



Funder Spotlight: AIDS Walk San Francisco

MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2017

*The AIDS Walk San Francisco Foundation (AWSFF) has chosen Positive Resource Center as one of their lead beneficiaries. AWSFF will distribute up to \$80,000 to PRC, which will be raised by AIDS Walk participants. In addition, AIDS Walk participants will raise funds to benefit other vital HIV/AIDS service providers throughout the Bay Area. **Questions in bold** were asked by Positive Resource Center to AWSFF, their answers follow each question.'*

1. **Positive Resource Center:** AIDS Walk has a longstanding history in many cities, particularly San Francisco. For how many years has it been going on? And, how do you try to keep traditions alive while keeping things fresh and exciting?

The AIDS Walk San Francisco Foundation: AIDS Walk San Francisco began in 1987, making this year the 31st. Traditions and change both come pretty naturally for us and the participants. A lot of people participate because they lost friends and family members, and the Walk is one of the ways that they honor their loved ones on an annual basis. We believe people find a lot of comfort in the many AIDS Walk traditions that exist – the AIDS Memorial Quilt on Hippie Hill, meeting up with their team members that they've walked with for years in Sharon Meadow, and, of course, setting off on the route with thousands of other determined people while taking in the beauty of Golden Gate Park.

At the same time, we are always looking to keep things fresh at the Walk. This year, we are looking forward to unveiling a new campaign and a fresh look that is distinctly Bay

Area. In fact that's what it's made of. When you see the design, you will know exactly what we mean by that.

2. What, in particular, do you have planned for this year's event that might be new or different from years past?

The biggest change this year is that we intend to directly confront the new administration's actions to dismantle, stifle, and roll back lifesaving progress in the fight against AIDS.



Our new creative design will reflect this, and we are also taking an edgier approach to our core message. In the face of the gravest threats to people living with HIV/AIDS since the Reagan era, we're pushing back hard to say "Not in the Bay Area. Not on our watch," and "Respond, Resist, and Register for AIDS Walk." This is a community of caring people with an extraordinary history of activism. We are not going to sit idly by as the health and well-being of women, immigrants, people with chronic diseases, and so many others are threatened, healthcare is rolled back, and safety nets are slashed.

We're resisting through our actions – gathering together to be loud and visible, and raising funds to support the people who stand to suffer the most under this administration.

3. This year, you have chosen Positive Resource Center to be a Lead Beneficiary along with Project Open Hand and Ward 86. How do you set about figuring out which worthy agencies to pick?

These are very hard decisions to make. The AIDS Walk San Francisco Foundation Board of Directors selects the lead beneficiaries each year, and they put a great deal of effort into the process.

The Board Members are all very connected to the local HIV community and the organizations that serve it. After careful consideration, they seek to distribute funds where the money will address the greatest unmet needs for people living with, and at risk for, HIV/AIDS in the Bay Area. Positive Resource Center's effectiveness in helping clients access government benefits, stable housing, and emergency assistance falls right in line with what is needed today, as we face the uncertain future of healthcare and cuts to other social services.

Project Open Hand is fighting HIV by providing people affected with nutritious meals, and Ward 86's Golden Compass Program is offering comprehensive medical care to low income people over 50 who are living with HIV, which is a huge part of the HIV positive population in the Bay Area. Additionally, through grants and team participation, dozens of other HIV/AIDS organizations in the Bay Area will receive funds that help sustain their services.

4. What is your fundraising goal for this year? And, how do you hope to get there?

We always aim to surpass the total from the previous year. We would be very happy to come in at a similar level as we did in 2016, at around \$2 million or more, and early fundraising is looking strong.

The most important and challenging effort is that of galvanizing the community to raise funds and recruit their friends and family to join them. While we certainly make use of all the modern outreach tools available, our essential methods would be familiar to grassroots organizers in any decade: fostering relationships, providing participants with the resources that they need to fundraise, and reaching out with compelling messages that speak to what their hard-earned fundraising efforts are doing to help people. Then, of course, we strive to make sure their work culminates in a meaningful and memorable experience at the event itself.

5. How can community members get involved and make a difference?

Register at sf.aidswalk.net! PRC's team is already up and running, so folks can join the team when they sign up on the website. Invite five close friends and family member to join in the Walk. Send a round of emails to a larger network of friends, family, and co-workers to ask that they support your efforts. We'll also have volunteer opportunities in the coming months, and plenty of opportunities at the event itself. Give us a call at 415.615.9255 (WALK) and we'll help answer any questions you have.

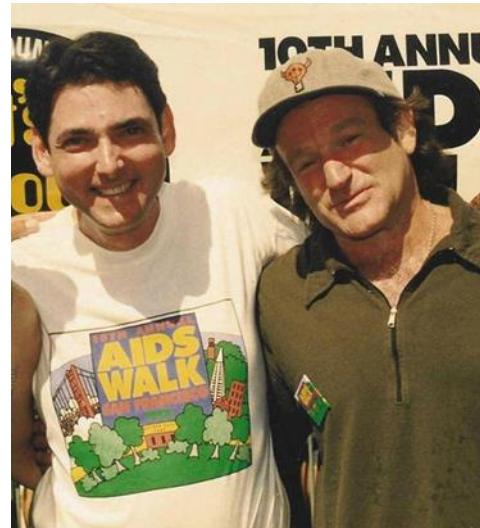
6. AIDS LifeCycle has been such a tremendous success, but it only benefits two agencies. How do you compare and contrast the AIDS Walk against that event?

Certainly both have achieved great success in AIDS fundraising and have each become beloved traditions in the community. Ultimately, they are two very different events, both in service of important work to fight HIV/AIDS. AIDS Walk San Francisco is the grassroots AIDS fundraising event accessible to everyone – there's no minimum fundraising requirement, and just about anybody can complete our 10K route.

Alternatively, the LifeCycle is an endurance event with a smaller core group of participants for the multi-day ride, with a required fundraising minimum. The LifeCylce benefits, as you note, two very worthy organizations, while AIDS Walk San Francisco funds benefit a broad array of local groups. This has long been an important part of the AIDS Walk San Francisco mission.

7. We remember meeting Gillian Anderson (Dana Scully from X-Files) at an AIDS Walk in the 90s. It was a big fan-geek moment for us. What recent celebrity appearances have stood out? And, do you have any celebrity appearances planned that you can share with us?

A few stand out over the years – Robin Williams came in the mid-90s during the height of the epidemic. Cheyenne Jackson (30 Rock) was phenomenal when he hosted a few years back. Last year, Carson Kressley (RuPaul's Drag Race and Dancing with the Stars) appeared, and we have been happy to have AIDS Walk San Francisco stalwart Dan Ashley of ABC7 with us for many years now. It is still a bit early in the campaign for us to know who's coming this year, but keep an eye out on our website as the event approaches – we always get the word out ahead of time about our special guest!



Craig R. Miller, AIDS Walk Founder/Senior Organizer

& Robin Williams in 1996

8. If there's just one thing that you'd like to make sure you let the community, what is that?

In today's climate, one of the most effective ways that people can support those who are most threatened here in the Bay Area is by participating in and raising funds for AIDS Walk San Francisco.

The massive AIDS Walk crowd that assembles each year in Golden Gate Park is also a **powerful form of advocacy**, making our collective voice strong and united. In short, it's the Bay Area's largest rally to defend public health and support people living with HIV/AIDS.