



GMHC Commemorates 35th Anniversary

August 11, 2016 By [POZ Staff](#)

The following is a statement from [GMHC](#) CEO Kelsey Louie:

On August 11, 1981, 35 years ago to this day, a group of brave men gathered in Larry Kramer's living room in the West Village of Manhattan to discuss the "gay cancer" that was affecting their friends and lovers. Choosing hope and strength over fear and helplessness, a hat was soon passed around and \$7,000 was collected to fight this disease.

The next year, in 1982, the world's first AIDS service organization, Gay Men's Health Crisis, was formally incorporated born with a mission of fighting to end the AIDS epidemic and uplifting the lives of all affected.

We now know that the "gay cancer" was actually HIV and AIDS, one of the most destructive diseases humankind has ever faced. Since the first reported cases in 1981; approximately 30 million people have died of AIDS-related illnesses.

Throughout all 35 years of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, GMHC has remained a vital and ever evolving source of programs, services, and information for those living with and affected by the virus. In 35 short years, we have grown and changed tremendously as an organization, but the one thing that has not changed is our core mission.

In 2015, GMHC served 10,000 clients. We provided 3,000 HIV and STD tests, maintained a 90% viral suppression rate of those who tested positive, served 80,000 hot meals, and opened a newly renovated youth space.

We are currently in the process of introducing new mental health and substance abuse clinics to meet the growing mental health crisis in this country. And, we relaunched our historic Buddy Program to meet the unmet needs of HIV and AIDS long term survivors.

Looking to the future, I am confident that we can end the epidemic. We have the tools. But I would be remised to say that we must never become complacent, and we must not stop fighting.

As a tribute to the founders of GMHC who gathered on August 11th, exactly 35 years ago, I pledge to continue to fight, until we have accomplished our mission of finding a cure, and ending AIDS.

[Click here](#) to read our 2015 Q&A with Kelsey Louie.

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