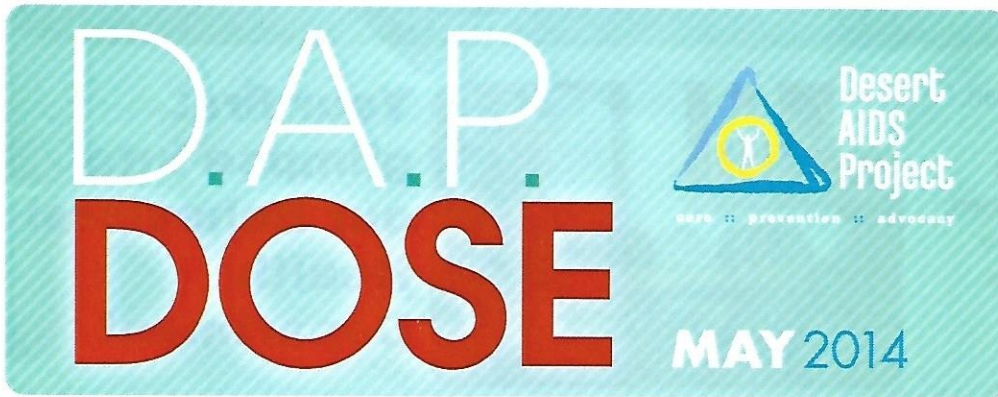


## Your contributions at work



## Housing is an essential therapy for people living with HIV



“From the time they come in and say ‘I’m homeless,’ to the time they say, ‘I got the apartment!’ it’s so great,” beams Nichelle Austin, Housing Case Manager for Desert AIDS Project. “You see them a month later and they look so different because they’re able to say ‘I’ve got a house. I can sleep tonight.’”

Nichelle knows that providing housing is essential therapy for people living with HIV and AIDS,

who are facing homelessness or already living on the streets. She’s seen it work many times. So has Housing Coordinator Monica Aitchison.

“When a client gets housing and can sustain it, his health improves,” Monica observes. “At first, his health is fragile. Then he gets better. He’s not so isolated. He’s more approachable. You can see the difference.”

That’s why D.A.P. includes 81 studio and one-bedroom apartments at the Vista Sunrise complex in the compassionate, comprehensive care package available to clients. Located next to our campus at Vista Chino and Sunrise Avenue, Vista Sunrise is just one of several ways we support clients in need of housing.

Follow the winding path through Vista Sunrise and you’ll see a cluster of two-story buildings with Spanish stucco facades in the hues of a Mojave sunset. The apartments are unfurnished and airy at about 352 square feet for studios and 534 for one bedrooms. There is a full kitchen and bath in each unit with outdoor patios. And the grounds include a dog park and a pool. Residents can decorate their patio areas to suit their own tastes just as they do inside their homes.

Gina Hooten, Vista Sunrise’s property manager, points out that potential residents must be diagnosed with HIV or AIDS. Applicants also have to undergo credit and criminal background checks. They must have a source of income, usually Social Security. Rent is based on a sliding scale of 30%-60%-of-income. This gets them into a space whose market value ranges from \$650 to \$700 a month for studios and \$700 to \$800 a month for a one-bedroom.

Our housing specialists say the need is growing. Your donations and support mean a world of difference for someone who doesn’t know where they’ll be sleeping tonight. When you donate, volunteer, or help fundraise, you make sure there’s one less person on the streets.

## Reaching youth at local schools for HIV Awareness

One in four new HIV infections in the US is among youth ages 13-24, and each month, another 1,000 young people contract HIV. That’s why every year for the past three years, National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day (NYHAAD) has been held on April 10.

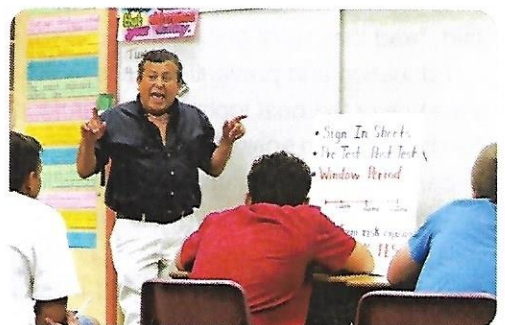
Since HIV prevention and education funds were decimated in the State of California back in 2009, our education team has remained dedicated to reaching teens and young adults with the message about HIV risk... but this year, we’ve made it a goal of ours to reach more kids with information they likely aren’t getting anywhere else.

But you might expect a group of eighth graders to break out in embarrassed laughter and horseplay at the mere mention of such words as penis, oral sex and vaginal secretions.

Earlier this month though, students at Raymond Cree Middle School did no such thing. When our Community Educator Steven Michael Chacon explained HIV and AIDS, how it spread and ways to prevent it, students didn’t giggle or get embarrassed. Instead they listened closely. They responded correctly when Michael quizzed them. And they asked thoughtful questions during and after his presentation.

Michael, a retired teacher, said he purposely uses mature vocabulary in his talks with kids. “I empower them with just enough information” to make proper choices about sex, drug use or other risky behaviors, he said.

“If you approach it as a matter of fact, you don’t allow it to get to that point” where students goof off. *(cont. on next page)*





Michael gave his talk, titled "HIV 101," as part of NYHAAD and the prevention work our other volunteers and paid staff are doing this year at local schools including Palm Springs, Palm Desert, La Quinta, Cathedral City, Yucca Valley, Moreno Valley High Schools and Nellie Coffman Middle School.

Michael spoke with students at Raymond Cree's New Directions Day Treatment Program, an extended school day program for youngsters with emotional challenges. New Directions spends four hours on academics and four hours on mental health services, social skills and life skills. "We added sex education to life skills because it's important for this population to be aware," said the school's Rehabilitation Specialist, Yanira Regla.

Michael engaged students by first quizzing them on HIV and AIDS. As a testament to how great the need is for prevention education, the eight youngsters in the class knew very few answers. Then he lectured, explaining basics about HIV, like how the disease circulates in four bodily fluids and how it can only be transmitted through sex, breast feeding and sharing drug paraphernalia such as needles.

He rubbed his hands together vigorously to demonstrate how friction makes skin so tender it can tear so having sex "in the front or in the back" can "open the door" to HIV and ultimately AIDS.

Students' hands shot up and peppered Michael with questions about more specifics.

When Michael revisited the quiz that began his lecture, students knew all the answers.

