



apicha  
community health center

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## State Backs APICHA CHC'S Transformation and Growth

### VAP Award Funds Major Staff Increase

APICHA Community Health Center has some extraordinary news to share. On December 5, 2013, we received notification that we were awarded a Vital Access Program and Safety Net Provider (VAP) award totaling over six million dollars for our Service Access Enhancement Project. Put another way, we will receive nearly \$2,000,000 every year for the next three years to expand our healthcare services and provide health care to more of the low-income community of the Lower East Side and Chinatown neighborhoods of Manhattan.

Receiving the VAP award provides further financial stability and acts as an important catalyst to APICHA CHCs to continue its transformation from an HIV/AIDS coalition for A&PIs to a Federally Qualified Health Center-Look Alike (FQHC-LA) for all New Yorkers. The funds provided through VAP will go directly to adding staff who will help bring more of our culturally-competent health care services to more members of the low-income communities of the Lower Eastside and Chinatown, as well as our core target populations residing throughout New York City, including people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) individuals, Asians and Pacific Islanders (A&PI), Hispanics or

We provided direct services to 3,057 New Yorkers last year, more than we ever served in a single calendar year.

Latinos, immigrants and other people of color. By providing access to comprehensive primary health care to some of the city's most-vulnerable individuals, APICHA CHC believes it will help achieve New York State's aim of improving primary care to reduce emergency room visits.

#### What Is A Vital Access Provider (Vap)

The VAP program was established by the New York State Department of Health's Medicaid Redesign Team. In 2011, Governor Cuomo issued an Executive Order aimed at redesigning New York's Medicaid program. At that time, New York spent twice as much on Medicaid per capita than the national average. Later, the governor laid out his reform plan that included New York State's new healthcare Triple Aim, which was made up of the following elements:

- Improving Care-Improving the quality of care by focusing on safety, effec-

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## Meet Our New Doctor!

Dr. Ian Tang  
Joins APICHA  
CHC's Team



Photo credit: Nate Riggs

APICHA CHC and its patients already feel the positive impact of the VAP funds. As a result of the award we hired a new physician, Dr. Ian Tang. With Dr. Tang's help, APICHA CHC will meet its goal of serving 3,000 patients by 2016.

Coming from a background as an infectious disease specialist, APICHA CHC provides Dr. Tang with his first opportunity to practice primary care. He studied medicine in Hong Kong before coming to the United States to do his internal medicine residency. From there he completed a fellowship, specializing in infectious disease. After his training, he practiced HIV-specialty care at St. Clair's Hospital, St. Vincent's Catholic Medical Center, Joseph Addabbo Health Center, and St. Barnabus Hospital. Dr. Tang also conducted lab research at Rockefeller University and taught at New York Medical College.

Dr. Tang pointed out that his transition to practicing primary care, while maintaining an HIV-specialty care practice, mirrors APICHA CHC's overall evolution. APICHA's origin is in advocacy for Asians and Pacific Islanders with HIV to disaggregate them from the "other" cat-

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## We have PRIDE!

Throughout June, NYC celebrates LGBT Pride with parades and festivals in all 5 boroughs. This year APICHA CHC will be providing HIV screening, as well as Gonorrhea and Chlamydia testing at Queens Pride Festival and Brooklyn Pride. Come and support us from noon to 5pm at both these events.

Queens pride is celebrating 22 years as the largest LGBT event in Queens with a theme of openness, togetherness and acceptance. The parade and festival are in Jackson Heights, with the parade beginning at noon at 87th Street and

**We experienced a 17% increase of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Queer New Yorkers from all five boroughs receiving our culturally competent services.**



Photo Credit: Wikimedia

37th Avenue leading to the festival site at 75th Street. Brooklyn Pride is celebrating 18 years of pride with a week of events culminating with a community festival on Saturday, June 14th. The festival is located on 5th Avenue from 3rd to 9th Street.

In addition, our organization will march in NYC's annual Pride March on June 29th. If you are interested in marching with us, please contact Stephanie Chary, Project Connect Coordinator at 646.744.0990, or by email [schary@apicha.org](mailto:schary@apicha.org). =

## APICHA CHC's Supportive Services Help Keep New Yorkers Healthy

For many people with chronic diseases, staying on top of their care can be overwhelming; for limited-English speakers or people new to the United States' health care system, it can feel impossible. APICHA CHC understands this and has many programs in place to help ensure these individuals receive the care they need to stay healthy. Here, we highlight two programs that involve oversight and treatment from primary care providers, specialists, mental health providers, pharmacists, and may include housing and legal assistance.

Care Coordination. Our team of Care Coordinators and Patient Navigators

**Last year we experienced a 75% increase in HIV+ clients receiving case management and care coordination support services from 140 to 245 clients.**

ensure that HIV-positive patients are not lost in the complexities of accessing services from multiple sites, ensuring they continue to receive the array of services they need to stay healthy. This program was supported by grant number H89HA0015 from the HIV/AIDS Bureau, United States Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration. This grant is funded through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act of 2009, Minority AIDS Initiative for Part A Grantees, through the New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene to Public Health Solution. Our Care Coordination services are available to clients who receive primary care at APICHA CHC, Astor Medical Group, and Pride Medical.

