



apicha
community health center

NEWS

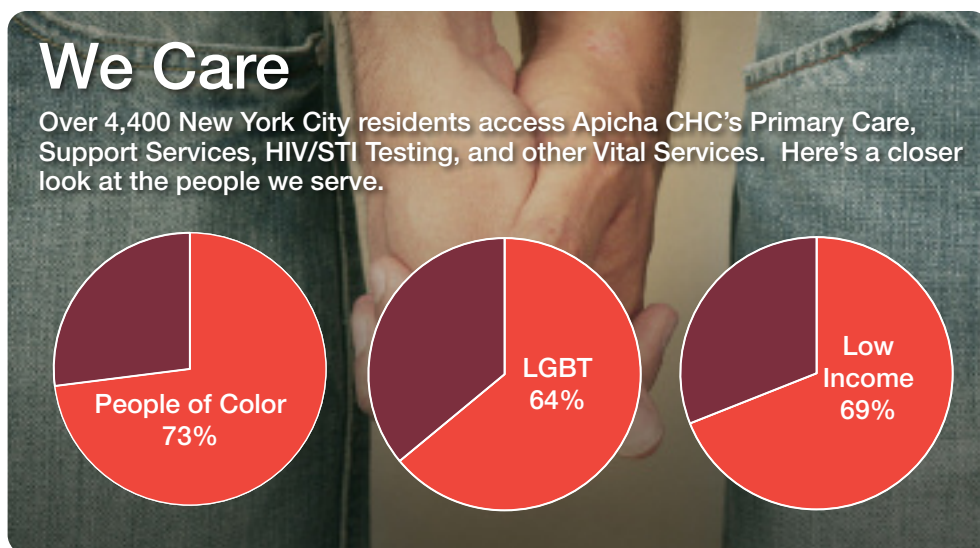
Volume 20
Number 1
Spring 2015

25th Anniversary: Celebrating Our Impact, Envisioning Our Future

2015 marks Apicha Community Health Center's 25th Anniversary. To celebrate this important milestone, Apicha News highlights in this issue our plans for the future: expansion of our current facility on 400 Broadway and building of a new site in Queens in order to develop greater capacity to serve more patients. We report on some outcomes of our new PrEP services and social media outreach and offer a profile of our mental health providers. We sing praises of our successes and note policy changes that impact the lives of our clients and patients. Come celebrate with us!

Expansion at 400 Broadway

With four medical providers on staff, Apicha CHC's current clinical space on the 4th floor has reached capacity. That is why Apicha CHC's senior management team has been hard at work putting together a plan to expand our clinic. We are thrilled to report the plan is complete and is being implemented. To make room for more exam rooms and multi-purpose rooms, renovation is underway on the storefront space and a portion of the cellar. The space will accommodate seven additional exam rooms, a more accessible reception/waiting area, phlebotomy lab, charting room, restrooms and five multipurpose rooms in the cellar which will provide a variety of non-examination needs, including counseling. The new clinic will



be seamlessly integrated with the existing clinic on the 4th floor, which patients can access by the elevator.

This expansion will result in a total of 13 exam rooms and 8 counseling/multi-purpose rooms at 400 Broadway. All this will allow Apicha CHC to expand staffing. With support from New York State Department of Health Vital Access Provider Program, hiring of additional health care providers support services staff, and administrative staff is also underway.

Dreamin' Jackson Heights

Jackson Heights, Queens, and adjacent neighborhoods teem with new immi-

grants. The diversity of the residents of those districts culturally and linguistically mirror Apicha Community Health Center's current patients and clients. In fact, Jackson Heights represents one of the most diverse neighborhoods in New York City and the nation. It is home to large numbers of South Asians, East Asians and South Americans, particularly Argentineans and Colombians—many of whom are immigrants and the majority of residents are multilingual or only speak a language other than English. Jackson Heights is also a hub of LGBT activity with four clubs and bars located in the neighborhood.

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Apicha News is a publication of
Apicha Community Health Center

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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 for 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.

Apicha's 25th Anniversary



2014 Champions Emcee Richard Lui takes a selfie with 2014 honorees Patrick McGovern, Jane D. Schwartz, Alec Mapa, and Dr. Jean Lobell

Photo Credit: Rex Romero

On May 20, 2015, friends and supporters of Apicha Community Health Center returned to Grand Hyatt's Manhattan Ballroom for our 25th anniversary gala, the annual benefit *A Thousand and One Champions*.

Hosted Richard Lui, journalist and anchor for MSNBC and NBC News, the event featured 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. The event also included a cocktail hour, silent and live auctions, entertainment by saxophonist Stephan Davis and pianist Joshua Kartes, and dinner.