"Where can you get tested?" he asked. "Hospitals, Revivals, D.A.P.," students answered.

"How old do you have to be to get tested?" "Thirteen," they shouted in response.

Teacher Jamie Dunn was pleased at how attentive her students were, saying she was a little surprised there was no laughter or disruptions. Michael said he wasn't stunned because he could tell they were listening.

"I was checking for understanding," Michael said, "and they were getting it."

Education and prevention classes like HIV 101 are some of the best tools we have in stopping the disease from spreading. Our Education Department and educators like Michael give these classes all year long throughout the Coachella Valley and Hi-Desert region. If you or someone you know would like to get HIV 101 in your child's class, call us at 760-323-2118.



## Your first glimpse into our Behavioral Health Department

It's 1986. You are 19 ... or 23 ... maybe 30, and you're told to get your affairs in order because you've only got a few months to live. Friends and loved ones are dying all around you. Memorial services are a weekly event. The obituary pages stretch on and on. You are scared to death. You can't tell your family. But no one is supposed to die this young.

Somehow, you survive. Through years of sickness, loss and despair, waiting for the next infection – expecting that proverbial "next shoe to drop" – you hope for some treatment or cure. Ten years pass, and finally effective medications are available. There are lots of side-effects ... but FINALLY something works. Too bad Joe or Jim couldn't have hung on just six more months.

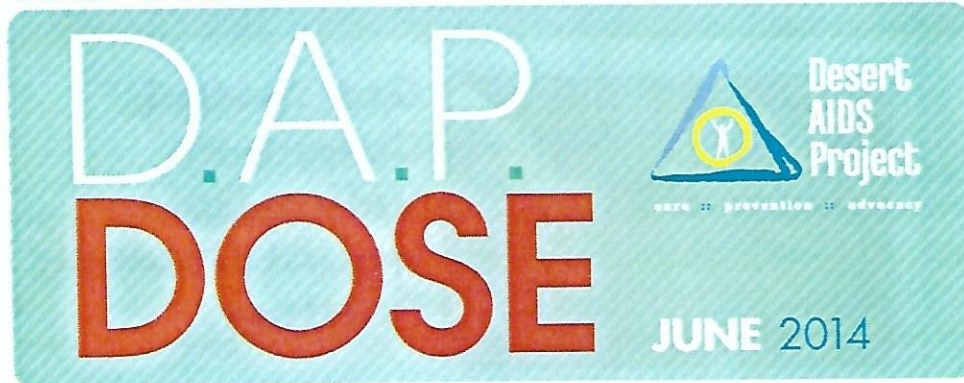
This is part of the back-story for many of the patients Dr. David Hersh, psychiatrist and Director of Clinical Programs for Desert AIDS Project, sees every day. "Most of my patients are true survivors. They lived through a hellish time, and managed to hold it together. Most didn't expect to live into their 30 s, let alone their 40 s or 50 s," Dr. Hersh says. "Now, here they are in 2014, grappling with depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and other mental health issues. My patients typically aren't dying from HIV anymore, but issues of stigma, isolation, loneliness, financial woes, medical problems, and an unclear path forward impact many."

Dr. Hersh and D.A.P. utilize an integrated, holistic approach to help patients cope with, and work through these issues. As a psychiatrist, Hersh heads the Behavioral Health Team, leading a psychiatric nurse practitioner, a therapist and a substance-use counselor. Each of these team members works closely with D.A.P.'s medical, case-management, housing, social services and home-healthcare providers to deliver an individualized, comprehensive care plan for each D.A.P. client. Having these services, as well as a thriving dental clinic, under a single roof, makes obtaining coordinated care much simpler for D.A.P. clients. In addition, the D.A.P. Community Center – located within the D.A.P. facility at 1695 N. Sunrise Way in Palm Springs – further supports client wellness through activities such as acupuncture, yoga, workforce re-entry and educational programs, as well as therapy, support and socialization groups.

Dr. Hersh's office is located within the medical clinic, where he and Medical Director Dr. Steven Scheibel, take a team approach to patient care. They agree that medical and mental health issues are often intertwined, needing to be addressed in a coordinated way to best help their patients better care for themselves. "Can we really expect a severely depressed patient to take their HIV meds regularly, or someone's mood to improve if their diabetes is out of control or they are experiencing chronic pain?" Hersh asks. "It's not 1986 anymore, but what happened then, and what is happening today, impacts our client's lives and quality of life in complex ways that can be best addressed with an approach that focuses on the entire person."



## Your contributions at work



## Get Tested “Roadshow” Marks National HIV Testing Day June 27



Get Tested Coachella Valley, the nation's first region-wide HIV testing initiative, has plans to mark National HIV Testing Day by taking its mobile HIV testing clinic on a “roadshow” to the region's three major hospitals – Desert Regional Medical Center, Eisenhower Medical Center, and John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital. The Get Tested Roadshow will bring a local focus to the national awareness day by parking its mobile

clinic at the three locales and offering free and confidential HIV testing to the general public and hospital staff.

The mobile clinic is scheduled to be at Desert Regional Medical Center in Palm Springs from 8AM-11AM, at Eisenhower Medical Center in Rancho Mirage from Noon-3PM, and at JFK Memorial Hospital from 4PM-7PM. All three of the hospitals are members of the campaign's coalition of more than 50 Community Partners, led by Desert AIDS Project. Desert Regional Medical Center is Lead Sponsor of the campaign and has already begun to integrate routine HIV testing into its standard patient care beginning with its Emergency Department.

The mobile clinic will be staffed by the Get Tested team of HIV test counselors and Public Health Liaisons, wearing the campaign's signature orange color. The sides of the mobile clinic feature full-color images of Coachella Valley community members, making the clinic resemble a rolling billboard as it cruises through the Valley. Involving community partners and local leaders – and featuring them in campaign communications – is a key aspect of the Get Tested strategy. “We've learned that if we want people to take action, we have to make our message immediate and personally compelling by showing local people that our neighbors may even recognize. We want everyone to know, at a glance, that this campaign is about us, about OUR community,” says Susan Unger, Get Tested Coachella Valley Project Director. All campaign materials are produced in both English and Spanish.

The Get Tested Coachella Valley Roadshow will help spread the word that HIV can end if everyone gets tested and if those who are currently unaware they are HIV-positive get proper medication. One day a year, that's the message of National HIV Testing Day. That's the message that Get Tested Coachella Valley speaks every day.