Health Home. In response to mandates brought on by the Affordable Care Act in 2010, APICHA CHC began to restructure its case management to include Medi-

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APICHA CHC'S mission is to improve the health of our community and to increase access to comprehensive primary care, preventative health services, mental health and supportive services. We are committed to excellence and providing culturally competent services that enhance the quality of life.

APICHA CHC advocates for an provides a welcoming environment and underserved and vulnerable people, especially Asians and Pacific Islanders, the LGBT Community and individuals living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

*Special thanks to Fresh Concentrate LLC for the newsletter design and Rhina Torres for production coordination and for contributing articles for this issue of APICHA News.*

# Working for Sustainability

## The Journey Towards Becoming an FQHC Continues

APICHA CHC's senior staff works tirelessly to ensure APICHA continues to provide sustainable, quality health care services for the communities we serve. Aside from direct services, so much of the work involves advocacy. Highlights of recent advocacy activities include meetings with Health Resources and Services Administration officials. In January 2014, representatives from APICHA CHC were invited by HRSA to introduce APICHA, our service model, and how we transformed from an HIV/AIDS clinic to a Community Health Center to key staff of HRSA's Bureau of Primary Health Care, Jim Macrae, Associate Administrator, Dr. Seiji Hayashi, Chief Medical Officer, and other staff. As head of the Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC), Macrae manages a nearly \$3 billion budget that supports the health care safety net for many underserved people across the country. APICHA's team led by CEO Therese R. Rodriguez was composed of Chief

involved in making the necessary changes.

Similarly, members of APICHA CHC's senior staff were invited to meet with Dr. Laura Cheever and staff of HRSA's HIV/AIDS Bureau (HAB). Subsequent to the meeting, Dr. Cheever sent a letter to CEO Therese Rodriguez expressing great appreciation for the presentations we gave to her staff. The following is excerpted from a letter from Dr. Laura Cheever:

"...I want to thank you for coming to Rockville on January 31, 2014, to share with us the incredible journey that APICHA has made in its evolution to become a community health center. We were all very impressed with the presentation that you and your staff provided.

"We understand that in order for APICHA to continue to serve people living with HIV/AIDS, you had to transform your organization into a larger healthcare service provider. We have seen many agencies faced with similar decisions either ignore the pending re-

**"[APICHA CHC is] a poster child of HIV/AIDS organizations seeking to transform into a community health center."**

Medical Officer Robert Murayama, MD, MPH; Chief Operating Officer Yumiko Fukuda, LMSW; Chief Development Officer Gertrudes Pajaron; and Chief Financial Officer Jake Lee.

"You are a poster child of HIV/AIDS organizations seeking to transform into a community health center," remarked Mr. Macrae after the presentation about APICHA's evolution, its new model of care and data on patient health. We learned from this meeting that very few organizations like APICHA have successfully completed the transition, and senior staff found Macrae's remark uplifting in view of the strenuous work in-

alities of changing funding streams or give up their mission. APICHA has taken the bold steps to broaden its mission while retaining its roots in HIV and in serving Asian Pacific Islanders and people of color."

In 2010, APICHA identified that the primary path to its long-term stability is a designation as FQHC. This goal remains current and the agency is committed to competing for this designation when presented with a new opportunity.

The next big step toward achieving that goal is applying for HRSA's New Access Point (NAP) award when it is an-

One of our nurse practitioners, Susanne Ren-deiro, hard at work.



Photo credit: Nate Riggs

nounced later this year. Receiving a NAP award is a necessary step for APICHA CHC to receive its full FQHC designation. We have unsuccessfully applied for a NAP award in the past, but are hopeful 2014 is our year. A NAP grant would provide funding of up to \$650,000 per year to support care for poor and low-income patients.

Other benefits include eligibility for Federal Tort Claims Act medical malpractice insurance reduces the burden of high costs of malpractice insurance coverage. We would also become eligible for supplemental and capital funding from HRSA

APICHA is a vital healthcare resource for Manhattan's Chinatown and the Lower East Side neighborhoods and beyond. To our patients, we are their safe space and safety net – part of the quality of care they can expect of the APICHA brand. =

**About 73% of HIV+ patients receiving medical care in our clinic suppress their viral loads, thereby increasing their quality of life.**

## Building a Better, Stronger APICHA Community Health Center – Donate to Our Capital Campaign!

A celebration of our 24 years of service includes our success in transforming from an AIDS service organization to a community health center. For example, our medical care patients prefer our cultural and linguistic competency as 65% identify as gay, bisexual or lesbian and 75% represent communities of color. In the last four years, our HIV primary care clinic experienced a dramatic 273% increase in HIV patients and our Trans\* clinic increased dramatically from 9 clients in 2010 to 187 trans\* clients today. These achievements demonstrate our commitment to serving residents of the Lower Eastside and Chinatown neighborhoods of Manhattan, as well as our core target popula-

The amount of patients receiving medical care in our primary care increased by 52% with 1,143 patients.

tions throughout NYC of people living with HIV/AIDS, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender individuals, immigrants and communities of color. APICHA CHC is a safety net and safe space for these communities who are often marginalized from mainstream health care providers.