Proceeds from the benefit gala are 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 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. Additionally, advocacy for the communities we serve is often key to ensuring healthcare and support services for them are available. This important, ongoing work is largely unfunded. In fact, with the closure of the Paul Rapoport Foundation which

funded our advocacy work over the years we must turn to others for support of this important work. Therefore, every penny raised through the gala helps hold Apicha CHC's programs and services together.

Our 2015 honorees are **Catherine Abate, Arthur Chi'en, Margaret Chin, and Charles King**. Read more about the achievements of our 2015 Champions who helped Apicha CHC achieve a monumental quarter-century milestone:



Catherine Abate (Posthumous Award) was the Past President/CEO of the Community Healthcare Network. In a career that spans several decades, Abate

had an exemplary record of public service in politics and healthcare. Choosing inclusion over self-interest, Catherine firmly supported Apicha CHC's effort to become a Federally Qualified Health Center. Ms. Abate began her professional life as an attorney at the Legal Aid Society in New York City, and eventually became Director of Training in its Criminal Defense Division. She taught criminal law and procedure and trial litigation practice to hundreds of newly hired attorneys. In 1986, Governor Mario Cuomo appointed Ms. Abate to the position of Executive Deputy Commissioner of the New York State Division of Human Rights and in 1988, to the position of Chair of the New York State Crime Victims Board. During the Dinkins administration, she served as

Gala Celebration

Commissioner of both the New York City Departments of Correction and Probation. Ms. Abate was elected as a New York State Senator in Manhattan from 1994—1998. While in the Senate, she was the ranking Democrat on the Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee, as well as Investigations and Government Operations Committee. She is survived by her husband, Ron Kliegerman; a son, Kyle Kliegerman; a stepson, Kip Kliegerman; a brother, Joseph; and three stepgrandchildren.



Arthur Chi'en is a 4-time Emmy Award winning newscaster currently with Fox 5, WNYW in New York and CEO/Co-Founder of fivelocals.com.

Chi'en joined Fox after 9 years as lead reporter at PIX11. From his early years as producer for NBC's Nightly News with Tom Brokaw and Bureau Producer for the Today Show to covering high-profile news for NY1, CBS, PIX11, and currently for Fox 5, WNYW, Arthur has always displayed an innate talent for recognizing a good story. As one of the city's most respected reporters, his stories have ran the gamut from local to national, from human interest feature to investigative reporting and hard news. Through all the accolades, Arthur remains steadfast in his support of both the Asian and Pacific Islander community and the city of New York and has served for many years as Master of Ceremonies for Apicha CHC's *A Thousand and One Champions* gala.



Margaret Chin took office in the New York City Council in 2010, as the representative for District 1, Lower Manhattan. Margaret is chair of the Council's Committee on Aging,

and is a member of the Committees on Education, Youth Services, Rules, and Transportation. She is a founding member of the Council's Progressive Cau-

cus, the co-vice chair of the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus, a member of the Women's Caucus, and a founding member of Asian Americans for Equality. Margaret immigrated to the United States with her family from Hong Kong in 1963, when she was nine years old. She grew up in Chinatown and attended P.S. 130 and JHS 65. She graduated from the Bronx High School of Science, and then graduated from the City College of New York (CCNY) with a degree in education. It was at City College through taking Asian Studies courses that Margaret got involved in community organizing. For more than 30 years she has dedicated herself to public service to help working families and the immigrant community. Chin was honored for her unrelenting advocacy for social justice for Asian Americans and her constituents of District 1. CM Chin has seen and supported Apicha CHC grow from its early years as an HIV/AIDS organizations dedicated to serving the Asian and Pacific Island communities and its most recent transformation into a community Health Center.



Charles King is one of the founders and the President/CEO of Housing Works, Inc. a community-based, not-for-profit organization that provides a full

range of services including housing, health care, mental health, chemical dependency services, legal, advocacy, and job training and employment for homeless men, women, and children living with HIV/AIDS and other chronic conditions. Charles serves on the governing body of UNAIDS as a member of the NGO Delegation to the PCB and is Co-Chair of Governor Andrew Cuomo's the NYS End the AIDS Epidemic by 2020 Task Force. Charles holds both a Law Degree and a Master of Divinity from Yale University, and is an ordained Baptist Minister. King was honored for his visionary work and leadership of the HIV/AIDS movement. =

25th Anniversary: Celebrating Our Impact, Envisioning Our Future

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There is a great need for a community health center like Apicha CHC, in the neighborhood. Recent needs assessments for New York City revealed that there few health centers are located in Queens. To put the problem in context, there are 112 health centers of all types in Manhattan, but only 27 in Queens. This does not mean there is not a need for health centers in general and community health centers specifically. The most recent data shows that only 8% of the approximately 72,500 low-income residents in this neighborhood receive healthcare at community health centers. It is hypothesized that many people in the neighborhood are using hospital emergency rooms for their medical needs instead of regular primary care.