## Fighting HIV stigma, one testimonial at a time

A new advertising campaign encourages Coachella Valley residents living with HIV or AIDS to take charge of their challenges and get on the path to a stronger and happier life, with help from Desert AIDS Project. The campaign, called the Client Empowerment Ad Series, features proud clients – showing their faces and using their names – while talking about the services they receive at D.A.P.

With 10 ads created so far, D.A.P. clients are just beginning to shine a spotlight on the breadth and depth of programs and services available – all under one roof at Desert AIDS Project. In one ad, Chuck talks about how yoga and meditation kept him strong when his T-cell count dropped to three; in another ad, Miguel tells how acupuncture helps alleviate his pain. In yet another, a beaming Kathy tells us why “food is medicine” as she picks up free, fresh fruits and vegetables from our monthly Farmers Market. Needlecraft activities – like quilting and embroidery – that ease hand tremors and neuropathy for clients are showcased in an ad for Pinkie's Monday Sewing Group, including Hugh, Bill, Rick, and Pinkie himself – also known as Larry.

The smiling faces of Chuck, Miguel, Kathy, Larry and many others tell the stories of D.A.P. clients who haven't bowed to the various stigmas that still surround HIV or AIDS for some. Instead, these “proud and out loud” clients have each spoken openly about their HIV status and how the care they get at D.A.P. is enriching, energizing, and empowering their lives.

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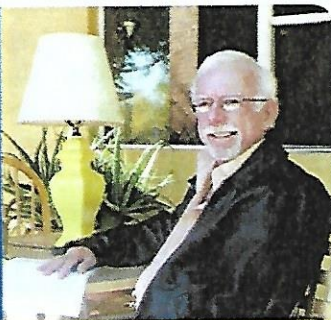




Barry Dayton, D.A.P. Director of Marketing & Communications, explained that “We are encouraging our clients to be their own best advocates of their health care while taking advantage of the amazing variety of programs and services we have in this single location, here at D.A.P.” Whether clients need to see a dentist, fill prescriptions for life-saving HIV medications, or just find a little camaraderie through a variety of activities and support groups, they can get it ... and more ... at D.A.P. And if a client, like Ross, lives in the Vista Sunrise apartment community on D.A.P.’s campus, all he or she has to do is walk across the parking lot. No wonder we have become a national model for holistic-care-done-right.

**Almost anything I need is right out my front door.**

Ross, D.A.P. client

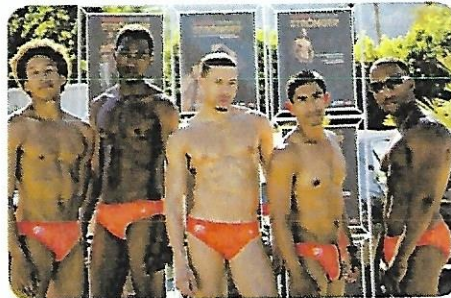


**D.A.P. treats and supports the whole person**

These “client empowerment ads” run locally in LGBT publications like Desert Outlook, LIVE Magazine, and The Standard, as well as in national print and digital titles like Compete Magazine, an LGBT sports focused publication, and A&U: America’s AIDS Magazine. The ads have also appeared in greater Coachella Valley general interest publications, like The Desert Sun, Desert Health News, and Desert Charities News. Tens of thousands of potential clients, donors, volunteers, and others will be exposed to the empowerment ads, here and across the country, during their run.

Hopefully, those reading the ads will come to see people living with HIV and AIDS as friends, family, and neighbors. It’s time to set aside the harsh labels that some put on the HIV-affected ... and simply treat them as anyone else dealing with a chronic disease. D.A.P. is proud of its clients who have found their medical home here with us and we love hearing how they’re making the most of all we have to offer.

Visit the “Staying Current” section at [www.desertAIDSproject.org](http://www.desertAIDSproject.org) to view all ten ads.



## Get Tested Coachella Valley Gets Hot At Coolest Parties

The Get Tested Coachella Valley campaign kicked into high-gear when it recently moved into Palm Springs’ international gay party scene. The Get Tested team both educated about and tested for HIV without disturbing the fun at both the world-famous, 25-year-old White Party and the lesser-known, but very popular, Blatino Oasis.

“Party promoters, in the past, had been skeptical about letting Desert AIDS Project test for HIV at their events, worried that the presence could harsh an otherwise mellow weekend,” said Ralph Gonzalez, D.A.P.’s newly promoted Manager of Prevention, Intervention & Education. “People might not want to test while they’re in party mode.”

Both White Party and Blatino Oasis attract gay and bisexual men from the U.S. and abroad to concerts, fireworks and pool parties here in Palm Springs and Cathedral City. The White Party, held the weekend of April 25, brought an estimated 10,000 revelers. Blatino Oasis, a celebration for gay men of color, held May 2 – 4, drew about 1,000 attendees. For both events, the campaign worked closely with promoters to make its presence fit seamlessly into the flow of the weekend.

During White Party weekend, the Get Tested campaign placed its mobile testing clinic on Arenas Road, where many gay bars are located. At the main White Party event, held Saturday night at the Palm Springs Convention Center, the Get Tested van and inviting outdoor lounge were set-up directly beside the main entrance – an historic first. Test counselors provided free and confidential HIV rapid testing. For any individuals receiving a preliminary positive test result, the counselors were on-hand to provide immediate guidance and to ensure linkage to confirmatory testing and appropriate care, if needed.

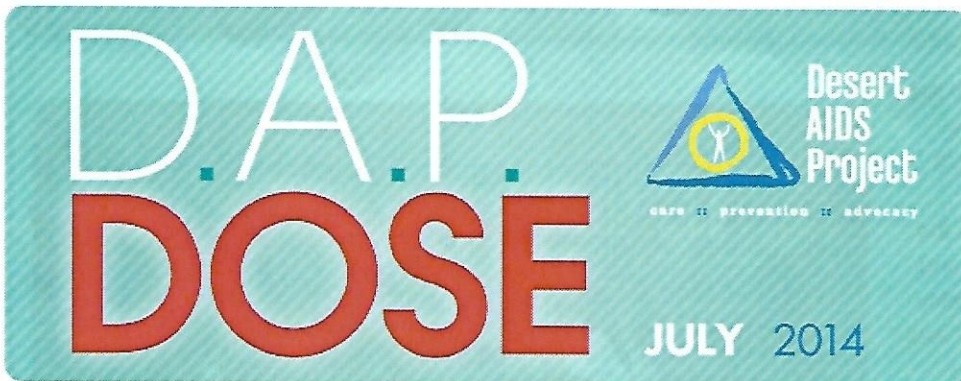
The Get Tested campaign had an even higher profile the following weekend as a Presenting Sponsor of Blatino Oasis. The mobile testing clinic, outdoor lounge, and eye-catching male models decked out in campaign-color orange “Get Tested” Speedos drew event-goers to learn more about the campaign and to get tested.

