Low-Income Co-op for San Franciscans With HIV Fights Eviction

Marty's Place, a longtime home for San Franciscans with HIV, is holding a silent auction to try to stay open. You can help out by bidding.

March 13, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

Marty's Place, a low-income housing cooperative in San Francisco for people living with HIV and AIDS, hosted a fundraiser on March 9 to fight eviction and bolster its legal defense fund after the property's owners threatened to terminate the co-op's lease early, CBS News reports.

Richard Purcell, a San Francisco friar who moved to the city to care for his brother Marty who was dying of AIDS-related illness, founded Marty's Place Affordable Housing Corporation as a safe haven for people living with HIV in 1993. After his brother's death, Purcell continued to use the property to house and care for low-income people with HIV and AIDS until he died in 2011.

The nonprofit's board of directors told CBS that the property's owner, Mission Action, is threatening to terminate the co-op's lease five years early. To raise much-needed money and protect its residents, Marty's Place hosted an Emergency Punk and Drag Fundraiser at El Rio, a local bar.

Resident Michael Rouppet, a cofounder and the board president, said the nonprofit has been trying for years to reach an agreement with Mission Action.

"We had made a proposal to purchase," Rouppet told CBS. "We suspect and they've indicated that they want to sell the property and what better way to sell it? We invited them to work with us. Unfortunately, they broke that trust and tried to leverage us in court."

Cosponsored by the Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club, the fundraiser featured a silent auction, live performances, music and dancing all while emphasizing the importance of preserving Marty's Place as an empowering sanctuary for the HIV and AIDS community.

The silent auction, which closes Saturday, March 16, features art— including photography, acrylic paintings on canvas and cross-stitch works—donated by supporters, partners and sponsors. Go here to bid on the unique pieces.

“We are deeply moved by the overwhelming community support,” the organizers wrote on Facebook. “Thank you to our board for all of your hard work to make this happen.”

If evicted by Mission Action, Marty’s Place residents say many of them will have nowhere to go.

Resident Paul Aguilar, who is living with HIV moved into Marty’s Place in November 2021 when he was 58 years old and homeless, is fighting alongside other community members and residents to keep the nonprofit open.

“When it was founded by Father Richard Purcell it was a place for people with AIDS to die,” said Aguilar, recalling a time when AIDS was a death sentence. “Now it’s a place for people with HIV to live.”

Cofounder Rouppet was featured in the 2018 POZ 100, which highlighted long-term HIV survivors and advocates. Rouppet’s write-up reads in part:

> “As he fought eviction from a rent-controlled apartment in San Francisco in 2012, Michael became homeless for nearly three years. During this time, the long-term survivor found it difficult to access care and treatment. At one point, he feared he might develop AIDS. Fortunately, he received support from friends in the homeless community and from ASOs [AIDS service organizations] and decided to give back—and fight stereotypes about homeless people—by helping to raise over $3,600 in the annual AIDS/LifeCycle ride, which benefits free programs and services at the San Francisco AIDS Foundation.”

In related news, see “Oregon’s First Hospice for People With HIV Added to National Register of Historical Places.” To read more, click #Advocacy or #Housing. There, you’ll find headlines such as “HIV Housing and HOPWA in Focus: Welcome From OHH Director Amy Griffin,” “Needs of Older People With HIV Are Going Unmet” and “HIV Researchers and Advocates Rally to Save Our Sciences.”

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