Apicha CHC's CEO, Therese R. Rodriguez, saw an opportunity to create a space in Queens that will not only keep this neighborhood's people healthy, but also strengthen the community. To accomplish this, the facility that we envision to build in Queens will house a community health center that mirrors the services available at the 400 Broadway location in Manhattan, but also include an A&PI LGBT community center. A place where people can be with people like them. A place that feels safe and like home. Most importantly, it will be a place where we can set our patients on a path to making their own dreams a reality. =

1 in 3 of our patients are HIV-positive

New York State Changes Healthcare Delivery through DSRIP

There are plans underway to change New York State's health care system. Apicha CHC is navigating these changes and joining in the efforts to make New York State's residents healthier, at a lower cost.

As part of the Medicaid redesign plan, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo is reinvesting \$8 billion in federal savings generated by Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT) reforms to address critical healthcare issues throughout the state

and allow for comprehensive reform through a Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) program. The DSRIP program creates community-level collaborations and focuses on system reform with the goal of achieving a 25 percent reduction in avoidable hospital use over five years.

At the core of this proposal is the need for system-wide collaboration among multiple providers. Safety net providers, like Apicha CHC, are required to work

with hospital systems to implement innovative projects focusing on systemic transformation, clinical improvement, and population health improvement.

Apicha CHC is leveraging our care coordination expertise to become part of a collaborative partnership with four DSRIP applicants--which are called Performing Provider Systems (PPS)--in order to contribute to addressing critical health issues throughout NYC. The

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Improving Transgender Health Care Access

Several important policy changes happened last year that helped to improve health care access for transgender people in NYC. One key change includes the NYC Council passage of legislation introduced by Councilman Corey Johnson, making it easier for transgender people to change the sex on their birth certificates. Prior, a trans*-identified person had to have undergone sex reassignment surgery in order to amend their birth certificate. This new change in policy removes a barrier for many transgender people. It helps reduce discrimination from potential employers or officials when asked to present their identification card and helps with getting insurance companies to pay for needed transition related services.

Another key policy change occurred in March 2015. New York State under the authority of Governor Andrew Cuomo lifted a 17-year ban on Medicaid coverage for transgender health care. The amendment extends Medicaid coverage for essential transition-related health care such as hormone replacement therapy and access to gender-affirming surgeries. Research demonstrates that when transgender individuals, despite their race or socioeconomic status, are able to access hormone therapies and gender reaffirming surgeries, their quality of life improves with better self-esteem, improved mental health with less distress and better social interactions within their communities.

The policy amendment was issued by the New York State Department of Health with an opportunity for public comments in January 2015. Apicha CHC applauded this effort but joined 91 commentators, 64 advocacy organizations, 10 lawyers or legal organizations, 8 mental or physical health care professionals, a New York State agency, a New York State Senator, a New York State Assembly member, and a New York City agency, as well as five individuals who did not indicate any affiliation who provided comments to help strengthen the proposal.

The majority of commentators objected to the regulation of limiting healthcare to trans*-identified individuals 18 years of age or older. Commentators, including Apicha CHC, recommended that Medicaid cover puberty cessation cross-sex hormone therapy for children and adolescents under the age of 18. The State responded that puberty cessation therapies are not FDA approved nor supported in the research literature, therefore no changes were made and the coverage remained for only those trans*-identified individuals 18 years and older. Although the research literature supports that children as young as age 2 are expressing being unhappy with their physical sex and want to be the other sex. This process of wanting to transition to their opposite sex is not restricted by age. Moreover, research shows that trans*-identified adolescents experience a great deal of distress not being able to access

transition services. Therefore, more advocacy work needs to be done to support this needed change and strengthen Medicaid coverage for trans*-identified individuals in NYC. Commentators also wanted cosmetic

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A Fresh Start

One of our trans*-identified patients made his way to the United States from South America only to be stopped by police at the border. After being humiliated due to his trans* identity, he was allowed to call a family member who lives in New York City. He was released and allowed to come to New York, seeking asylum. Once here, he found Apicha CHC. We not only provided him with medical and mental health services to assist with his transition, we were also able to help him apply for insurance and obtain a work visa that reflected his preferred gender. We followed up with him and asked him what kind of job he wanted now that he had a work visa. He paused for a moment and his eyes welled up with tears. He said, "I want to own my own restaurant one day." It was clear his recent past was occupied trying to stabilize basic needs: a home, his health, his ability to work. Assisting him take charge of his life and helping him strive to achieve the American Dream is our biggest honor. =

A Blueprint to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2020

Wednesday, April 29 was an exceptionally pleasant New York spring day made even more memorable when Governor Andrew M. Cuomo accepted the historic document that lays out the recommendations to achieve the goal to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2020.

The plan's goal is to reduce the number of new HIV infections to just 750 (from an estimated 3,000) by 2020, thereby achieving the first ever decrease in HIV prevalence in New York State. The ultimate goal of the plan is to reduce new HIV infections to zero. For those infected with the disease, the plan includes provisions to inhibit disease progression by 50%.

