

# THE FRONTLINE

SPRING 2012

## State-of-the-Art Learning

### PRC Computer Training Lab receives vital upgrades

**T**hanks to a very generous \$50,000 grant from AT&T, PRC has updated the hardware and software in our computer training lab, making a state-of-the-art learning environment that opened for client services on April 4, 2012.

“Access to skill-building and job opportunities is essential for those who are disabled, particularly in a difficult economy, which is why I was thrilled to hear about the AT&T technology contribution to upgrade Positive Resource Center’s Computer Training Lab,” said San Francisco Supervisor Scott Weiner.

The upgrades include brand new computer stations, a classroom projector, and software and server upgrades. Perhaps one of the most innovative additions to the lab was the adaptive technology for students with physical disabilities, including ZoomText for the visually impaired and Nuance Speak & See, allowing students to use speech recognition and text-to-speech technology.

“AT&T is honored to support organizations that are working hard to improve lives and strengthen Bay Area communities each and every day,” said Ken McNeely, President of AT&T California. “That is why we are proud to support Positive Resource Center.”



(LtoR) AT&T’s Julian Chang, AT&T’s Vice President External Affairs Marc Blakeman, Supervisor Scott Wiener, State Senator Mark Leno’s District Representative Anna Damiani, PRC’s Executive Director Brett Andrews

## Taking the NextStep: a Program for Success

**F**or most of us, life without computers is simply unfathomable. Work, socializing, traveling and even choosing what to do with free time is increasingly done with the aid of electronic devices. But for some clients of Positive Resource Center’s Employment Services program, life *with* computers had seemed unimaginable until recently.

For clients like John, all of that changed after participating in PRC’s NextStep program, a six-week, intensive computer training course designed to give clients foundational computer skills to translate to the working world. “I hadn’t been in the workforce for over 10 years and my computer skills were rusty at best, but I needed computer skills for a job,” he says. “PRC gave me the computer skills I needed to move ahead.”

Three days per week, clients in the NextStep program come to the Computer Training Lab to learn the ropes of Windows operating systems, Internet Explorer and Microsoft Office software suite.

Throughout 54 hours of classroom instruction, participants gain highly marketable—and essential—technical skills. Additionally, the class instills the motivation and the confidence to apply them. For most, NextStep is their first experience with computers.

Clark, another client originally at PRC for benefits counseling, found that just being around computers and the employment services prepped him for the day he was ready to return to work.

Continued on page 5

## Note from the Executive Director



**Twenty-five** isn't so young in nonprofit years; it's a highly respectable and seasoned number. This year, Positive Resource Center (PRC)

celebrates a quarter century of serving our community—helping tens of thousands of people disabled by HIV/AIDS or mental health issues to secure disability benefits and employment opportunities.

AIDS has affected the world for over three decades, and the road towards political acknowledgment and reduced social stigma has been long and difficult. But it has also been one of remarkable scientific advances, strengthened support systems and dogged determination with PRC on the leading-edge of client-centered service delivery to ensure people can afford life-sustaining income and healthcare coverage.

Beyond the inspiring and incredible successes of PRC's many clients, our work has a far-reaching impact on programs across the nation through our trainings and technical assistance to medical and social services providers.

In this anniversary year, we take the time to look at our modest beginnings and plan a future in which we continue to respond to the changing needs of our community. It is clear by the thousands of people who turn to PRC year after year that we are still needed every day, and with your generous support, we will continue to respond for as long as we are needed.

**Brett Andrews**  
Executive Director

## We Welcome...

PRC is excited to welcome new Staff Attorneys **Selina Khuu**, **Ron Kurlaender**, Legal Assistant **Ali Nixon**, Front Office Coordinator **Michael Rubio**, Employment Specialist **Dee Yavor**, and Board Members **Robert Mason, Esq.**, **Alex Khoo** and **Marko Satarain**.