Our organization continues to grow to meet the health needs of our diverse communities. Every inch of our medical clinic at 400 Broadway is utilized. Currently, we are limited in serving more patients with our clinical space, which impacts opportunities for growth. Our need for more space is dire. Meeting the needs of our current patients and anticipated patient growth requires more exam rooms. There is a large amount of unused square footage, both in the space formerly occupied by the sub-tenant on the first floor of our building, as well as space in the basement. Unfortunately, we currently lack the appropriate funds for the construc-

tion of more exam rooms within the empty space.

Our goal is to build 18 medical exam rooms with multi-purpose rooms for mental health counseling, HIV testing and other support services. The project estimate is 3 million dollars. Therefore, we need your financial support now more than ever. We are eager to work with you, our friends, donors and supporters to meet our fundraising goals to expand our medical clinic. Your donation will contribute to making a significant impact on the health of our communities. More exams rooms mean more people will receive the health care services they need. Your donation will directly help increase the quality of life for people on the fringe of the health-care system that need us. Donate today to make us a better and stronger community health center by contacting Ding Pajaron, Chief Development Officer at (646)-884-5383. =

## Meet Our New Doctor! Dr. Ian Tang Joins APICHA CHC's Team

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egory of AIDS surveillance data collection and reporting. To adapt to the changing needs of the community and to the healthcare environment, APICHA moved into HIV/AIDS specialty care and has now providing primary care to everyone.

When asked about his similar transition, Dr. Tang explained, "I view practicing primary care as the next step in my career. Primary care allows me to treat an entire person, just not one part." Dr. Tang says he was drawn to APICHA CHC's unique ability to provide culturally-competent care to a variety of vulnerable communities, "APICHA is an essential portal to health care for many different people."

As with all of APICHA CHC's new employees, Dr. Tang's history and abilities reflect our goal of providing culturally

competent care to our patients. This is shown through Dr. Tang's heritage and personal history, as well as his language proficiency, "I speak English and Cantonese fluently. I can manage with Mandarin and Spanish. And, I guess I can speak tourist French, too [Laughs]."

As one of the first faces newcomers to APICHA CHC may meet, we asked Dr. Tang what a new patient can expect. He reports, "The environment is private, respectful, neat, clean, and on time. It runs like a really nice private office, but it's a non-profit! For their initial visit, it takes about 30 minutes to get a medical history and a brief physical and flu shot or any other quick vaccines. The second visit is a full physical. For HIV patients, the first interview is up to an hour because there's a lot of history to go through and labs to conduct—it's more complex than a standard physical." Asked about what he does in his free time, Dr. Tang told us, "I used to play

classical piano, but haven't done that in a while because my partner is a musician." He joked, "We can't be playing piano at the same time. Currently I've been painting; that's my hobby." When pressed about how serious about this hobby he is, Dr. Tang divulged, "I've been in shows! I donated a painting to The Twenty-Fourth Anniversary Benefit gala's silent auction!"

When asked what he enjoys about working at APICHA CHC Dr. Tang says, "I had almost no experience working with transgender patients prior to working here. Now I've met a lot of very nice transgender people. Some of the nicest people I've encountered and worked with! I think as a society we still have quite a ways to go and all of these strange ideas about minority groups are based in ignorance. But at APICHA, we try to understand everybody from every background." =

## Taking a Pill Once a Day to Prevent HIV Infection

Although the idea of taking a pill once daily to help you remain HIV negative or uninfected sounds like a fairytale, the reality is that it is very true. This is the latest HIV prevention method gaining attention among individuals who are at high risk of infection. Individuals who are at high risk of HIV infection include “anyone who has unprotected anal sex, multiple sex partners, an HIV-positive partner, difficulty with condom use, a history of STDs, engage in sex work, or injection drug use” explains Jonathan Bannigan, Men’s Health Coordinator at APICHA CHC. People can benefit from this daily pill to decrease their risk and remain uninfected. This new prevention method is called PrEP or Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis.

PrEP is the latest prevention tool for use within a broad spectrum of HIV prevention tools. Other HIV prevention tools include abstinence or not engag-

ing in sex, asking your sexual partner their HIV status before sexual activity and when they were last tested, engaging in regular HIV and STD testing, reducing your number of sexual partners and consistently using condoms. PrEP is based upon scientific studies among HIV negative individuals who decreased their chances of acquiring HIV by taking a daily pill used to effectively treat HIV infected patients. This medication, when used to treat HIV positive individuals, works to prevent HIV from making multiple copies to spread infection throughout the body. The science of

PrEP is based on the pill working to help keep someone uninfected by keeping the virus from establishing a permanent infection, if they engaged in a high HIV risk activity such as unprotected sexual activity or sharing needles, where HIV was present.