As New York City has always been the epicenter of the AIDS crisis, the location of the event, the NYC LGBT Community Center, added meaning to the occasion. The symbolism of the site was not lost in the minds of the leaders present. In her remarks, the Center's executive director, Glenda Testone recalled that the activist group, ACT UP, protested the lack of government response to the AIDS epidemic was born at that very site. Those protests stand in stark contrast to the Governor standing at the same spot, outlining his plan, and making it clear the epidemic could be ended by 2020.

It is the hope of everyone involved that this audacious action by New York State will set an example for the nation. During his speech Governor Cuomo exclaimed, "Once again, New York is a national leader by raising the bar and saying we will not stop until the AIDS epidemic is part of the past." He continued, "We must add AIDS to the list of diseases conquered by our society, and today we are saying we can, we must and we will end this epidemic. The blueprint compiled by the Ending the Epidemic Task Force is smart, requiring an all-out comprehensive approach including more testing, more healthcare and more access to new drugs. We can do this by 2020 and end this nightmare once and for all." The Governor referred to the Task Force that he appointed



Governor Cuomo accepts the Ending the Epidemic Blueprint outside the NYC LGBT Center

Photo Credit: flickr account, governorandrewcuomo

with a mandate to put together a plan of action to achieve the goal. Since last June, stakeholders from across the state have come together to discuss suggestions gathered from task force members and from public input through community listening forums and surveys.

The Task Force was co-chaired by Charles King, President and C.E.O., Housing Works, Community Co-Chair and , and Guthrie S. Birkhead, M.D., M.P.H., Deputy Commissioner, Office of Public Health, Government Co-Chair. The Task Force was divided into four Committees; Data, Prevention, Care, and Housing and Supportive Services. Apicha CHC's CEO, Therese R. Rodriguez, is one of the 52 HIV/AIDS leaders that were appointed by the Governor. She participated in the Care Committee, offering recommendations based on Apicha CHC's years of providing HIV/AIDS services.

Committees were charged with providing expert advice on implementation and monitoring strategies surrounding their focus areas with a concentration on New York State's successful existing HIV prevention and care efforts to identify undiagnosed persons; link and retain infected individuals in care; and utilize biomedical interventions such as pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis to prevent infections among high-risk indi-

viduals. In addition, the committees addressed stigma and discrimination with the purpose of reducing associated health disparities.

The Governor's acceptance of the blueprint took place almost one year after he announced his goal to End the Epidemic on June 29, 2014. At the time, the Governor announced the three pillars of his plan:

- Identify persons with HIV who remain undiagnosed and link them to health care.
- Links and retain persons diagnosed with HIV in health care to maximize virus suppression so they remain healthy and prevent further transmission.
- Facilitates access to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for high-risk persons to keep them HIV negative.

The plan asserts that "Ending the Epidemic (ETE) in New York State will maximize the availability of life-saving, transmission-interrupting treatment for HIV, saving lives and improving the health of New Yorkers. It will move New York from a history of having the worst HIV epidemic in the country to a future where new infections are rare and those living with the disease have normal lifespans with few complications." =

The Mind-Body Connection in Health

"I am all about self-care, gym, holistic practices, exercise, laughter, doing pleasurable activities, having close, supportive friends who one can confide in and to eat well and get enough sleep.", Jim Feinberg, Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), told Apicha News. Jim is the newest member of the mental health team at Apicha CHC, having joined the organization in 2014. He brings over 16 years of experience working with LGBT, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, grief/loss and intimate partner violence issues.



Jim believes that self-care is important to maintaining proper mental health in our fast paced city. Jim enjoys working in a fast paced health care environment, fitting in nicely at Apicha CHC. "My experience thus far has exceeded my expectations. I am grateful and blessed to be doing the work I love and fighting the fight in HIV and equality for LGBT

folks. I have felt welcomed since my first day by patients and staff."

Apicha CHC's mental health team works closely with our primary care providers to make our patients healthier.

LGBT, PLWHA and communities of color experience high rates of depression and anxiety in the United States due to their daily experiences with stigma and discrimination. Last year, Apicha CHC recorded 2,438 mental health visits impacting 768 patients. As we continue to grow, our patient-centered model maintains our commitment to the mind and body connection by addressing the mental health needs of our communities.

"Apicha CHC's mental health team works closely with our primary care providers to make our patients healthier."

At Apicha CHC, we realize that good health embodies more than just preventing illness. We understand that it is important to address the connection between your mind and body, as our emotions play a critical role to our quality of life. What we think and feel influences our health. With this in mind, our patient-centered approach integrates mental health within our primary care. Our primary care providers screen patients for depression and substance use at scheduled medical visits. Patients with behavioral health issues are referred to a LCSW or psychiatrist located on site. Our culturally compe-

tent mental health staff provide in-depth mental health assessments and counseling, while our psychiatrist provides psychiatric consultations and medication consultation or management.