# From Disability to Retirement: Addressing the Needs of People Over Fifty with HIV

**A**ging is an inevitable part of life. For those living with HIV/AIDS, it is something many thought they would never experience. Incredible medical advances and increased treatment education efforts have enabled many people living with HIV/AIDS to reach their older years.

It is estimated that by 2015, over half of all people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States will be over the age of fifty. In San Francisco, a 2008 Department of Public Health study showed that 47% of people living with AIDS diagnoses were 50 years of age or older, and 40% were between 40 and 49, a population which will likely be aging into their 50's in the coming decade.

Reaching this age with HIV/AIDS comes with an extra set of challenges. Usual health issues most of us face as a consequence of living with an aging body such as arthritis, heart disease are often complicated and accelerated by HIV.

To complicate matters further many individuals were diagnosed in their youth during the first and second waves of the epidemic in the 1980's and 1990's, when imagining being alive for retirement was inconceivable. Thinking their lives were imminently ending, a large number of people living with HIV survived on Long Term Disability, Social Security Disability, and liquidated assets including retirement accounts, leaving them with no savings and no financial plan for this eventuality.



PRC Managing Legal Director Andy Chu

Now, facing an advanced age with reduced income and a lack of services designed to address their specific needs coupled with trying to navigate the labyrinthine system of disability and retirement benefits, people living with HIV/AIDS over 50 urgently need help to ensure that they are able to seamlessly transition from disability to retirement.

Positive Resource Center has been the expert in providing access to public disability benefits for 25 years and is now leading the way to address the

needs of this population with an innovative training program aimed at educating medical and vocational providers on emerging issues for people living with HIV/AIDS who are over 50.

Funded by San Francisco Department of Public Health, Ryan White Care Act, and in collaboration with SF AIDS Foundation, the AIDS Legal Referral Panel, California Health Advocates and Project Inform, PRC launched its comprehensive medical benefits training program earlier this year. This groundbreaking effort will pave the way for medical providers across the state and nationwide to gain access to the most up-to-date policy research and develop relevant services for this generation of HIV survivors.

Continued on page 4

# Positively Fantastic!

## Windows of Opportunity 2011



▲ Elizabeth Khachigian, Board President Kent Roger, Diane Webb, and Jim Ryan celebrate Positive Resource Center's 24 years of service.



▲ Long-time supporters Joe Pessa, Lenny Broburg, and Deana Dawn share a moment with PRC Advisory Board member Gary Virginia.



▲ Executive Director Brett Andrews (R) presents PRC's Keystone Award to former board member Diane Easterwood and Randy Wittorp for Kaiser Permanente's unwavering support and inspired leadership.



▲ Supporters Michelle Park Chiu, Sacha Steenhoek, Tom Peterson, and Joan Haratani enjoy the evening.



▲ Kenyon DeVault, Sean Livingston, and Tom Tarn added to the glamour of the evening.

## Bare Chest Calendar Dinner Date Auction 2011

## Grand Opening of the AT&T Computer Training Lab



▲ AT&T's Julian Chang poses with Executive Director Brett Andrews at the Grand Opening of the AT&T Computer Training Lab.



▲ California Department of Rehabilitation's District Administrator Darlene Rutkowski, PRC's Managing Director, Employment Services Joe Ramirez-Forcier, and PRC's Board President Kent Roger celebrate the Grand Opening of the AT&T Computer Training Lab.



▲ The perennially stunning Donna Sachet surrounded by the big-hearted 2012 Bare Chest Calendar men who raised \$151,678 for Positive Resource Center and AIDS Emergency Fund. (Photo by Bill Weaver)

# From Disability to Retirement

Continued from page 2

“The goal of the training for PRC and its partners was to educate providers on issues confronting people living with AIDS who are over 50,” says PRC Executive Director Brett Andrews. “This is particularly important as healthcare reform rolls out and we all prepare for 2014.”

Topics of the training include Social Security regulations applicable to people who are over 50, Working While Disabled MediCal program, Private Long Term Disability Benefits (LTD), Office of AIDS programs such as OA-HIPP and OA-PCIP, and Healthcare Reform.

