Signs of the Times

Two AIDS groups in the South move into new, and more visible, homes.

December 19, 2012 By Trent Straube

The AIDS/HIV Services Group (ASG) of Charlottesville, Virginia, used to be in a hidden warehouse-style building it shared with other organizations. Its name wasn't even on the door. But in September, ASG got its own home sweet home—complete with a porch, backyard and welcoming sign—in a vibrant downtown area. "By making our presence more widely known, we're helping people know that AIDS is still a very real issue for the Charlottesville area," says its executive director Peter DeMartino. The move wasn't easy, especially in the rural South, where stigma "seemed to mean we would always have to have a back door for discretion." But the change of address is changing minds: Within a month, the new space helped bring 10 people back into care.

Similarly, the team at Nashville CARES chose for the first time to place a sign in front of its new building to help increase its community profile—but only after spending six months in focus groups to be sure that visibility isn't a liability. Turns out, says John D. Winnett, chief development and external affairs officer, "the No. 1 reason people find it hard to come to CARES for the first time is the internal struggle with the diagnosis, not the fear of the name being on the building." And folks seeking anonymity can use a discrete entrance. That's one way to improve access to care!

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/AIDS-orgs-move-23301-3069