Apicha CHC's mental health team is headed by Jun Matsuyoshi, LCSW, who has served as Director of Mental Health Services since 2010. She coordinates the behavioral health services provided by the behavioral health team including psychosocial assessments, crisis intervention services and counseling for all patients. She brings with her

over twenty years of experience providing mental health counseling. Her dedication to the communities we serve is evidenced in her prior work experience and membership on our Board of Directors from 1994-2004. "I have observed Apicha CHC's growth since its inception. I am excited to be part of this growth" said Jun. She enjoys being a social worker due to the opportunity to "be creative while helping people."



Dr. Dickson Jean, staff psychiatrist, provides psychiatric care for patients including evaluating, diagnosing and managing acute and chronic mental health conditions. Dr. Jean is well experienced in providing psychiatric assessments, psychotherapy, medication management, and has extensive experience working with LGBT and people living

with HIV/AIDS. Dr. Jean enables us to treat our patients with psychiatric disorders that our primary care providers cannot treat, which lessens the need for us to refer patients with psychiatric needs to other medical facilities.

When thinking about the mind and body connection, Dr. Jean cites the important role of exercise in reducing stress and depression. "Research shows that moderate exercise helps with your heart and mental health. It improves mood and lowers stress. I try to find a way to stick with a fitness routine even if there is temptation to skip because of lack of time or feeling slightly tired," said Dr. Jean. =

Apicha CHC staff helped complete over 450 applications resulting in nearly \$1,000,000 in SNAP assistance for hungry New Yorkers

A Special Night to Be Remembered

With over 86% of the vote, Councilmember Corey Johnson was elected in November 2013 to represent District 3, which includes the West Village, Chelsea and Clinton neighborhoods on Manhattan's Westside. He is a strong representative of the LGBT community and has been heralded as potential hopeful politician for the state of New York.

Photo Credit: Facebook account, Corey Johnson



Councilmember Johnson is the chairperson of the Committee on Health and a member of five other committees. He has been the primary sponsor on 48 pieces of legislation, including legislation that improves the lives of the communities Apicha CHC serves. For example, in winter 2015, Johnson introduced legislation that would expand eligibility requirements so that all low-income HIV+ New Yorkers are able to receive rental assistance, increased food and transportation allowances and seamless support services. Currently, these benefits are only available to NYC residents with an "AIDS" diagnosis. Additionally, Johnson has been integral to the passage of legislation that removes the surgical requirements for transgender people born in New York City to correct the gender markers on their birth certificates.

For those who were not present last year at our 2014 gala, *A Thousand and One Champions*, Councilmember Johnson shared the impact Apicha CHC had on his life. He was a young 22 year old gay male who had just tested HIV positive and uncertain of his future. "I was completely devastated and in shock

and about two weeks before that I had just lost my health insurance, and I wasn't sure what I was going to do or what was going to happen. I was filled with guilt and shame and remorse and I was given a piece of paper by someone in the doctor's office and I was told, go to this place called Apicha."

The councilmember further recalled his visit with us, an organization he knew nothing about at the time. He said, "I had never heard of it. I was living in Chelsea and I one day just walked all the way across town, scared and nervous not knowing what to expect. And I showed up at Apicha and I walked in and they were lovely, smiling and welcoming and loving. And I said I don't have health insurance, I don't know what I am going to do. And they said, don't worry, we are going to take care of you. You are going to be okay, we are going to take care of you."

He confessed to the audience that night that reminiscing about that first visit was emotional for him, as he was filled with fear and uncertainty at the time. "I was so scared that they sat me down and they said you are going to come here next week and we are going to take care of everything for you and you are going to come see us on a weekly basis for as long as you need to. And they sat

me down with this incredible social worker who signed me up for ADAP, so I was covered, and who called me and checked in with me, on a weekly basis to make sure I was okay."

He further spoke about the acupuncture services and continued support he received from his care coordinator who at the end of the night reunited with the councilmember in an emotional moment that had the audience on the brink of tears. He closed his speech at the gala thanking Apicha CHC for the tremendous work done to improve his life and the lives of communities in NYC.

He further spoke about the services and continued support he received from his care coordinator who he spotted in the audience and reunited with on stage in a moment that had the audience on the brink of tears. I will always remember the open hand and the hug and the follow up phone calls and the acupuncture to this day. And so I wanted to personally come tonight and personally say thank you to Apicha, not just on my behalf, but on the behalf of everyone that you touched and I am tremendously proud to be here tonight and to continue the fight forward so we can take care of people living with HIV and AIDS and also stop the spread of HIV and AIDS in NYC. =

**In 2014, we served
1,525 patients in our
primary care clinic,
a 103% increase
from 2012**



CM Johnson Reunited with his Care Coordinator, Shefali Rowshan

Photo Credit: Rex Romero

Our Patients Are PrEPared

One of Apicha CHC's PrEP patients, a Spanish speaker, discovered our services while we were doing HIV testing at Queens Pride Festival in Jackson Heights. He tested HIV negative and learned about PrEP while becoming a primary care patient. He discussed PrEP with his primary care provider and, as a result, decided to begin taking the pill as an HIV prevention tool.