The pill is called Truvada or the combination medication tenofovir disoproxil fumarate plus emtricitabine. In studies, daily dose of Truvada helped prevent HIV acquisition among HIV-negative adults when used with other HIV prevention methods. When Truvada is taken consistently every day and used with other prevention methods like condoms, researchers estimate it may be up to 92-99% effective at pre-



Photo Credit: Getty Images

Jonathan further clarifies that, “PrEP is an excellent way for those at high risk for HIV infection, especially men and transgender women who have sex with men, to take ownership of their health and engage another line of defense against HIV infection.”

It is important to note that PrEP is not intended to be used as the only method of HIV prevention, but rather in combination with other methods such as regular condom use. The best benefit of PrEP’s effectiveness was seen among those people in the study who received monthly HIV testing, counseling, used condoms and treated their sexually transmitted infections. In addition, those who reported taking the pill everyday had the highest levels of protection. Taking PrEP includes getting routine blood work and being monitored for potential side effects.

Although PrEP was approved by the FDA in July of 2012, many medical providers may still not know about it or are inexperienced with prescribing the medication. As a result, APICHA CHC was invited by the AIDS Institute of the New York State Health Department as one of six health centers implementing PrEP as a standard of care for HIV negative patients at risk of infection. HIV negative gay and bisexual men, as well as trans-women who have sex with men can learn more about PrEP by accessing our primary care clinic. The costs for the clinic visits are paid by the patient’s health insurance or out o

**“It is important to note that PrEP is not intended to be used as the only method of HIV prevention, but rather in combination with other methods”**

venting HIV infection. Dr. Murayama, Chief Medical Officer at APICHA Community Health Center explains the important role this new prevention tool can contribute to the communities we serve. “It is empowering to be able to take one pill a day to prevent HIV acquisition. It can sometimes be very difficult to get a partner to use condoms, or be sure the condom remains intact, so having additional protection is powerful. It does not, however, protect against STDs or pregnancy.”

Based on studies to date, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the fixed dose pill Truvada for use as a prevention tool known as PrEP for sexually active adults at high risk for HIV infection. PrEP can play an integral role in helping to reduce new HIV infections in New York City and in the United States as it offers an extra prevention method that was not available before.

**Our outreach services increased with more LGBT individuals receiving safer sex kits and health education with risk reduction activities.**

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# APICHA Community Health Center Celebrates

We Thank Our 2014 Anniversary Benefit Sponsors for Supporting Our Endeavors and for Continuously Making Our Gala Better Each Year

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& Elvin Parson, MD



Photo Credit: Corky Lee

## 2013 Gala Honorees pose with APICHA Board members.

On May 22, 2014, friends and supporters of APICHA Community Health Center will return to Grand Hyatt's Manhattan Ballroom for our 24th anniversary celebration, the annual benefit gala A Thousand and One Champions gala. As has been the tradition, the event will feature an award ceremony to honor the achievements of individuals who have made significant contributions to the fight to end HIV/AIDS and to our efforts to improve the well-being in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community, the Asian and Pacific Islander communities and other communities of color. Other highlights of the event will include a silent auction, entertainment by saxophonist Stephan Davis and pianist Joshua Kartes and a special number: the unveiling of our new logo (see page \_\_\_ on our rebranding story).

Proceeds from the benefit gala have been essential to APICHA CHC's ability to provide quality services to our clients and patients. They fill gaps in operational costs that are not covered by grants and service revenues. For example, only 36%-six percent of an uninsured patient's visit is covered by self-paying patients and Indigent Care grant that we receive; the remaining uncovered costs must be raised from private contributions. Advocacy is an ongoing work that is largely unfunded. Every year, we spend approximately \$50,000 to take our messages to policy makers locally and nationally. In fact, with the closure of the Paul Rapoport Foundation, we must turn to others for support of this important work. There-

fore, every penny raised through the gala helps hold APICHA CHC's programs and services together.

Our 2014 honorees are Dr. Jean Lobell, Alec Mapa, Patrick McGovern and Jane Schwartz. Consul General of the Philippine Consulate of New York, Ambassador Mario de Leon; Ma-Yi Theater Artistic Director Ralph Pena; Amida Care President Doug Wirth; and APICHA CHC CEO Therese R. Rodriguez will present the awards.



Dr. Jean Lobell is the Senior Managing Director of Community Resource Exchange. She plays a key role in making New York City's non-profit organizations

stronger and more effective in fighting poverty and advancing social justice. She served on the Board of Directors of several non-profit organizations including United Way of NYC, the Asian American Federation and APICHA Community Health Center.