“Many clients in this population are especially concerned about Long Term Disability (LTD) issues. When a person reaches 65, his or her LTD payments will most likely end because he or she is considered “retired” rather than “disabled.” Such individuals often experience a significant drop in income because they only have their Social Security retirement to rely on,” says PRC Managing Legal Director Andy Chu. “Others are concerned about staying on their disability, making sure that Social Security or the private LTD company does not cut them off of benefits.”

““ The goal of the training for PRC and its partners was to educate providers on issues confronting people living with AIDS who are over 50...This is particularly important as healthcare reform rolls out and we all prepare for 2014. ””

The Working While Disabled MediCal program was another hot topic. The rules of the program are confusing to many, even for Positive Resource Center client Mark, who has been HIV positive for over two decades and has ample experience in dealing with HIV services and government bureaucracies.

In the 1980's, he went to law school to become an attorney as the AIDS epidemic was ravaging his community. As he describes it, “I dug the trenches and I buried most of my friends there.” He used his talents, fiercely advocating for others with HIV as a volunteer with a number of local agencies.

For the last few years, Mark has relied on the Working While Disabled MediCal program for his medical insurance, but he did not know whether he would still be eligible for such a program after he reached 65. He was confused as to whether he would still be considered “disabled,” since he has reached the age of retirement, an issue similar to that faced by LTD policyholders. He also wanted to start his own small online business, but was afraid that self employment would not be considered “employment” under the Working While Disabled MediCal program.

Staff at PRC was able to find the answers for him; indeed, people are allowed to be on the Working While Disabled MediCal program even at retirement age, and self employment is considered employment for the program.

As a generation of people living with HIV grows old enough to enter their retirement years, PRC is also maturing. This year, PRC turns 25—but, we are not retiring. As we have for the last twenty-five years, we will respond to the changing tides that affect the communities we serve. ●

## POSITIVE RESOURCE CENTER

The mission of Positive Resource Center is to assist people affected by or at risk for HIV/AIDS through culturally appropriate counseling, education, training, and advocacy. As a result, our clients can make more informed choices that maximize available benefits and employment opportunities.

### STAFF

**Fernando Aguayo-García**, Senior Bilingual Benefits Advocate/Quality Assurance Manager

**Brett Andrews**, Executive Director

**Matthew Bandiera**, Finance Manager

**Melissa Cardoza, Esq.**, Supervising Attorney

**Andy Chu, Esq.**, Managing Legal Director, Benefits Counseling Program

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**Taylor Hoang, Esq.**, Staff Attorney

**Leigh Illion**, Managing Director of Development

**Alisa Jackson**, Senior Legal Assistant

**Selina Khoo, Esq.**, Staff Attorney

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**Joe Ramirez-Forcier**, Managing Director, Employment Services Program

**Dennis Reilly**, Employment Specialist

**Pat Riley**, Deputy Director

**Michael Rubio**, Front Office Coordinator

**Tracilyn Tasch, Esq.**, Staff Attorney, Registered Legal Services Attorney

**Chuan Teng, Esq.**, Staff Attorney

**Vaughn Villaverde**, Senior Legal Assistant/Training Coordinator

**Jim Wegman**, Information Technology Manager

**Brian Whitford**, Computer Training Coordinator

**Jolene Wong, Esq.**, Supervising Attorney

**Dee Yavor**, Employment Specialist

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## NextStep program

Continued from front page

“I wasn’t quite able, right at first, to start working again,” he says. “But if you come in here to get other services, or use the computer, the motivation starts rubbing off on you, whether that be to return to school or work.”

Over the past 15 years, the demand for employment services for people living with HIV/AIDS or mental health issues has steadily increased, and the results have been outstanding.

Clients completing NextStep have entered the job market significantly better equipped at securing stable employment, and many credit PRC’s supportive, pragmatic approach to skill building.