We recently asked him about his experiences with PrEP and he said, "A lot of people don't know about PrEP. When I tell them I am on it, they ask me, are you positive? People think that PrEP is about being positive and you are taking the medications to suppress the virus to be undetectable. But, in reality, PrEP is a form of prevention for negative people."

He added, "I liked [PrEP] because it's a new method for prevention of HIV. So if people take PrEP, it's really good. But in reality, a lot of people think PrEP is bad, that it has too many side effects. But those side effects are minimal. For me it was a headache, just slightly the first couple of days. Now, I have ten months, no 9 months on PrEP. It's been spectacular. When I get tested for HIV my tests have been negative. I feel good on PrEP and I tell all my friends about it. I recommend it to them."

PrEP or Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis is the latest HIV prevention method gaining attention among individuals who are at risk of infection. 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. People who are at an increased risk of HIV infection can benefit from this daily pill to decrease their risk and remain uninfected. Our current PrEP model provides patients with comprehensive services including navigation and retention services for medical appointments, mental health services, medication assistance program, benefit screening, referrals including insurance prior authorization, risk-reduction counseling, medication



Photo Credit: Getty Images

adherence support, STD screening and condom distribution.

The costs for the clinic visits are paid for by the patient's health insurance or out of pocket using our sliding fee scale based on the patient's income. Likewise, the medication is often covered by the patient's health insurance (private and public) or through medication assistance program, if a patient is eligible.

Currently Apicha CHC has about 170 patients enrolled in our PrEP services and all have remained HIV negative to date. The majority of our PrEP patients come from communities of color and were young adults ages 18-34, representing communities at high risk of HIV infection. The most reported side effects from our patients included nausea and loose stools/diarrhea, but these side effects largely went away on their own after being on PrEP for about 2 weeks.

PrEP works best as an HIV prevention tool when people take the pill daily. Through our PrEP model, our patients' ability to take their pill every day improved and they reported less risk taking behaviors. The specific risk behaviors that are associated with HIV-infection are not using condoms during sex, engaging in anal sex, having a sexually transmitted infection, or trading sex for money or goods continued. These behaviors decreased in our pa-

tients who take PrEP after 1 month, 3 months and 6 months of care.

Implementing our comprehensive PrEP services was not a difficult undertaking, but it did highlight the important role for supportive services. For example, many patients needed support with navigating the systems to gain health insurance and medication assistance support because most people who need PrEP are young, healthy, and have very little experience in taking medications regularly or coming to the doctor regularly. They also needed reminders for medical visits and mental health support. In addition, more work needs to be done educating our communities about PrEP stigma and availability of PrEP. Apicha CHC will continue to expand our PrEP and PEP services, as long as there continues to be a demand in the community. If you would like to learn more about PrEP and become a patient please contact our Primary Care Clinic at 212-334-6029. =

52% of our patients/clients are men who have sex with men (MSM)

Taking on the Social Media Frontier



Apicha CHC's Updated Website's Homepage

Social media is daunting but this has not stopped Apicha CHC from taking on the challenges of this latest communication frontier. Building on its experience in outreach using meet-up sites, the organization expanded its engagement to other platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. To support this expansion, the Health Center redesigned its website, part of an organizational rebranding project. The result: www.apicha.org is now an active portal to Apicha CHCs services.

Since its launch in August 2014, hundreds of new and existing patients have requested appointments through the website. Along with its brand new look, the website makes it as easy as possible for people to contact us, make appointments, learn more about our providers and services, keep track of our goings on with a calendar of events, and stay up-to-date with information pertaining to their health through our new blog. Apicha CHC has a hard-earned reputation for cutting edge care and our enhanced online presence helps us keep that reputation.

With thirty-eight percent of Apicha CHC's patients and clients falling between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine—an age group notorious for preferring to communicate electronically—Apicha CHC made electronic communications a priority. Apicha CHC has always engaged with our community where they are most comfortable, so reaching current and poten-

tial patients online is a natural move for the organization. Whether it is through our patient portal's application for smart phones, through our new website, or through social media platforms, we want to be available to new and existing patients and clients.

The content we create for our blog and the information we post on Facebook is intended to be meaningful, informative, or entertaining to Apicha CHC's community. In this way our online presence acts as another avenue to engage with the communities we serve and connect them to care. All of our blog posts and many of our Facebook and Twitter posts include content that allows potential patients to schedule an appointment. To make sure the human component remains intact, a member of our clinic staff responds to every visit request with a call to set up the appointment, making sure being linked with our care is as seamless as possible.