Award-winning actor, comedian, and writer Alec Mapa flew in from Los Angeles for the occasion. Alec's career on Broadway, television, and movies spans more

than twenty years and started shortly after graduating from NYU when he starred in a Tony Award winning Broadway show called M. Butterfly. He can be seen this season on ABC Family's hit

# 24 Years of Service to the New York Community

drama show *Switched at Birth* and on reruns of *Ugly Betty* and *Desperate Housewives*. As an out gay actor of Filipino descent, Mapa has long been supporting HIV/AIDS, gay, lesbian and Asian-American causes.



Patrick McGovern joined Gilead Sciences' Government Affairs unit as a Director in September of 2010. He is responsible for the development of FOCUS, a fifteen city initiative to reduce the

number of undiagnosed persons living with HIV & HCV and link them to care. Formerly the Chief Executive Officer of Harlem United Community AIDS Center, Inc., he has been a leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS for the past twenty years. In addition to his affiliation with Harlem United, Mr. McGovern participated in the creation of AmidaCare, Inc., a special needs insurance plan for people with HIV/AIDS.

Jane D. Schwartz has been Executive Director of the Paul Rapoport Foundation (PRF) since 1987, the year when the



foundation was established as the first staffed, independent LGBT foundation in the nation. She has shepherded the foundation to its current position as one of the top grantmakers to LGBT communities of color in the country. She also served on the original board of Funders for LGBTQ Issues; is a member of the grantmaking committee of the NYC AIDS Fund; and of the steering committee of the Spend-Down Working Group of foundations. =

## APICHA Community Health Center would like to thank our funders.

### Government Grants

#### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- The Young Men Who Have Sex with Men
- HIV Prevention, Communities of Color

#### Health Resources and Services Administration

- HIV Early Intervention Services

#### New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute

- Multiple Service Agency/Community Development Initiative
- NIV/STI/Hep C Prevention and Related Services for Gay Men
- Nutritional Health Education
- Health and Human Services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
- New York State Office of Health Insurance Programs
- New York Health Benefit Exchange: In Person Assistors and Navigators
- Vital Access Provider Program

#### New York State Assembly: Richard Gottfried; Michael DenDekker

#### New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene /Public Health Solutions:

- Ryan White Part A CARE Coordination
- New York City Council Community of Color Initiative
- New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn
- New York City Council Local Initiatives
- Council Members: Margaret Chin; Daniel Dromm: Rosie Mendez
- Manhattan Delegation

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*This list includes funds received from May 1, 2013 to April 30, 2014*

## State Backs APICHA'S Transformation and Growth

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tiveness, patient-centeredness, timeliness, efficiency, and equity

- Improving Health-Improving health by addressing root causes of poor health e.g., poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and substance use disorders
- Reducing costs- reducing per capita costs.

Given that the overall goal of the Medicaid redesign is to lower costs, Governor Cuomo understood that it would be necessary to invest in the health delivery systems in some communities to accomplish the Triple Aims. "Creating healthier communities is one of my administration's highest priorities, and ensuring that New York's most vulnerable populations have access to quality medical services is vital to fulfilling that goal," said Governor Cuomo in a January 27, 2014 press release. "This funding will improve health care in communities across the state by providing the necessary support to these facilities, and allow them to continue delivering much-needed services to New Yorkers."

These facilities became known as Vital Access Providers. A designation of Vital Access Provider (VAP) means the state has determined a healthcare organization is necessary for providing the healthcare needs of a vulnerable community. A VAP designation also qualifies an organization for supplemental financial assistance to support their longer-term financial viability.

The funds provided by the state through the Vital Access/ Safety Net Provider Program grant must be used primarily to improve community care and to achieve defined financial, operational, and quality improvement goals related to integration or reconfiguration of services offered by the facility.

### **More Healthcare Providers, More Patients Served:**

The funding will be used over the next three years to achieve enhanced financial and operational capacity including



Nurse practitioner, Sara Ponce, with one of APICHA CHC's patients.

Photo credit: Nate Riggs

the hiring of additional primary care and mental health providers, support staff, and other essential administrative staff. With this staff enhancement, APICHA CHC will be able to serve more people and provide better access to care.

By recognizing APICHA CHC as a Vital Access Provider, New York State acknowledged that our care model is successful in improving the health of our community and increasing access to comprehensive primary care, preventative health services, mental health, and supportive services. For this reason, the Service Enhancement Project does not aim to change our health delivery system; instead, it aims to enhance it. Put simply, this means more healthcare providers, more staff for our support services, and more administrative staff to keep all of APICHA CHC's operations humming along.

As we add staff, APICHA CHC will make it a goal to keep our mission in mind. Our staffing choices will reflect our commitment to providing culturally competent services for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) individuals, Asians and Pacific Islanders, Hispanics or Latinos, immigrants and other people of color.

### **How Apicha Chc Transformed To Make This Possible:**

APICHA CHC's successful effort to se-

cure the VAP award is another example of how our organization is transforming in response to America's rapidly changing health care environment to better meet the needs of some of New York City's most vulnerable populations. To fully understand what the VAP award and the subsequent growth means for the organization and the communities we serve, it is necessary to understand other recent transformative events.

