the Institute for Immunology*, the first hospital in the country dedicated solely to treating AIDS patients. When it closes one year later, patients with private insurance are routed into other hospitals owned by AMI and the remaining 700 patients are referred to Harris County Hospital District. AMI returns several million dollars in research funds to the Federal government and gives Houston the reputation of being a poor investment for scarce federal HIV funds.

1986 – 1990 ...continued

1987 - The Institute contributes \$25,000 to DIFFA—funds that have been set aside to help people pay their insurance premiums when they can no longer work—and asks DIFFA to take on this function. With these funds and their own resources, DIFFA forms the Assistance Fund*.

1987 - The drug AZT is approved for marketing by the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Finally, a drug that extends life.

Gay men start running up their credit cards to get as much out of life as possible in the unknown time they have left.

1987 - The Houston Gay Pride Parade encourages local organizations to have walking units and to donate funds that would have been used to construct a float. The Parade Grand Marshall that year was all people living with AIDS.

1987 - Galveston City Council meets in special session to ask a judge to quarantine an AIDS patient they believe is acting irresponsibly. Council Member Paso is quoted as saying, "It is not a perfect bill, but I consider it critical", sparking outrage and national attention.

A Houston area Baptist church expels a member of their choir when they find out that he has AIDS. Local activists demonstrate outside of the church.

1988 - The City of Houston is awarded CDC funds for the Perinatal Prevention Project, a pilot program that identifies and offers voluntary counseling and testing to women at high risk, or HIV positive, and enrolls the women in family planning, maternity and sexually transmitted disease clinics.

1988 - The City of Houston also receives State funds to develop a citywide AIDS speakers' bureau in conjunction with AIDS Foundation Houston and to develop AIDS education modules targeting different high risk populations. The city also receives \$3,500 to conduct a minority initiative program targeted to beauty shops, barbershops, and morticians.

1988 - County Judge Jon Lindsay announces the formation of the Greater Houston HIV/AIDS Alliance, a private non-profit corporation designed to bring private and public players to the same table to coordinate care services for people living with AIDS.

1989 - Psychotherapists Miles Glaspy, Bill Scott and John O'Donnell launch Body Positive Wellness Center to educate and support people with AIDS. A buddy system matches up volunteers who are HIV+ with persons who have just been diagnosed.

1988 - The Houston Chapter of the Names Project is formed and hosts a display of quilts representing individual friends and loved ones who have passed away from AIDS.

1989 - Montrose Clinic forms the Houston Clinical Research Network to allow more clinic patients access to experimental drugs, and becomes one of the American Foundation for AIDS Research's (amfAR) 12 test sites.

1989 - Harris County Hospital District opens Thomas Street Clinic, a publicly-funded outpatient clinic for people living with HIV/AIDS. Members of DIFFA paint walls and donate furniture to make patients more comfortable. Today, Thomas Street Health Center is cited as one of the for most HIV clinics in the country.

1989 - Aerosolized pentamidine is introduced as a prophylactic against pneumocystis pneumonia (PCP). At the last minute, members of Queer Nation decide against demonstrating and throw-ing blood at guests attending a Bering Foundation fundraiser because the foundation accepted a donation from an insurance company that will not cover the cost of pentamidine treatments. The Diana Foundation funds pentamidine treatment stations at Thomas Street Clinic and Jim "Mattress Mack" McIngvale sees a news report about the treatment stations and donates recliners to replace plain chairs.

1986 – 1990 ...continued

1989 - The City of Houston, is one of only six cities in the nation awarded direct funding from the CDC specifically for HIV prevention activities. Funds support health education, HIV counseling and testing, public information and minority initiative campaigns. Funds are also allocated through the grant to fund over 15 community-based organizations and agencies. To date, the CDC continues to provide grant funds directly to the City through this cooperative agreement.

1989 – An HIV/AIDS Resource Directory is published by United Way. Approximately 35 agencies are listed as having services specifically for people with AIDS.

United Way provides funding to Visiting Nurses Association specifically for the care

of people with AIDS. Due to the depressed economy, United Way prohibits any new organizations – which most AIDS organizations are – from applying for funds.

1989 - Art Against AIDS, a coalition of Houston artists, create a calendar of events and performances that are dedicated to AIDS and collectively raise \$165,000.

1990 - The National Affordable Housing Act establishes the Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) Program. The City of Houston is an early recipient of these funds.

1990 – There is a huge turnout when activists organize a Cure AIDS Now march in downtown Houston during the 16th G7 Economic Summit.