Apicha CHC's social media project is funded in part by grants from the New York State Department of Health, Vital Access Program, and the New York City Council.

If you're not already following us, you can find us on the web at Apicha.org, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Apichacommunityhealthcenter, and on Twitter @ApichaHealth. Join the conversation! =

Healthcare Delivery Changes with DSRIP

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four PPSs are Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center PPS, Maimonides PPS, Mount Sinai Hospital Groups PPS, and NYC Health and Hospitals PPS. At Mt. Sinai PPS, Apicha CHC is represented by Chief Medical Officer Dr. Robert Murayama (Clinical Committee) and Chief Development Officer Gertrudes Pajaron (Finance Committee).

This is the planning year of the DSRIP program, so specifics on implementation plans are evolving at press time. As specifics are firmed up, Apicha CHC's participation in PPSs will also change. At this point, Apicha CHC has submitted plans to the PPSs to participate with their projects related to patient navigation, reducing emergency room visits due to cardiovascular disease or diabetes, and increasing early access to and retention in HIV care.

To ensure Apicha CHC's patients remain healthy many of these DSRIP projects involve the creation of "Care Teams" comprised of patient navigators and providers who work together to create strategies aimed at keeping our patients healthy.

In addition to putting a statewide focus on the importance of primary care in reducing unnecessary hospital visits, the DSRIP program aims to shift Medicaid-related reimbursements made to primary care providers from fee-for-service payments to value-based payments—the idea that providers are compensated based on the "value" of the care they provide and not simply for the services rendered. At this stage in DSRIP program planning, "value" has not been defined.

Apicha CHC anticipates the changes made through the DSRIP program will impact our organization, but are confident we will continue delivering the same quality of care that has come to characterizes us. =

Apicha CHC Care Coordination Team Featured in New CDC E-Tool Kit

Apicha CHC's highly successful care coordination program--represented by Venus Vacharakitja, Director of Support Services, Timothy Au, Care Coordinator, and Derek Foulks, patient navigator--are among the featured providers included in new instructional videos created earlier this year by a new program called Science-based Translation of Effective Program Strategies to Care -- STEPS to Care (StC). StC is a program funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is planned to become part of a compendium of care coordination E-Tools to be offered nationally.

comprehensive primary care, access to support services, outreach/education, and closures of area hospitals.

These videos will serve as testimonials about the benefits and value of the NYC Care Coordination Model. They will share best practices and lessons learned about patient navigation, case conferencing and health education/promotion and be disseminated on the CDC's effectiveinterventions.org.

"We were thrilled to have your staff involved during the development of STEPS to Care. Both Venus and Tim served on our Community Advisory

"I was nervous while taping the video. It was good to be able to do multiple takes because I kept getting tongue tied and I kept wiping my makeup off due to sweating under the hot lights." Timothy shared, "We were told the interviewer would ask questions repeatedly, so that they can get the best responses during the editing phase. But when the interviewer asked me the same questions over and over, by the 3rd time, I sometimes forgot my original response and have to think on the spot. It was a little bit scary but fun process."

Inclusion in these videos speaks to the quality and effectiveness of the support services offered at Apicha CHC and the staff here couldn't be more honored. As Venus explained, "It is a good feeling to have your work and program recognized and determined to be a best practice. As a program director, I feel ecstatic--it was nice to hear from the [Department of Health and Mental Hygiene] and CDC how they are impressed with how well Apicha's care coordination works."

Apicha CHC has long understood that robust care coordination is necessary to achieve the goal of stopping the AIDS epidemic and we make it a priority to mentor other agencies so they may duplicate our success. =

|| Inclusion in these videos speaks to the quality and effectiveness of the support services offered at Apicha CHC and the staff here couldn't be more honored. ||

StC is a new linkage, retention and care program that is based on the NYC Care Coordination model being implemented at Apicha CHC and agencies like it around the nation. The program will provide other health agencies and staff with an online package of e-tools to support the delivery of coordinated HIV/AIDS care to clients with demonstrated barriers to HIV-related health, including those who are sub-optimally engaged in HIV care and treatment. Examples of these barriers include, poverty, housing, nutrition, access to

Board. [All three Apicha CHC staff members] did a great job of representing your care coordination program in the video", emailed Deborah McLean, project director of StC. Deborah explained the STEPS to Care set of strategies will be pilot tested by 6 agencies in NYC starting in June 2015 and is planned to begin national dissemination in 2016.

