An Enchanted Evening for Health Equity Raises $1.4 Million for HIV Services in the Coachella Valley

DAP Health held the 28th Annual Steve Chase Humanitarian Awards in Palm Springs, California, and shared its vision for the future.

April 14, 2022 By Jennifer Morton

As guests arrived on the blue carpet for the 28th Annual Steve Chase Humanitarian Awards (aka The Chase) held in Palm Springs, California, on Saturday, April 9, the temperature hovered in the 90s until the sun set behind the San Jacinto Mountains. But despite the heat, the community showed up in full force and raised $1.4 million to support the work of DAP Health, an advocacy-based health care center in Palm Springs that serves more than 10,000 individuals in the Coachella Valley.

Formerly known as Desert AIDS Project, DAP was created in 1984 by a community of volunteers as a resource for people living with HIV and AIDS. Over the years, it has expanded its mission and now offers medical and mental health care, STI testing and treatment as well as dental, pharmacy and lab services. In addition, it provides social services, support groups, alternative therapies and other wellness services to help support the overall health and well-being of its clients.

Amazon was the presenting sponsor of this year's The Chase, named for interior designer Steve Chase, who was a DAP donor, volunteer and board member. The sold-out event was held outdoors to reduce the risk of exposure to the coronavirus. After a cocktail reception, guests enjoyed dinner al fresco under the desert sky. Actor Michael Urie (Ugly Betty) hosted the ceremony, which featured performances by Broadway actors Max von Essen and Eden Espinosa, Latin Grammy–winning trumpeter Spencer Ludwig, Sirius/XM radio host Seth Rudetsky and Canadian recording artist Deborah Cox.

The Chase honored DAP volunteers for their tireless commitment to the organization's mission of helping those in need. In addition, Congressman Raul Ruiz, MD, (D–Calif.) was presented with the inaugural DAP Health Equity Award. When COVID-19 struck the Coachella Valley, Representative Ruiz was instrumental in obtaining much needed funding for local health centers, including DAP,

which received more than $3 million in federal COVID-19 grants to provide care, testing and vaccinations free of charge. As he accepted his award, Representative Ruiz spoke about the importance of health equity in providing care:

“I’m still that kid from Coachella that carries the burden of the sick and the vulnerable in my heart. And I still dream of a future where your background, your ZIP code and income do not determine your access to quality, affordable care. I have no doubt that together under the banner of equity we will achieve health and social justice. We must achieve health and social justice. We must take care of our most vulnerable amongst us.”

Representative Raul Ruiz and DAP's CEO & President David BrinkmanCourtesy of DAP Health/David A. Lee

Taking care of the Coachella Valley's most vulnerable is precisely what DAP intends to do via Vision Forward, its plan to expand its programs and services to better fulfill its mission of ensuring the health and well-being of the community.

"We were founded to be the safety net—it's what we do. It's what we've always done; it's what we'll always do," said CEO David Brinkman. "DAP's Vision Forward: Building for a Healthier Tomorrow is our strategy. To increase our capacity of care from serving 10,000 people annually to 25,000 people a year. By supporting the expansion of our physical footprint through the

construction of additional primary care, mental health, dentistry and addiction clinics—not to forget our additional affordable housing.”

DAP’s physical expansion will help the nonprofit increase that safety net to better serve those in the community who struggle to access care, including those experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges, addiction, stigma, discrimination or poverty. By protecting and empowering the most marginalized, DAP hopes to build a healthier community for all.



Actor Michael UrieCourtesy of DAP Health/David A. Lee

To learn more about the work of DAP, visit daphealth.org.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.