Even multimedia professionals who are fluent in every medium can relate to the frustration that comes with learning new technology, and most can agree that building a solid foundation with a skilled teacher is the critical factor.

Brian Whitford, NextStep’s training coordinator, is known for his ability to translate complicated information into manageable bites for computer novices.

For clients whose lives and prior occupations never involved computers, Whitford strives to make adapting to the new technology approachable.

“They (clients) say to me, ‘I’ve avoided working with computers my whole life and now I can’t escape it,’” says Whitford. “My job is to make that easy.”

Since every participant has a different background, individualized instruction is a hallmark of NextStep and PRC, and the reason for the program’s success. Likening the computer lab to the “Little Schoolhouse on the Prairie,” Whitford explained how having multiple skill levels in one room was beneficial to everyone.



PRC Computer Training Coordinator Bryan Whitford

“Even those with advanced skill sets benefit from classroom instruction,” he says. “Most people never got a computers 101 class, so NextStep helps them fill in the gaps.”

Along with gaining essential computer skills, the supportive network formed by the group is an important component of the NextStep experience. Clients coming to PRC are under considerable stress from their disabilities and everything that goes along with job searching.

“That little bit of help—providing the absolute basics for reorienting oneself—saved my life,” says John. “Next Step offers a great crash course and it got me into the swing of things.”

John and Clark were so inspired by the skills and support they received at PRC, that they both entered the nonprofit world to help others.

“My experience at PRC showed me that I was always interested in being a caregiver,” says Clark.

Providing this priceless service to clients has significant returns. It has proven to enhance the quality of life for so many people in a multifaceted way—increasing financial security while contributing to drug treatment adherence, and helping to rebuild dignity and self-worth. ●

## Ways to Give

Please help disabled people access financial resources and healthcare.

There are many ways to support PRC. However you decide to help, please consider making a tax deductible gift today.

- \* **Donate by check or credit card using the donation envelope provided.**
- \* **Make a secure online donation at [www.positiveresource.org/donate.asp](http://www.positiveresource.org/donate.asp).**
- \* **Increase your gift’s impact with employer matching gifts. Ask your employer how.**
- \* **Attend fundraising events.**
- \* **Leave a legacy by naming PRC in your will or trust. Speak with your financial advisor.**
- \* **Donate used items at Community Thrift Store.**

Visit [www.positiveresource.org/support.asp](http://www.positiveresource.org/support.asp) for more easy ways to show your support.

Contact PRC’s Development Department for more information at 415.777.0333 [development@positiveresource.org](mailto:development@positiveresource.org).

## James C. Hormel & Michael P. Nguyen 25th Anniversary Challenge

Good friend to our community and long-time supporter Ambassador James C. Hormel and his partner Michael P. Nguyen have issued a \$25,000 challenge. Mr. Hormel and Mr. Nguyen will match dollar-for-dollar every new gift over \$100. They will also match gifts from existing donors who increase by \$100 or more—up to \$25,000!

**Please consider a gift of \$100 or more.**

PRC is 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation. Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law. Our tax identification number is 94-3078431.

**POSITIVE**  
**RESOURCE**  
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place  
stamp  
here

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www.facebook.com/positiveresource

**Positive Resource Center**  
is a grateful beneficiary of  
these community events:

- Pride Brunch** Saturday, June 23
- AIDS Walk** Sunday, July 15
- Up Your Alley Fair** Sunday, July 29
- Help Is On the Way** Sunday, August 5
- Folsom Street Fair** Sunday, September 23



To volunteer, contact  
Michael Rubio at 415-777-0333;  
michaelr@positiveresource.org

## *Save The Date*



### **Windows of Opportunity PRC's 25th Anniversary Celebration**

**Tuesday, October 23, 2012  
at RF80 from 6-9 PM**

**Join us to celebrate 25 years  
of service to our community**

Sponsorship opportunities available.

Contact Leigh Illion, Managing Director of Development  
at 415-972-0878; leighi@positiveresource.org