When asked about the shoot itself, Apicha CHC's staff had some entertaining stories to share. Derek recounted,

Improving Transgender Health Care Access

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services included in the Medicaid expansion. Apicha CHC specifically advocated for electrolysis and for chest/breast surgery for either male to female and female to male individuals. The State responded that the Medicaid program can not cover "purely cosmetic procedures." They further outlined that those procedures that are primary to gender reassignment surgery, like chest/breast surgery, would be covered in limited circumstances and would issue a policy brief soon to further ex-

plaining the circumstances. Electrolysis, however, was considered an "ancillary procedure directed solely at improving an individual's appearance" and will not be covered by Medicaid. At the city level, the Human Resources Administration anticipates filling some of the gap in transgender care that is not addressed by the current Medicaid coverage. However, no decisions have been formalized at this time.

Overall, Apicha CHC commends the efforts to address the health care access

of transgender New Yorkers. The ability to change the sex on their birth certificates and Medicaid coverage expansion will improve their health outcomes by improving their access to quality healthcare. This further contributes to New York State's overall goal of addressing the medical needs of the transgender community and ultimately improve the quality of life for transgender individuals who are often stigmatized in their pursuit of gender transition and marginalized from accessing culturally appropriate healthcare. =

Therese R. Rodriguez Honored at Winter Pride Event



On January 24, 2015, The Queens Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee honored Therese R. Rodriguez, Apicha CHC's CEO, for her contributions to the LGBT movement at its Winter Pride

Dinner Dance held in Astoria World Manor in Astoria, Queens.

The award was presented by Marjorie Hill, now CEO of the Joseph Addabbo Community Health Center. In her speech, Rodriguez thanked the Queens Pride Committee by saying, "In honoring me, you honor Apicha Community Health Center's 25 years of culturally competent service to the LGBT community and its abiding belief in health as the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual wellbeing of an individual."

In her moving speech Rodriguez recounted the challenges facing too many LGBT people, "When a child discovers his or her sexual identity, one outside of society's accepted norms, or when this little girl says he is a boy and wants to be called a boy's name or this boy wants to wear girl dresses and says she is a girl – that child carries one of the most difficult life decisions a child or even an adult has to make. To open up to parents, family and friends, school and workmates, and risk rejection or live with the illusion that there is safety in secrecy."

She went on to describe the consequences of coming out of the closet experienced by many patients and clients of Apicha CHC, "...their worst fears are realized, finding themselves cast off onto a path of oppression and isolation. A life of mental strain and anxiety, dis-

eases, homelessness."

After sharing Apicha CHC's success in mending these physical and mental health consequences, the audience of 400, the largest ever for the Queens Pride Committee's annual winter event, gave Rodriguez a standing ovation, responding to Apicha CHC's announcement that it plans to increase our capacity to serve New York City by opening a second site in Jackson Heights, Queens, "My dream is a co-located Apicha Community Health Center and an inclusionary A&PI LGBT Center, in Jackson Heights...If you believe that those who suffer severe health disparities deserve the best quality of care in a culturally competent, patient centered/community oriented health center, bring us to Queens."

Motivated by her speech and bringing Apicha CHC's model of care to the borough, Queens Pride chose Apicha CHC

as one of the Marshals for their 2015 Pride Parade. When discussing the parade marshal decision, Queens Pride stated, "We are very supportive of Apicha's work in Queens and the idea of an Apicha-ran health center that could be based in Jackson heights is something we strongly support."

The Queens Pride Committee, headed by co-chairs Chris Calvert and Hank Krumholz, also honored Melissa Mark-Viverito, Speaker of the New York City Council, and the Queens Community House, which provides thousands of Queens residents with programs and services, advocacy and community building. The Winter Pride dance and dinner is the Committee's largest annual fundraiser with the proceeds from the benefit going toward the Queens Pride Parade and Festival, the Queens Pride film program, and other outreach activities that take place throughout the year. =



Therese R. Rodriguez, Apicha CHC CEO, Melissa Mark-Viverito, Speaker of the NYC Council, Daniel Dromm NYC Council Member, and Apicha CHC Board and Staff at the The Queens Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee's Winter Pride Dinner Dance

Our Trans Health Clinic experienced dramatic growth from 9 patients in 2011 to 243 patients at the end of 2014

Apicha Community Health Center would like to thank our funders.

This list includes funds received from May 1, 2014 to April 30, 2015.

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
- PrEP – Outreach and Early Assessment
- FAYS Transgender Care Program

New York State Assembly: Richard N. 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 Members

- Margaret Chin
- Daniel Dromm
- Corey Johnson
- Carlos Menchaca

Speaker Funding

Manhattan Delegation

Private Grants

H. van Ameringen Foundation

Broadway Cares/ Equity Fights AIDS, Inc.

C. J. Huang Foundation

Gilead Sciences

Hunger Solutions

Hunter College Research on Sex Workers

The Paul Rapoport Foundation, Inc.

Contributions

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Jorge Z. Ortoll/Ma-Yi Theater Co.

\$1,000-\$4,999

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