1991 – 1995

United Way lifts its ban on new organizations and provides economic support to the Montrose Clinic and Montrose Counseling Center.

1990 - The Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act is signed into law by President George H. Bush in response to the enormous impact HIV/AIDS is having on the nation. The monies appropriated by this federal law are to fund HIV/AIDS care services in those areas most affected by HIV/AIDS. Eligibility is determined by the number of AIDS cases reported in all 50 states and US Territories, and the metropolitan areas most impacted by the epidemic. Due to the huge impact that HIV/AIDS is having on the Houston area, Harris County and five surrounding counties receive Ryan White Care Act Title I funding in the amount of \$3.7 million in 1991, the first year of awards made under the program. This stable, long-term funding dramatically changes the grass roots nature of service delivery in the Houston area.

1990 - Burgeoning funding, coupled with an increasing number of clients, strains the capabilities of an already fragile system. County Judge Jon Lindsay asks that all public funding being channeled through the Greater Houston AIDS Alliance (GHAA) be moved under the jurisdiction of the Harris County Health Department. There is an investigation of GHAA and a significant

amount of money is returned to the Federal government. The resulting controversy over mismanagement and secrecy causes a redirection of Federal and State funding streams. The largest federal grant (Ryan White Title I) returns to Harris County. Remaining federal (Ryan White Title II) and state funds move to the newly formed Houston Regional HIV/AIDS Resource Group. Both agencies administer these funds to this day.

Brian Bradley, one of many outspoken activists, dresses as the Grim Reaper and disrupts County Judge Jon Lindsay and Commissioners Court because the Judge is disbanding GHAA. Protesting the efforts of Sue Cooper, the executive director of the GHAA, and later the Manager of the HIV Services Division at Harris County Health Department, Brian dons Sue Cooper drag and greets guests attending a breakfast hosted by Ms. Cooper. After identifying himself in a newspaper article as both a person with HIV and also as a nurse at M.D. Anderson Hospital, hospital administrators remove him from his position as a scrub nurse and assign him to a job as a clerk in the shipping department. Brian sues M.D. Anderson Hospital and takes the case all the way to the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. In the process, Brian appears on Good Morning America, Oprah, Rolanda and Night Line.

1991 – 1995

1991 – Derek Humphrey's *Final Exit: The Practicalities of Self-Deliverance and Assisted Suicide for the Dying* becomes a continuing bestseller in Montrose-area bookstores.

1992 – AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power (ACTUP) chapters throughout the country send members to join Houston ACT UP and Queer Nation activists for a demonstration at the Houston Astrodome where the Republican National Convention is being held.

1993 – A common source of AIDS-related medical information is *This Week in Texas* (TWIT), a local magazine for gay men.

1994 – Project LEAP (Learning, Empowerment, Advocacy and Participation) is established by the Houston Ryan White

Planning Council to teach people living with HIV/AIDS how to have a voice in planning HIV/AIDS services by serving on a planning body, such as the Houston Ryan White Planning Council or the Community Prevention Group (CPG). Project LEAP is still being offered today.

L. Joel Martinez, a local immigration attorney, Michael Peranteau, a member of the local arts community and Chris Kerr, a former Catholic priest from the Kolbe Project, founded the Center for AIDS to empower people living with HIV to make informed decisions about their healthcare by providing the latest research and treatment information and by advocating for accessible, affordable, and effective treatment options.

1995 – The death toll from AIDS spikes.

1996 – 2000

According to the Houston HIV Resource Guide, more commonly known as "The Blue Book", over 450 organizations are listed as providing services to people living with HIV.

1996 – Retroviral drug regimens are introduced and HIV/AIDS begins to be described as a chronic, treatable illness. Drugs become available to interrupt the HIV reproduction cycle at two entirely different points. The death rate from AIDS finally begins to decline.

Viral load tests are introduced measuring how fast the virus is destroying CD4 cells and approves to be a much better indicator of drug effectiveness than the standard test that measures the patient's CD4 cell count.

When Texas moves to name-based HIV diagnosis reporting, in addition to AIDS reporting, the realization that HIV is now disproportionately affecting the African-American community becomes very clear. Activists at the Federal level began working to ensure that more HIV/AIDS money is specifically targeted to minorities. The US Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) creates the Minority AIDS Initiative, set-aside HIV/AIDS prevention and care dollars speci-

fically to underwrite the cost of services for African-Americans, Hispanics and other hard hit minorities

Between 1996 and 2000, Houston receives \$77,193,111 in Ryan White Title I (now Part A) and Minority AIDS Initiative funding.

