

MCAVHN

Providing service and comfort to people affected by HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C

MENDOCINO COUNTY AIDS / VIRAL HEPATITIS NETWORK

SPRING 2013

Fernando Shares His Journey at Event of the Heart

My name is Fernando Velázquez. I am a client of MCAVHN. It gives me great joy to see all of you here tonight. I remember seeing so many of you six years ago at my first Event of the Heart. Seeing all of you tonight shows me how truly dedicated you are to the goodness of our community. Your support and dedication to MCAVHN's cause has yielded more success stories than you will ever know.

My own personal journey begins exactly the same as many others', with the same tragic ending. That tragic ending is where my new life began.

Seven years ago I woke up with the diagnosis of AIDS. I was given six months to live and had a T cell count of 47. I needed to change my life completely and by the grace of God I found my way to Ukiah where my recovery from methamphetamine addiction began.

I was receiving mail and calling the Buddy Eller Center home, shuffling each day south from the shelter on the only true expressway in Ukiah- the railroad tracks-to Plowshares for lunch, laundry and haircuts.

One day Chris and Jennette from the shelter told me about MCAVHN. They said the only requirements were that you had to have HIV or Hep C and the desire to change your life. Having all the requirements to this exclusive club, I crawled through the front door.

Dr. Libby Guthrie, John Weber, Bradley, Cyril and many volunteers stood there waiting for me with open arms, open hearts and open minds. I was hugged. I was loved and promised that everything was going to be alright.

John Weber, as my case manager, started my extensive case file. With his infinite wisdom and true compassion for others, he held my hand throughout this entire process.

MCAVHN introduced me to the Mendocino Community Health Clinic, where I was accepted with the same love and kindness. Dr. Goldyn, Scott Claypool and Sam Fernandez, along with Dr. Lewis, dedicated their time not



Left to right: Steve Cook, Libby Guthrie, John Weber and Fernando Velázquez

only for my recovery from methamphetamine, but for my physical and mental health as well. I always felt that I was the most important patient of their day during each and every appointment I had with them.

John Weber assisted me with a HUD voucher for housing. Along with all this and Libby's guidance, my self-esteem, self-respect and dignity began to grow.

Through this entire painful process my life began to change into the positive, caring and loving world that I enjoy today. Tonight I'm celebrating five years free from my drug addiction. I was able to return the housing voucher for the next addict who wants to change their life. I enjoy a beautiful job at the Club Calpella. Steve, my partner of seven years, and I are now purchasing our own home.

My health is nothing short of a miracle with a T cell count of 1147 and my HIV status undetectable. I am grateful beyond words to MCAVHN for what they provide for other human beings. The meaning of this evening is much larger than my story. And please remember to keep loving, keep sharing and keep giving for it will come back to you tenfold. Thank you very much!

A Note from the Executive Director, Libby Guthrie

We've been very busy with a variety of programs here at MCAVHN. We continue to *serve all persons with HIV in Mendocino County*, as well as those who are seeking care and/or treatment for *hepatitis C*. MCAVHN continues to provide prevention services through our syringe exchange program; delivering *harm reduction counseling and prevention materials* for clients in our office and throughout the county (with the help of volunteer outreach efforts).

We continue to deliver *housing services*, administering HOPWA for HIV clients and other housing case management programs for other clients. We also continue with one of our newer programs, *CUSOC (Chronic users System of Care)* assisting those in our community who are challenged by mental illness and substance use issues, especially those who have fallen out-of-care and over-utilize the emergency department at the hospitals and the jail.

We are subcontracting with Health and Human Services to deliver *prevention and hepatitis C testing* to those who would not otherwise access this vital service.

Another recent project is a pilot collaborative with Mendocino County Superior Court, County Mental Health and the collaborative partners involved in *CUSOC (UVMC, MCHC, FSP and the Sheriff's Department, as well as Manzanita)* to deliver intensive case management services to those referred by Judge Moorman and the Public Defender's Office to *address recidi-*

vist misdemeanor criminal activity that is directly related to serious mental health diagnoses.

MCAVHN continues to be funded by a variety of state and private foundation resources. In this current federal fiscal climate, resources from larger government entities have been earmarked for major metropolitan areas nationally, and especially here in California. *Rural areas are significantly challenged by this trend, as government spending focuses financial resources on the "epi-centers" across our country.* MCAVHN relies heavily on private fundraising efforts, our Event of the Heart, and grants from private entities.

MCAVHN will be hosting a number of events and smaller fundraisers throughout this coming year.

We are seeking sponsors and/or donors for our upcoming annual participation on May 4th in the "Human Race" - as well as *donations for our annual rummage sale* - to be held in the early summer. To sponsors one of our team members, call our office at 462-1932 or go to the Mendocino County Human Race website and make your donation electronically. We want to thank all past and potential donors who have made it possible to continue our mission here throughout the past 26 years. The staff, the board and especially the clients we serve, thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

If you missed the Event of the Heart but would still like to contribute to MCAVHN, it would be greatly appreciated. For more information, please call 707-462-1932. Or visit MCAVHN.org to donate using PAYPAL.



Special Thanks
to
Our Newsletter Sponsor
Ukiah Valley Medical Center

Watch for our
Upcoming
Bingo Drag Show Dance



Thanks from the Heart to Our Many Supporters

This year's Event of the Heart set a new fundraising record through ticket sales, sponsorships and generous donations to the live and silent auctions.

Supporters of this year's event enjoyed music from Majide! Machiko and Paul during the "Champagne" reception featuring Weibel Family Vineyards sparkling wine, hors d'oeuvres and a delicious meal provided by Ellery Clark paired with Jaxon Keys wine, and music by local band the Funky Dozen. The decorations for the event, provided by Wil Gonzalez from Rain Forest Fantasy, contributed to the ambiance of elegance.

The evening was made possible by generous donations from the following sponsors: Ukiah Valley Medical Center, Mariposa Market, Savings Bank of Mendocino County, Coyote Valley Casino, K-Wine and MAX radio, Cyril Colonius, Dan Schott and a generous Anonymous donation.

Other sponsors include Haines Financial Management, Hawkes Construction, Banners and Signs, Doug Lewis, Eagle Distributing, James Armstrong and Jim Creelan. The list of sponsors also include State Farm agent John Lattimore, Jonathan Middlebrook, Larry Jensen, DDS; Larry White, Mary Lou Leonard, and Mason & Morrison Attorneys.

Events like this could not be possible without the incredible show of community support. Other community members involved include Mendocino Engineering, Mountanos Family Foundation, Mendocino Inland Ceramic Artists, Redwood Health Club, SASSI (Systems and Software Support, Inc.), Patricia Harnett, Allyne Brown, KG Talbot and Starbucks. A special thank you goes to Tom Allman for his year round support of MCAVHN.

Check out other photos from our festive event at facebook.com/MCAVHN

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If you would like to receive
future correspondence via email please
contact us at mcauhn@yahoo.com or
call 462-1932 and ask for Judy.

CHECK OUT OUR REDESIGNED WEBSITE



www.mcauhn.org

It's Human Race Time Again



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MCAVHN's Mission:

To care for people affected by AIDS and HEPC and to prevent the spread of these diseases in our County.