As part of its Presenting Sponsorship and partnership with Blatino Oasis founder and promoter, Joe Hawkins, the Get Tested campaign offered a free ticket to the Saturday night concert featuring the hot hip-hop headliner, Trina. Tickets ordinarily sold for \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door. “People were coming up to us saying, ‘We get a free ticket if we get tested? Yeah!’ ” Ralph recalled. “We had lines of people getting tested.”

The levels of testing and education at both White Party and Blatino Oasis exceeded expectations and drew praise from representatives of the CDC, the State Office of AIDS, and the event promoters – making it very clear that the Get Tested team did its work ... without breaking the groove!



Enhancing our clients' health with your support



## Supplementing health care with non-traditional therapies

For Ray Robertson, Community Center Manager for Desert AIDS Project, it's all about tapping into the body's ability to care for itself by using all programs available to aid that process.

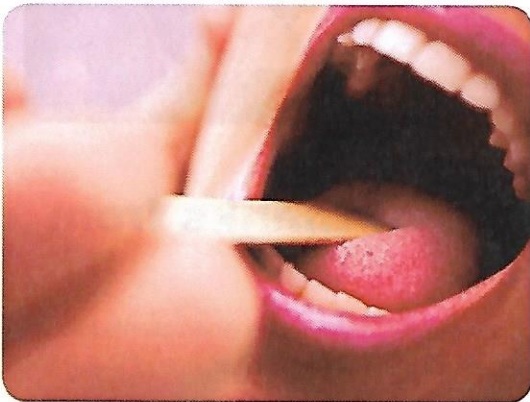
Ray coordinates many activities D.A.P. sponsors, outside traditional medicine, that promote health and well-being. Along with cooking classes and emotional support groups, Ray assembled a menu of homeopathic and non-traditional therapies. Among them are reiki, acupuncture, yoga, hypnotherapy, transformational breathing, flower essence and aromatherapy. Pet therapy and qigong, (pronounced chē-gung), an ancient Chinese healing art that involves meditation, controlled breathing and exercises designed to improve physical and mental health while staving off disease, are coming soon.

Ray provides the evidence of this philosophy, saying non-traditional therapies have grown dramatically since he joined us three years ago. Prior to that, he served 20 years as program director of a residential substance abuse treatment center. With his leadership, we now offer a variety of mostly Eastern-inspired treatments and homeopathic remedies.

Alternative therapies seem to be popular with our clients because group and individual sessions generally are booked solid. "A lot of our clients believe in natural, homeopathic healing," Ray explains. "They have to take lots of pills, so anything they can do that's neither invasive nor dangerous they really are eager to try."

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## D.A.P. and Desert Regional screen 115 for oral cancer



For the second consecutive year, the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Desert Regional Medical Center joined in providing free screenings for oral, head, and neck cancer at the Annette Bloch Cancer Care Center at Desert AIDS Project on Friday, June 20.

As they waited to be examined, some watched videos about cancer screening and prevention, produced by the Oral Cancer Foundation,

featuring celebrities and others diagnosed with oral cancer. Information on quitting smoking – the leading cause, along with alcohol use, of mouth and voice box cancers – and other cancer-related materials were also available.

Although walk-ins were accepted and no one was turned away, most people had called the toll-free appointment line in advance and were quickly seen by the medical and dental providers performing the examinations. "Many of the patients we screened were advised to have further follow-up with their primary care physician while others were referred for immediate consultation with a specialist, such as a dermatologist or an otolaryngologist ... more commonly known as an ear, nose, and throat specialist," said Dr. Steven Scheibel, medical director at Desert AIDS Project. "This oral cancer screening clinic was an excellent opportunity to focus on one specific area of concern that is often forgotten during regular doctor visits."

Scheibel was joined by a nurse practitioner and two dentists from D.A.P., as well as two doctors from the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Desert Regional Medical Center, in performing the screenings. As patients left, they were given copies of the completed screening forms to review with their primary care doctors or indicated specialists. Also provided was "50 Facts about Oral, Head and Neck Cancer."

"That fact sheet points out that about 50,000 people are diagnosed every year in the U.S. alone with oral, head, and neck cancers," said Dr. Nicolas Batty, one of the screeners from Desert Regional's Comprehensive Cancer Center. His colleague, Dr. Amir Lavaf, added "I feel Desert Regional and D.A.P. provided a real service to our community today and I was so pleased to see how well our two staffs and the volunteers kept the entire process running so smoothly. We look forward to doing it again next year."

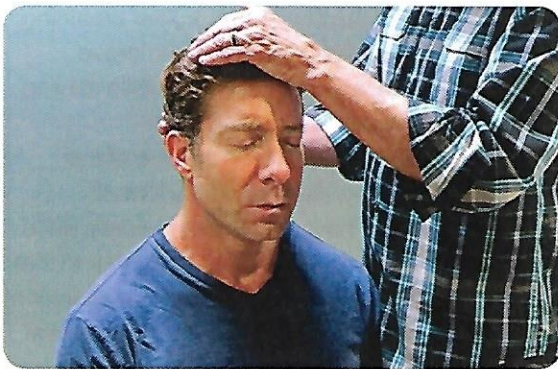




Acupuncturist Askat Ruzyev adds some of the many medications his clients take have heavy side effects. "Acupuncture treats side effects, it doesn't add any," Askat says.

Sometimes these remedies can dial down the depression and anxieties that living with HIV and AIDS can cause. Jeffrey McCall, who has weekly acupuncture treatments, is one such client. "I was depressed and had little energy," Jeffrey says while Askat gently placed needles into Jeffrey's left ear. "He knew what to do and how to treat it."

Stanley Naeschen was waiting for his sixth session while Askat worked with Jeffrey. "It's like recharging the battery on a car." Stress and depression also get him down. Stanley says, "I'm not a needle person, but there's no pain... and, in the end, it's worth it. It's brought me better sleep, even better dreams. I like the direction this is going."