Recent advancements in HIV prevention and treatment shifted the focus of government-funded programs to medical approaches and targeting populations at highest risk for HIV. The medicalization of HIV/AIDS led to the categorization of HIV/AIDS as a chronic disease. Furthermore, the Obama Administration developed the country's first-ever National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS), which, among many directives, calls for the integration of HIV primary care in general primary care. NHAS was followed by the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), another monumental policy that widely impacted health care delivery and reimbursements in this country.

These policies made it clear that it was necessary for HIV-focused organizations to integrate HIV specialty services into primary care and provide primary care to people without an HIV diagnosis or close their doors. APICHA embraced the shift in service delivery, but

## "For this reason, the Service Enhancement Project does not aim to change our health delivery system; instead, it aims to enhance it."

faced many challenges. The greatest challenge was the lack of supplemental funding to make the necessary changes.

Undaunted, APICHA began the process of broadening its services in 2008. With a new building at its current 400 Broadway location, APICHA CHC knew the HIV service delivery model it developed to treat its A&PI HIV-positive patients could be successfully adapted to a patient-centered service delivery model that would meet the special primary care needs of PLWHA, the LGBT population, all A&PIs and other immigrants with limited English proficiency. These primary care services became available in 2009.

This service delivery system proved to be a success. In 2010, APICHA CHC was awarded the highest recognition for quality, as a Level 3 Physician Practice Connections®- Patient Centered Medical Home (PPC-PCMH), by the National Committee on Quality Assurance. At this same time, APICHA CHC began applying for a FQHC designation through the federal government's Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to expand our services to other medically underserved, while preserving our core HIV-services. To secure the FQHC designation we conducted comprehensive demographic and epidemiological research on the health issues affecting our target populations

and residents in the surrounding area of Chinatown and the Lower East Side to determine the areas of greatest need. As a result, we realized it was necessary to again broaden our reach and bring our culturally sensitive care to the city's Hispanic/Latino communities.

On September 10, 2012, APICHA CHC received a designation as a FQHC-LA, which provided enhanced Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements, an expanded discounted drug program, and access to National Health Service Corps Providers who provide care in health professional shortage areas across the country. In short, it provided some much needed stability to APICHA CHC's services.

When the New York State Department of Health announced the VAP funds as part of its Medicaid redesign, APICHA CHC recognized a new opportunity to provide stabilization and growth for our organization. It was clear that receiving these funds would increase our ability to offer our proven health care services to the city's vulnerable and marginalized communities. However, when originally announced, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) had decided to exclude both FQHC and FQHC-Look Alike organizations, like APICHA CHC, from the funding. Understanding that this oversight significantly impacted the VAP program's ability to accomplish its goals, APICHA

CHC joined Community Health Center Association of New York State (CHCANYS) in its advocacy efforts to change the eligibility requirements. When APICHA CHC attended the CHCANYS Statewide conference in October of 2013, we learned our efforts were successful and we were eligible to apply for this award as an FQHC look-alike.

### What's Next!!!:

The importance of the VAP award to the overall transformation of APICHA CHC from a HIV/AIDS-focused practice to a community health center cannot be overstated. In short, these funds will help us bring our culturally competent services to more New Yorkers and improve health outcomes for all of our target communities. We anticipate expanding to serve 3000 patients by 2016. To accomplish this, we have to let our communities know we are here for them, so we're re-branding APICHA CHC and launching a social marketing campaign (See page 12 for more details). The expansion and growth create a new challenge—we will need more exam rooms. To ensure those become available, APICHA CHC has embarked on the process of expanding our current location at 400 Broadway (See page 4 for more details). We are excited to share our progress and our growing impact on the communities we serve. We cannot thank our friends, partners, and patients enough for making our transformation possible. =

**Our licensed behavioral health providers delivered 1,526 mental health visits to 500 patients last year.**

## Supportive Services Help Keep New Yorkers Healthy

*Continued from Page 2*

caid patients with chronic illnesses beyond HIV. This new model of case management, known as Health Home, caters to patients with multiple chronic diseases such as diabetes, substance abuse, and psychiatric illnesses. APICHA CHC oper-

ates as a downstream provider for some of the Health Homes designated by the New York State Department of Health (DOH). Currently, we are a downstream provider for hospitals in four boroughs: Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. =

**Our Health Home chronic disease case management services tripled in patient size with 344 clients from 110 enrolled in 2012.**

## APICHA CHC's Thriving Trans\* Health Clinic

Everywhere you look around APICHA Community Health Center you can see examples of our growth. There's no better place to witness our expansion of services than by watching the rapid expansion of the Trans\* Health Clinic (the THC). In two and a half years, APICHA CHC has gone from serving 9 trans\* patients to serving approximately 190. We use the term "trans\*" to refer to individuals who align themselves with a number of identities along the transgender spectrum, including those identifying as gender non-conforming, gender variant, and gender queer. Through the growth of the THC it is possible to witness our commitment to improving the health of our community and to increasing access to comprehensive primary care, preventive health services, mental health and supportive services.