People with HIV/AIDS start to live longer and have improved health outcomes. Harris County Hospital District continues to receive the largest share of Ryan White Title I funds, since medical care is a top priority and since the Hospital District traditionally serves the largest number of clients. Programs designed to serve minorities, women and teens are initiated. In an effort to serve underserved minorities, Ryan White funds help community-based primary care clinics, like the Montrose Clinic, stabilize and expand. New organizations are established, like Houston Area Community Services (HACS) and St. Hope Foundation, to provide HIV medical care to Hispanics and African Americans. The emphasis from the Federal government is now on medical outcomes determined by the results of viral load tests. Services change in respect to how they can measure that important aspect of clients' lives.

1996 – 2000 ...continued

On World AIDS Day, December 1, 1999, County Judge Robert Eckels declares an HIV/AIDS state of emergency in the African-

American community. Several days later, Mayor Lee Brown makes a similar declaration.

2001 – 2005

2003 – In *Lawrence vs. Texas*, the Supreme Court overturns the Texas sodomy laws.

2005 - Montrose Clinic helps over 600 Katrina evacuees with medical care and life-saving medications that were lost in the Hurricane Ike's devastation. Approximately one-third of the evacuees are HIV positive.

2006 - The Houston Area is awarded the Expanded Testing Initiative (ETI) and establishes routine, opt-out HIV screening in hospitals and community health centers throughout Harris County. In the following 3 years, the project screens 134,426 individuals, identifies 687 newly diagnosed positive individuals and reconnects with 1,527 previously diagnosed individuals, of whom 382 have fallen out of care.

Between 2001 and 2005, Houston receives \$98,968,616 in Ryan White Part A and Minority AIDS Initiative funding.

The "Blue Book" lists 315 organizations that provide services for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Because of long-term, stable funding, numerous community-based organizations are now able to outreach into historically underserved/unserved communities and bring people into services while they are still in the earlier stages of the disease. Early intervention is critical. The use of HAART (Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Treatment) prescribed at the appropriate time slows or even halts the progression of the disease in many people, enhancing the quality and duration of life in most cases.

2006 – 2015

Between 2006 and 2014, Houston receives \$180,829,579 in Ryan White Part A and Minority AIDS Initiative funding.

2008 – Swiss HIV experts conclude that an HIV-infected person on antiretroviral therapy with a suppressed viral load is not sexually infectious and cannot transmit HIV through sexual contact. The new mantra becomes "treatment is prevention".

2010 - The release of the first-ever National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the U.S., the United Nations' new framework for attaining "zero new HIV infections," and the 30th anniversary of those first known cases of HIV/AIDS.

2010 - As a result of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, the Houston Area is selected for ECHPP, the Enhanced Comprehensive HIV Prevention Planning project to enhance HIV prevention efforts in the most HIV/AIDS impacted cities. A year later, the Houston EMA embarks on HRSA's EIIHA initiative, the Early Identification of Individuals with

HIV/AIDS, which seeks to improve linkage to medical care for the newly-diagnosed.

On March 23, 2010 President Obama signs into law federal health reform legislation known as the Affordable Care Act. The purpose is to assure that all Americans have access to affordable health insurance and that eligibility is based upon income as opposed to health status. This creates questions about the need to continue the Ryan White Program.

April 8, 2015 is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Ryan White, the young hemophiliac boy for whom the Ryan White Program was named. Had he lived, he would have been 44 years old.

In Houston, there have been approximately 22,000 deaths related to HIV since 1981. Over two thirds of the deaths occurred before the end of 1996, the year when the first highly active anti-retroviral therapy (HAART) medications became available in Houston.

Today

Over 24,000 men, women and children are living with HIV/AIDS in Harris and the five surrounding counties. Over 11,000 of these individuals receive care and support from Ryan White funded organizations. According

to the Houston HIV/AIDS Resource Directory, over 180 organizations in the Houston area have services for people living with HIV and their loved ones.

Tomorrow

At the end of 2013, nearly 50% of people living with HIV/AIDS in the Houston area were 45 years old and up. As HIV treatment is allowing more people living with HIV/AIDS

to achieve typical lifespans, it is anticipated that seniors will soon make up the greatest proportion of all HIV/AIDS cases in the Houston area.

**This service or organization is sited as being the first of its kind in the United States.*

Credit on all documents: This information was prepared by the Houston Ryan White Planning Council Office of Support staff with significant input from Ken Malone, Brandon Wolf and OutSmart Magazine.