Reiki master John Strobel relates that his clients say they get relief from stress when he softly places hands on and around them in order to "channel energy from the universe" and produce a meditative state. "Some people have an emotional release. Most people just find it relaxing. Someone once said it was as good as an eight-hour sleep."

Besides offering a relief from depression, stress or insomnia, non-traditional therapies are yet another way to get clients up and out and active, which can have curative powers, Ray maintains.

"We need to be able to offer clients every opportunity to get out of the house and do something they believe will improve their health and well-being," Ray believes. "If they're coming here, then they're not isolated. If their bodies are active, then their minds are active and that's good stuff!"



## A heart-felt note of thanks from a D.A.P. client

We know our donors like you are making a difference when clients tell us we're doing a great job ... like this email that Michael Muller, one of D.A.P.'s Medical Case Managers, received on June 24, 2014:

*Michael, haven't written you in a while, but wanted to express my appreciation to you and D.A.P. for the good care and consideration I've received since I re-enrolled as a D.A.P. client.*

*When things were looking pretty bleak for me due to loss of my Social Security retirement and Medicare coverage, D.A.P. stepped in and helped me get affordable care until I could re-establish my coverage. I had excellent scheduled consultations with Dr. Hawthorne and had a recent urgent care visit with Dr. Scheibel. Also, once again the D.A.P. Dental clinic gave me a good evaluation and cleaning; it's always nice working with them and I was glad I could qualify again for that service.*

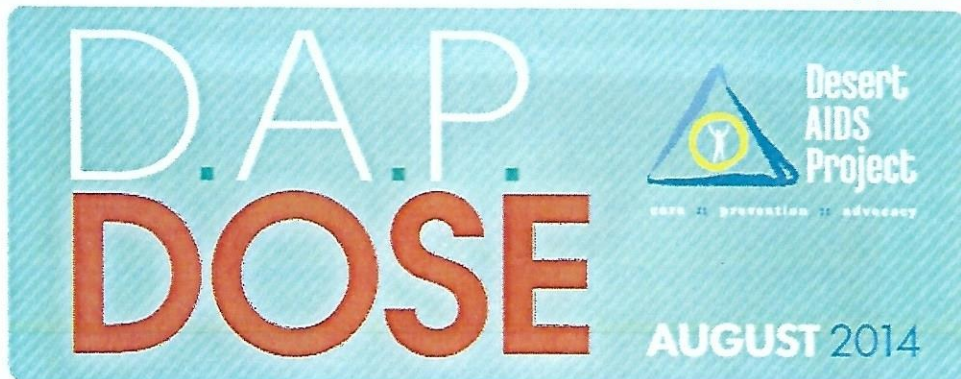
*My Medicare is due to resume on July 1, and I'm very much looking forward to continuing with D.A.P. for my clinical needs, as well as the excellent social support groups that I've been attending for the last several months.*

*Thanks again to you personally, Michael, for clearing the way for a good outcome for me. I've very grateful.*

*Bill Spivey*



Enhancing our clients' health with your support



## Primary care at D.A.P. often means treating cancer as well



HIV patients diagnosed with cancer are two to four times more likely to have their cancer go untreated than patients without the virus, a recent study says. Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania's Abramson Cancer Center and the National Cancer Institute, who conducted the study, believe doctors treat cancer in HIV patients less aggressively because they're not sure how

cancer therapies will affect this special population.

Desert AIDS Project has been treating cancer along with HIV through the Annette Bloch Cancer Center since 2012. The center was established with a \$1 million gift from Annette Bloch. She and her husband Richard, the R in H&R Block, both battled cancer.

"I felt this gift might extend the compassionate care I saw at D.A.P.," she said at the time. As a member of 100 Women, the program dedicated to serving women and children affected by or at-risk of HIV/AIDS, Annette continues to be a friend of our cause.

Her generosity is essential because HIV and certain cancers go hand in hand. Some of those malignancies are so common they're called "AIDS-defining conditions" and include Kaposi sarcoma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and cervical cancer. Lung cancer is an AIDS patients' second most likely cause of death. Liver, oral and anal cancers also are common, unwelcome companions among our clients.

D.A.P.'s medical team recognizes the threat anal cancer can pose to a large segment of our community, so they perform anoscopies to catch it in its early stages. Nurse practitioners and providers use anoscopies to visually examine the canal for anal dysplasia. Pronounced dis-plā'-zuh, the condition affects sexually active gay men and is brought on by unprotected intercourse with a partner who has HPV, the human papillomavirus. HPV causes a clustering of abnormal cells, dysplasia, that forms lesions in the anal canal. The lesions, if left undetected and untreated, can lead to full-blown cancer.

Without the anoscopies and other cancer treatments offered (cont. above ▶)

at D.A.P., our clients might be thrust into a medical community that doesn't understand how to help them. According the study, which appeared in Newsweek June 30, HIV patients generally have been excluded from clinical trials, so oncologists don't know if the best available treatments are equally safe and effective for them.

"Many oncologists rely on guidelines based on such trials for treatment decision-making, and in the absence of guidance," Dr. Gita Suneja, the study's lead author, says, "they may elect not to treat HIV-infected cancer patients due to concerns about adverse side effects or poor survival.

## The volunteer "Angel" among us

Meet Margie Lobley. Margie, 70, has been a Desert AIDS Project volunteer for 17 years.

D.A.P. staffers dropped by to congratulate Margie when she was granted Angel status by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, Inc., an international non-profit organization of gay men who promote joy, forgive guilt from stigmas and labels and honor community service. The local order has given \$70,000 to groups such as D.A.P., the AIDS Assistance Program and Coachella Valley animal shelters. They have been very active in HIV testing and prevention.

The sisters choose Angels, who share their commitment to giving. Margie, who has donated nearly 6,000 hours of service to our clients, was invited to join those ranks. The

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ceremony was held July 16 in the Library at D.A. P. and presided over by her son, Sister Theresa Solution.

"We're here today to honor Margie for 17 years of volunteer work at D.A.P.," said her son, batting her 3-inch eyelashes dressed in nun's habit and 6-inch heels. "My work as a sister has been inspired by your work as a volunteer."

With Sister Theresa flanked by Sister Anne Thrax and Sister Teryn McCloseoff, the scene was deliberately light and comical though it recognized that community service was serious, heartwarming business.

"She inspires me," Sister Theresa continued. "I love her commitment to D.A.P.'s female clients. I love her all-hugs policy."

