Milestones

May 1, 2000

Tributes

Thomas Sinclair
1952–1999

The loss of Thomas Sinclair, executive director of San Francisco's Immune Enhancement Project (IEP), who died March 8, 1999, at the age of 47, continues to be felt by patients and colleagues a year later. Sinclair, who joined IEP in 1990 as an acupuncturist after receiving his degree from the American College of Traditional Medicine, was drawn by its mission to provide low-cost care. Here, the founder of Quan Yin Healing Arts Center and the director of Chicken Soup Chinese Medicine, remembers the colleague she considered a brother.

I knew Tom as a pain researcher at the University of California at San Francisco. Through this connection, he joined our team at Quan Yin in the late '80s. He always went that extra step as an intern in our clinic, participating fully even though he had a full-time job and was attending school. From there, times were both great and hard between us—the emotional aftermath of organizational splits lasted a long time. But no matter the surface, we were united. In our struggle, we were family.

For years, Tom was the only colleague with whom I shared a need to reconcile the yin/yang contradiction of conducting rigorous Western-style research with Chinese medicine. While I was technically his teacher, in those conversations I was often Tom's student.

Tom, you remain in my heart. Every day you help us all to take one more step—and continue down our path to the healing of AIDS and to wholeness for ourselves, our community and our planet.

—Misha Ruth Cohen

Irma Torres
1958–1999

I first met Irma in our home country, Puerto Rico, in 1994. Then, as later, she was striving to leave behind years of drug abuse. Looking for a clean start and better treatments for HIV, we decided to start a new life together in San Francisco. She was passionate about helping other immigrant women and going the extra mile so they could get the care they deserved. For all those years, first as lovers and later as friends, I witnessed Irma's struggle to heal her wounded soul, to free herself

from the chains of her past and to have a say as an activist in her own right [see *POZ* April 1996 for a profile].

I think she would like to be remembered as a woman warrior who was not easily understood because she did not surrender to established norms. She was a great salsa dancer and guiro guitar player with a big heart. She was always helping other people and supporting her family. She filled every room she entered with her charm.

When she got up to share her story, many audiences listened with awe and gave standing ovations for her courage. Her life was living proof that help can come from wounded healers. She inspired many of us to continue her legacy. Our lives were touched forever by how important it was for her to become a better person in this lifetime.

—Doris Muniz

Careers

Steve Wakefield, a longtime AIDS activist who has used Chicago as home base for his far-flung efforts, has left that city's **Night Ministry**—an outreach program for homeless and runaway youth—to become director of community education for the NIH-funded **HIV Vaccine Trials Network** in Seattle. Wakefield served on the Chicago Board of Health since 1993 and has consulted with the United Nations about HIV research in Uganda and South Africa, but "doing effective work with vaccines is my passion," he said.

Last year, New York City AIDS organization **Body Positive** absorbed the cash-strapped **People With AIDS Coalition** (PWAC), ushering in a self-proclaimed better-than-ever era of merged services and programs. But in a matter of months, five senior staff members—including Body Positive executive director Scott Cotenoff, and the sole remaining PWACer, Luis Lopez Detres—either quit or were fired by the board. Former staffers say they were trying to refocus the organization's efforts to reflect changes in the epidemic, especially by targeting young gay men of color, and that the board—which one former employee said was dominated by "pseudo-intellectual social science types" out of touch with day-to-day realities of AIDS—resisted the reorganizations. Board chair Dominic J. Carbone, PhD, said, "The mission of the agency has not changed, and it will remain the same."

A more amicable marriage went off without a hitch last year when **Philadelphia Fight** added the **AIDS Information Network**—which includes the **AIDS Library**, **Critical Path Project** and the circuit party–fundraiser **Blue Ball**—to its network of AIDS organizations. The affiliated groups now have a combined staff of 49 and a $3.6 million budget, and, as executive director Jane Schull said, "no one lost their job, and no programs were cut."

Awards

The 10th annual **AIDS Action National Leadership Awards**, held in April, honored **Frances Peabody**. She is the 96-year-old founder of Maine's first AIDS hotline, now part of Portland's AIDS Project, and the state's first hospice, **Peabody House**. **Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS**,

Phil Donahue, **MTV** and **BET's Tavis Smiley** were also recognized.

Deaths

Steve Whitson, editor of the Chicago-based AIDS treatment journal Positively Aware, died of a heart attack January 20. Whitson, 38, had been a professor of rhetoric and coach of the award-winning debate team at DePaul University for eight years in 1998 when his partner, Phillip Matthews, then the executive director at Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN), convinced Whitson to guest-edit the bi-monthly. His regular columns and tenure as editor blended 15 years' experience of living with HIV with a knack for explaining difficult concepts in simple terms, said TPAN's Dennis Hartke. "He was a quiet man," said Hartke, "and he wielded his influence in a very quiet but tremendous way."

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