We attribute this success largely to intense outreach activities led by Cecilia Gentili, APICHA CHC's Trans\* Health Program Coordinator. Ms. Gentili is able to successfully convey APICHA CHC's non-medical, mental health and supportive services. Her persistent outreach into the community targets trans\* individuals who are looking to address their health issues in a safe space.

**"A lack of knowledge regarding the options available to them and navigating the bureaucracy surrounding insurance and legally changing one's name and gender marker is a major barrier for trans\* individuals seeking healthcare!"**

One of the best ways to understand the services APICHA CHC provides is by looking at the success of our patients. During 2013, we met an exceptional trans\*man named Drew. In under six months, Drew began cross-gender hormone therapy, legally changed his name, found new insurance, underwent

gender-affirming surgery, and secured a position as a nurse with his true identity. APICHA CHC was there to help him every step of the way.

At the core of the THC is the belief that nurturing the overall wellness of trans\* individuals is key for better health outcomes. In addition to our health services, we offer a number of social services to support our patients such as housing assistance, help with finding health insurance plans that cover services specific to this population, including cross-gender hormone therapy and sexual reassignment surgery/gender affirming surgery. Moreover, our trans\* patients have access to all services that APICHA offers: individual and group counseling and mentorship programs, care coordination, food and nutrition, acupuncture, and case management. APICHA has also strengthened relationships with local organizations that provide trans\*-friendly services not offered

at our facility so that we can easily make referrals as needed. These services include laser hair removal and compression vests, support groups for transitioning individuals, and assisting patients with understanding and creating flex spending accounts to manage the costs of sex reassignment sur-



Trans\* Health Program  
Coordinator, Cecilia Gentili

gery/gender affirming surgery.

When the THC first meets with a new trans\* patient, we work with them to determine what services that want and need. When Drew first came to APICHA CHC he remembers, "I spoke with Cecilia about my desire to begin hormones, have gender affirming surgery, and let them know my insurance would be ending after my graduation from school." After better understanding Drew's needs he recalls, "I was able to begin the process of seeing a primary healthcare provider and beginning hormones within a few months. [The THC] also informed me of a doctor in NYC who could perform my gender affirming surgery. They helped me fill out the paperwork and gather the necessary information/documents to apply for insurance that would cover the surgery, which I received, and was able to have my surgery on May 25th, 2013."

Another significant part of our work with trans\* patients is helping them legally change their names. To many of our patients, changing their legal names is a significant gender-affirming gesture, allowing them to present their chosen names on government issued forms of identification such as driver's licenses and passports. Changing our patients' legal names is an arduous

process involving copious paperwork and legal aid, and to help us get through it, we have created a strong relationship with the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund (TLDEF), which on numerous occasions has connected us to lawyers who provide much-needed assistance to our patients and staff.

To complement our work around legal name changes, we also help trans\* patients change the gender markers (e.g., male or female) used on legal documents. This is significant to many of our trans\* patients who want cross-gender hormone therapy but whose insurance does not cover it. Insurance companies often provide hormones to patients for a copayment, given that these hormones align with their gender in the eyes of mainstream medical providers. Insurance companies will cover estrogen given to a woman, for example, should her doctor prescribe it. Trans\* people often depend on hormones for overall health and well-being, and not having them covered by insurance is costly, especially since therapy can last for many years, if not for life.

In Drew's case, APICHA CHC was able to help him legally change both his name and gender marker, "During one of my first meetings [with Cecelia] I asked her about the process of legally



changing my name. She informed me of an organization called the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund (TLDEF) and specifically referred me to an attorney there named Noah who I ended up being able to meet with that day. Noah gave me a list of step-by-step instructions for changing my name and gender marker with the court as well as all of the major agencies (DMV, social security, passport, etc). He also helped me get my information together to bring to court, including a fee waiver application to waive the court fee for the name change because I wasn't working at the time."

A lack of knowledge regarding the options available to them and navigating the bureaucracy surrounding insurance and legally changing one's name and gender marker is a major barrier for trans\* individuals seeking healthcare. The process is overwhelming and APICHA CHC's commitment to com-

prehensive care removes this barrier. To this point, Drew wanted to point out the importance of the personal attention he received from APICHA CHC, and Cecelia's work in particular, during this stage of his transition, "From helping me change my name to picking out and applying for insurance to referring me to a specific surgeon to even helping me network and find a nursing position, Cecelia has been instrumental during every step of this process for me. She is an invaluable resource to the clients at APICHA CHC and has done more for me than I can repay or than she is even aware of."