Margie began helping out here shortly after she and her family moved from Thousand Oaks to Big Bear in 1998. Sister Theresa is one of Margie's seven children, a brood that includes five stepchildren and two of her own. Margie is a native of Rhode Island, who moved to Thousand Oaks in 1973. She now lives in Palm Desert.

"I just came back from a refresher course on my accent," Margie said, with a New England brogue that sounds very Boston, just a little 'softah.'

Margie explained how she used to drive to Palm Springs from Big Bear to do volunteer clerical work for D.A.P. Later, she decided to distribute food to those in need at our pantry. One day, she came across some fabric and thought it would be excellent material for decorative pillows. The little project turned into 120 pillows that sold for \$20 each and raised \$1,500 to buy items to put inside holiday gift bags for our clients. During that process, Margie noticed that the bags were the only present some clients received for Christmas.

Sister Theresa described the pillow campaign to the crowd at Margie's Angel ceremony, recounting how relentless she was in getting money and materials from family and friends to complete the project.

"It was my way of giving back," Margie recalled. "It was my way of saying thanks to God for all the blessings he's given me."



## Five Brand New Ways Our Clients Can Improve Their Health Online

This summer, Desert AIDS Project is rolling out a new secure online patient portal for clients and patients. Months in the making, the number one goal of the portal is to provide a useful online tool for our clients, as part of new Affordable Care Act requirements.

To reach this goal, our new Health Information Management team has been hard at work finalizing implementation across the agency, so that all staff and departments are fully knowledgeable about the new technology.

HIV health center patients and all clients who have a case manager can use the patient portal to:

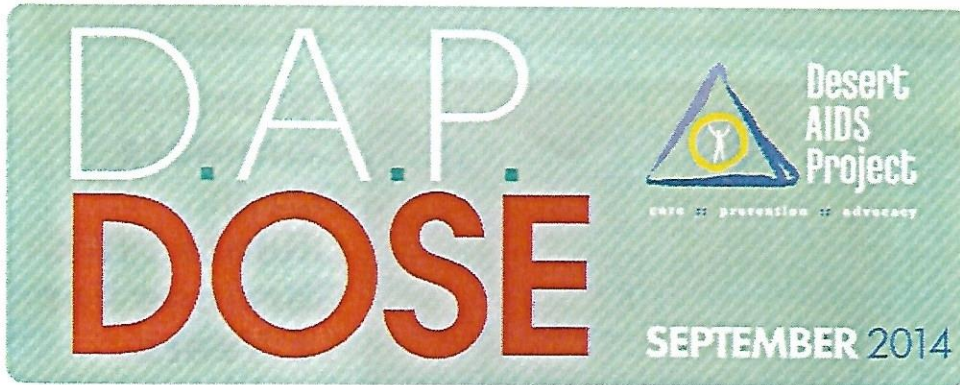
1. Ask a clinician a question: have a question about medications or your last visit? Ask your provider using the secure online form, as part of the patient portal.
2. Review and request lab results: get access to your most recent labs, instantly!
3. Request appointments: no time to call the health center for an appointment? Put in a request for your next health center visit, and get a confirmation just days afterwards.
4. View their personal health record: need to share your health record with a private physician? Just login, download, and forward your record to your doctor.
5. Ask a case manager a question: have a question about eligibility for other D.A.P. programs? Use the portal to ask your case manager, and get a response back in a day or two.

Plus, clients and patients will get secure email alerts so they'll never miss another appointment.

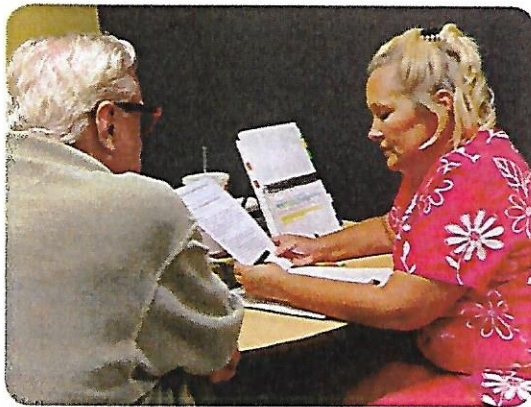
The D.A.P. Patient Portal is live right now, so if you're a client – or you know one – sign up with a staff member today!



Enhancing our clients' health with your support



## D.A.P. Aims To Find Answers, Improve Quality Of Life, With New Research Projects



Aging with HIV was once an impossible dream.

When the epidemic first appeared in 1981, those becoming ill most often heard doom-and-gloom prognoses. Many were told to “get their affairs” in order because they couldn't be expected to live long. Most doctors in those days were as confused by this

new disease as their frightened patients. And the almost-complete lack of medication therapies in those days made progression to what we've come to know as full-blown AIDS far more likely than it is today.

The good news is that many of those who expected to live only months ... or a couple of years ... are now, thanks to advances in drug treatment and other therapies, living much longer with HIV or AIDS. But just how WELL are they aging? That's what a new study aims to find out:

Why are some people thriving, while others living with HIV seem to develop more co-infections – or co-morbidities – than others?

Along with the School of Medicine at University of California, San Diego (UCSD,) Desert AIDS Project is participating in a study, made available through a \$3.4 million grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, to find some of the answers to this question and others like it.

“Since the advent of antiretroviral therapy to treat HIV, life expectancy of these adult patients has been increasing progressively,” a UCSD press release says. “By 2015, nearly half of individuals with HIV in the United States will be over age 50, and this number is expected to continue to rise. The newly funded study will be the first large-scale investigation of successful aging in those with HIV who are between the ages of 36 and 65 years.”

D.A.P. clients meeting the dual requirements of being 65 or older while living with HIV have shown themselves eager to

*(cont. on back)*

## “Sisters are doin' it for themselves”

That's not just a song by HIV activist Annie Lennox. It's what's happening at D.A.P. through the Women's Empowerment Group, facilitated by Janine Bell, Substance Abuse Specialist.

“It's not as easy for a lot of women to 'come out' as living with HIV, like gay men do,” says Janine. “Women still tend to be the family caregivers, who aren't used to taking time for themselves, rather than hearth and home.” But Janine is encouraging D.A.P.'s female clients – about 8% of the total – to stick around after their medical or dental appointments or seeing their case manager and “engage” with themselves and with others who might be experiencing some of the same things as them.

Anyone who has seen the D.A.P. Client Community Center in action knows that it's most often rocking with educational and social activities – all designed to encourage fellowship and tear down the walls of stigma, even if it's self-stigma. As Janine sees it, “The whole idea of the Women's Empowerment Group is to help women find the strength to reach their full potential and achieve their goals – whether that's to return to school, mend relationships, or simply have a reason to get out of bed in the morning.”

Group members are encouraged to shout out their challenges, whether those are menopause, cancer, or the amount of medications they need to take. This is the start for many of these women to see themselves as valuable enough to write a Goals List in three parts: what's been done ... what's being done ... and what can be done ... to have a better life.

One client, mired in unbearable guilt over the loss of a child, took the group's encouragement to heart. She got her driver's license and applied for financial aid, to attend College of the Desert where she's planning to achieve a whole new set of goals.

“Girl Power” – at Desert AIDS Project, it's a real thing.



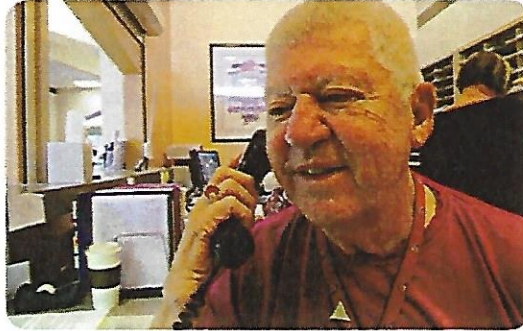
participate in the "UCSD HIV and Aging Neuropsychological Study." While we have dozens of clients who may qualify for the study, funding limits the number to 20 participants. If this first trial is successful, the program could be expanded to include more participants.

Michelle Sims, a Medical Assistant on the D.A.P. client team that's conducting a battery of tests as part of the study, says "Our portion of the study assesses the physical and cognitive functions of adults with HIV or AIDS." Determining relative mental acuity among study participants might be as simple as asking clients to correctly fill out a make believe check. Other tests are more complex, such as correctly recalling 12 words that Michelle reads aloud. In yet another assessment, clients begin by defining simple words like bed, tree, pencil, and house ... but end by defining more "complex" words such as trellis, palette, protractor and abacus.

"This kind of research is what helps us and other AIDS service organizations to continue providing our clients with great primary and HIV-specialty care," says Dr. Steven Scheibel, D.A.P. Medical Director. "Our clients also recently participated in another, ongoing study to help advance the early detection of HPV-associated anal cancer, while reducing morbidity and mortality among high-risk MSM."

D.A.P. clients meeting the dual requirements of being 65 or older while living with HIV have shown themselves eager to participate in the "UCSD HIV and Aging Neuropsychological Study." While we have dozens of clients who may qualify for the study, funding limits the number to 20 participants. If this first trial; is successful, the program could be expanded to include more participants.

Watch for more D.A.P. research updates soon ...



## Volunteer Connects D.A.P. Clients With Services For 12 Years

Nick Procaccino was an academic and theater director living in Princeton, N.J., when the AIDS crisis hit in the 1980s. "I thought it affected other gay men, those living on the fringe, until my partner was diagnosed," Nick says. His partner of 23 years, Michael Schnessel, passed away in 1992. "At that time, there was no cure. Doctors just told you how long you had to live."

From that watershed moment on, AIDS became part of Nick's life. Upon retirement, he pledged to serve those facing this life-altering challenge. He became a volunteer at Desert AIDS Project in 2002. He is among D.A.P.'s corps of 550 volunteers working throughout the agency, and is in the top 20 in terms of hours donated.

Nick, who is 81 years old, has clocked about 5,100 hours of service to D.A.P., first as a sales clerk at the old Revivals on Perez Road in Cathedral City and then as a receptionist at our main campus at Vista Chino and Sunrise.

"I wanted something more challenging, interesting and different than being a sales person, so I asked to come here and do reception work," Nick recalls.

You can see Nick behind the front desk greeting callers and visitors with a kind "Hello. This is Nick. May I help you?" He enjoys connecting clients with the proper service providers, making appointments for HIV testing or even calming them when they're upset. "Mostly, I try to solve clients' problems," Nick says. "Sometimes, they want information and ask me questions I can't answer. We can tell them general things such as, 'Exposure shows up in eight weeks.' But of course, we can't give them medical information.

"I've had to deal with clients who are disgruntled about something. When that happens, I have to remain calm enough to keep them on track and lead them to the D.A.P. staff member who can help them."

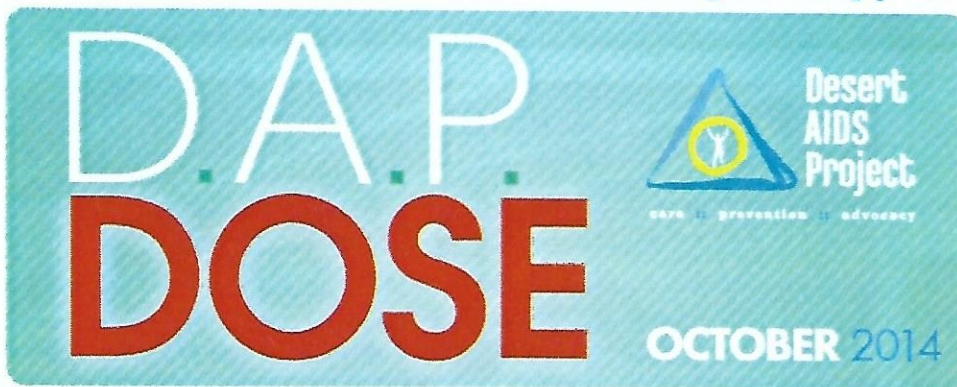
Connecting clients with staff used to be easier when D.A.P. was smaller and Nick knew every staff member's name and telephone extension by heart. Over the years, Nick has watched the operation grow from about 60 staffers to 139. Our services have expanded to include the dental clinic, a complete behavioral health department, an electronic medical records system and alternative therapies such as acupuncture and reiki meditation that are all designed to provide comprehensive and compassionate care to all D.A.P. clients.

This growth also means now Nick has to consult rosters with job titles and extensions to place callers and drop-ins with the proper service provider.