As the THC continues to grow, it is necessary to look for funding sources to hire more patient navigators to assist in addressing the needs of our trans\* patients. Our funding from the VAP award caps administrative and support costs, so there continues to be a need for other funding as the volume of our THC patients continues to increase. Helping Drew and all of the trans\* patients live better lives gives us the motivation to ensure we find those funds. ■

**Our Trans\* Health Clinic more than doubled in size from 62 patients in 2012 to 163 patients by the end of 2013.**

## Taking a Pill Once a Day to Prevent HIV Infection

*Continued from Page 5*

pocket using our sliding fee scale based on the patient's income. The medication for PrEP is covered by the patient's health insurance or if the patient meets eligibility requirements they can qualify for Gilead's drug assistance program. When people access PrEP at our clinic, "they are not merely prescribed medication and sent on their way. On the contrary, they are accessing an effective HIV-prevention tool within a structure of ongoing monitoring and support. Participation involves regular visits with a medical provider and with a treatment-adherence counselor to ensure the effectiveness of PrEP as a

method of HIV prevention" explains Jonathan. Dr. Murayama adds that "in addition to helping our patients get on medication, we provide Hepatitis vaccination, routine STD testing, and can assist with behavioral health referrals. We can also assist with enrolling them into Medicaid or health insurance, depending on their eligibility."

The growth and sustainability of APICHA CHC includes our adaptive response to effectively meet the health needs of our community. It is important that we continue to evolve our prevention framework. "Prevention is now a matter of being rigorously honest with ourselves about how we have sex, in

the absence of shame and stigma, and taking appropriate steps to protect our health. I think LGBT communities are ready for those empowered conversations" exclaims Jonathan. We at APICHA CHC continue to facilitate those conversations with our patients. To learn more on how you can become a patient, call us at (212) 334-6029. ■

**About 1,890 New Yorkers were screened for HIV within our testing program, an increase of 13% from last year.**

## Refreshing Our Brand to Reflect Who We've Become

Every step in our evolution brought up new questions. In 2009, when we expanded the services to general primary care, we saw the need to refine our mission. The following year, APICHA CHC embarked on a strategic planning process that resulted in a name change and a broadened mission. In view of the expanded target populations defined in our new mission and the need to serve the medically underserved residents of Lower Manhattan, we needed to understand the health seeking behaviors of those populations.

To address those concerns, a marketing team composed of staff and consultants was created. The team, co-led by Ding Pajaron and Yumiko Fukuda included Development Unit staff, Clinic, LGBT Program HIV/STI and Community Health Education Managers. Therese R. Rodriguez provided overall oversight and was also active in team activities. We engaged the services of Greg Kaple, president of the consulting firm GAK3 who brought in experts, including Valdis Krebs of Orgnet and Nathan Riggs, of NR Media Group. Their experience in strategic business development, network analysis and content development offers the best combination of expertise we needed to develop a marketing plan that captures the work we do.

**"With its modern look and feel, bold colors and consistent typography, our logo will convey our mission's values, create recognition amongst our audience and send an impactful message of our significance in the community!"**

The consultants' approach included building staff skills, which is so important given that APICHA CHC does not have communications or marketing personnel. The team learned about social network analysis, developed survey questions, analyzed the results and assessed our environment. Based on information gathered, we hammered out our brand values that will help guide us as we implement the marketing plan.

The six-month planning process produced a comprehensive social media strategy. Implementation of the plan is already in full swing. Starting with logo refresh, the first phase involves a new website design and increased social media communication. APICHA CHC's new logo will be launched at the 24th anniversary event on May 22.

Throughout the rebranding process or the refreshing of our brand, we balanced our history and commitment to serving

people living with HIV/AIDS and Asians and Pacific Islanders (APIs), our affinity with the LGBT community, and our current mission to provide healthcare to all. "There was a lot of thinking put into fleshing out the foundational elements of the APICHA brand," explained Nate Riggs. He clarified a common impression about brand: "Most people simply think of a logo when they think of brand. Logos, colors and the general look and feel are a big part of the organization's brand identity, but a brand is really about the set of expectations, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer's decision to choose one product or service over another." With that note, a logo refresh became top of the work plan.



### Meet our new logo!

If a picture is worth one thousand words, then trying to hone in and symbolize our true essence with one image was no easy task. There were many steps necessary in order to create an icon that will both detail our transition into a comprehensive health center as well as portray our founders' initial mission. As Nate so clearly explains, "APICHA is a highly mission-driven organization that is rooted in these very personal and inspiring stories from employees, board members and clinic patients. We started first by surfacing all that history and the stories, and then used them to define a clear set of brand values that speak to the ideal attitudes that APICHA employees have adopted and promote. Once that foundation was established, NR Media Group's Creative Director, Jessi See, was able to translate those values visually while also using current design trends and thinking.

With its modern look and feel, bold colors and consistent typography, our logo will convey our mission's values, create recognition amongst our audience and send an impactful message of our significance in the community. By depicting "APICHA" in lowercase, our logo removes its association with an acronym. The softer font conveys our commitment to being a caring health center and welcoming space, and the use of the abstract triangle and LGBT equal rights symbol signify inclusion, dignity and respect for all. The colors create recognition of our traditional red, while serving as a positive element that is associated with both the HIV/AIDS movement and the Asian culture. Even though the logo has a direct message to marginalized communities seeking quality medical services, it leaves room for future expansion. We love it and we hope you love it too. 