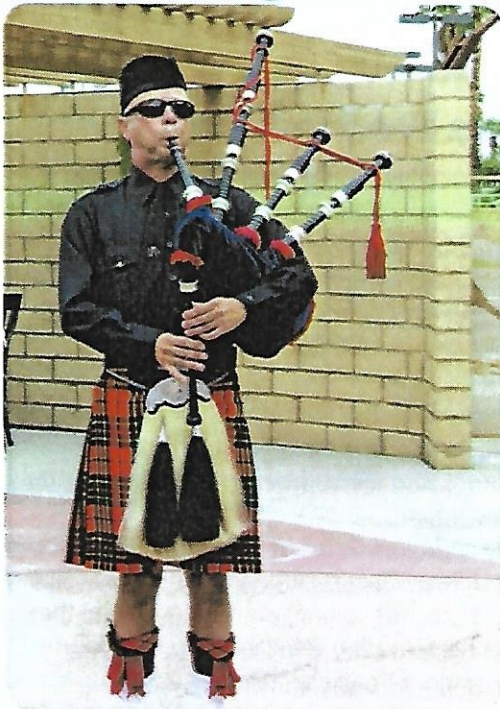
"But the interesting thing is, it's always different," Nick says. And that's just the way he likes it.



Enhancing our clients' health with your support



## Coffee House Showcase a smashing success



The Coffee House Showcase recently opened with bag pipes, ballads, mosaics, burgers and a choir that seemed to come straight out of "Animal Farm."

A total of 136 clients and quite a few staff members attended the show's premiere making it a rousing success beyond anything its organizers imagined.

"Wow," beamed Ray Robertson, Desert AIDS Project's Community Center Manager. "It was big."

The really big Coffee House Showcase is the newest on the list of activities designed to support and empower our clients. Like quilting, yoga and computer classes, the showcase is designed to keep clients' minds

and bodies active while it combats their tendency to shut themselves in and isolate.

Simply put, Ray explained: "It gets people out and shows their creativity."

And that's just what it did, client Steven Trapp observed. "When you're diagnosed with HIV or AIDS you kind of shy away from the world a little bit because of the stigma that's attached to it. This show allowed clients to commune and share with others instead of hiding."

Waves of them came to see the showcase when Ray was expecting about 60 people to attend. As clients arrived at D.A.P., they were greeted with burgers, homemade potato chips and chocolate chip cookies donated, grilled and served by Ruth's Chris Steak House in Palm Desert. The chef actually ran out of burgers, as the crowd grew larger and larger, so he went to a local market and bought more.

Ditties from the Highlands, played by on bag pipes by Rob Roy in kilts, wafted over the crowd as they ate and mingled. Then *(cont. on back)*

## Free, confidential testing at Mecca health fair mark Latino HIV/AIDS awareness day

It's estimated that 1-in-50 Latinos will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetimes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2010, Latinos made up about 16 percent of the U.S. population but accounted for 21 percent of new HIV infections nationally – a rate three times that of whites. With more than 220,000 Latinos in the U.S. living with HIV, Get Tested Coachella Valley is determined to begin stemming that tide.

On Oct. 15, "Get Tested" will be lead sponsor of the Mecca Family Resource Center, (FRC), Resource Fair, which falls this year on National Latino HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. The Get Tested mobile testing clinic will use this great venue to provide free and confidential testing for HIV among Latinos, who comprise 55 percent of the population of the Coachella Valley, according to the most recent U.S. Census.

The annual Resource Fair helps families – including those of our local farmworkers – to create healthy lifestyles and communities. The estimated 1,500 – 2,000 attendees at the Resource Fair will have an opportunity to connect to more than 100 local non-profit and public agencies that offer helpful and empowering health and wellness resources.





came a ballad that Angel Vasquez sang in Spanish. Jonathan and Kate Goldman pulled the audience members into their improv comedy skit by having them moo, cluck and bark in rhythmic timing.



Finally, artists David Julio, Don David Young and Miguel Criado, showed work in watercolor, acrylics, oils and mosaic tiles. Each of them described the inspiration behind each piece as well as their artistic process.

Paul Josephson was truly impressed. "It was really good," he said. "I should have gone up there but I was shy."

Ray said Paul and other clients will get the opportunity to perform and share their creative product with the D.A.P. community at future Coffee House Showcases.



"I've got more artists and a couple of designers lined up for future showcases," Ray said. "We're going to bring back improv because it was so popular. And we've got some poets."

The event clearly boosted clients' self-esteem and morale, which Ray believes improves overall health and well-being, too. So, of course there will be more of that to come, he said.

Catch snippets of the showcase premiere on Desert AIDS Project's YouTube channel at [youtube.com/desertaid](http://youtube.com/desertaid).



## Cat City Revivals Redux

Over the years, the Revivals stores have certainly evolved ... from a single corner of the office when D.A.P. was on Vella Road, to four stores today, in Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Palm Desert, and San Diego. The Cathedral City store alone has had a variety of incarnations and addresses, going from "shabby chic" on Perez Road and Ramon Road ... to the newly remodeled, "Wow – this is a RESALE shop?" at 68401 Highway 111.

Come in and check it out for yourself. The "Cat City" store was closed for about a month and opened again on Sept. 27 after getting a new floor, paint, and lighting. These are just a few of the tweaks that make the 17,000 square-foot-store look new again.

"Previously, the Cathedral City store just didn't have that sparkle and pizzazz that the Palm Springs and Palm Desert stores have," says Melanie Jones, coordinator of the approximate 180 volunteers working at the three Coachella Valley locations. "With this remodel, Cat City is up to those same standards. I'm thinking it's going to really spike sales a lot."

Most importantly, all this fresh razzle dazzle serves to enhance the Revivals mission of supporting D.A.P. as it helps individuals, families and communities, affected by HIV and AIDS, to live longer and stronger lives. Revivals raises funds for the comprehensive, compassionate care we offer clients on our campus at Vista Chino and Sunrise Way where clients receive medical care, food, housing, medications, dental care, group and individual counseling, fellowship and much more right here under our roof.

The Revivals stores help D.A.P. by selling clothing, furniture, appliances, electronics, housewares, home fashions and such that are new, gently used donations, sold-on-consignment, or bought as complete estates. Each store is run by an army of volunteers, guided by just a few paid staff. Palm Desert has six staffers and 40 volunteers. Palm Springs has the most volunteers, with about 125, Melanie says. Cathedral City has seven staffers and 40 volunteers.

The Cathedral City Revivals store, just west of Cathedral Canyon Way, functions much like an anchor for neighboring shops in and around the plaza, attracting customers, who then check out retailers and restaurants nearby. Melanie added, "Our neighbors kept asking, 'When will Revivals reopen? We're dying out here.'"