Message from the Director

Welcome to the inaugural edition of ARI In Motion! We hope that you will find it to be informative and interesting. We are most pleased to release this new version of our newsletter soon after learning that the AIDS Research Institute (ARI), established in 1996, has been renewed for the next five years by the UC San Diego School of Medicine. We look forward to an upcoming period of great discovery in HIV research, and we are proud that our members are at the forefront of the discovery process.

I would like to amend a well-known phrase and say that the ARI as a whole is greater because of its parts. Our members and programs are the very reason that the ARI thrives. Some of their extraordinary contributions are profiled in this edition of ARI In Motion. Dr. Davey Smith (page 3), has become an internationally recognized translational virologist and clinician, leading projects on five continents. The Lead the Way program (Page 11) is ground-breaking not just in San Diego but throughout the U.S., and it is providing information and testing strategies that will have a far-reaching impact. We are extremely proud and honored that Teresa Oyos (page 17) received the 2012 A. Brad Truax Award for her devoted and tireless work on behalf of the HNRP and the community. The ARI is grateful for the Survivors Project, created and led by Jae Hansen (page 9). This project celebrates long-term survivors diagnosed with HIV, and shares their courage and hope.

In future editions, we will continue to share with you the breadth of the knowledge, talent and contributions of ARI members and programs. We also would like to hear from you regarding our current projects or new ways we can be of assistance. Please visit our website http://ari.ucsd.edu for updates and to let us know your thoughts.

Best regards,

Douglas Richman, MD
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PROFILE: Davey Smith, MD

Dr. Davey Smith embodies the spirit of the AIDS Research Institute. Through his passion and excellence in HIV/AIDS research and clinical care, he lives our mission of creating change and progress in HIV prevention, diagnosis, and treatment on a local, national, and global level. A tireless researcher and renowned expert in HIV superinfection and transmission, Smith was honored in 2012 with a prestigious NIH Avant Garde award for HIV research. His international research spans Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America. When he’s not in the lab, Smith advocates enthusiastically for family-sensitive treatment and services for HIV+ women as a board member for Christie’s Place, a San Diego agency. He also serves as Medical Director of the TN2 Clinics for MSM and transgendered populations at San Diego’s Family Health Centers. In the lab, in the community, and across the globe, Davey Smith has become a respected leader in HIV/AIDS research and care.

As early as 1995, while attending East Tennessee State University, Smith began distinguishing himself as a leader with his election to the AOA Medical Honor Society. His gifts for both research and community service have been continually recognized with such honors as his selection as one of Discover magazine’s “The Year In Science: Top 100 Stories in 2005,” the Dr. A. Brad Truax Award (for outstanding achievement in HIV/AIDS service) by the County Of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency in 2009, and the 2010 HIV Medical Association Research Award from the Infectious Diseases Society of America.
2012 was a particularly good year for Dr. Smith, as he received the prestigious Avante-Garde Award for HIV/AIDS Research. This award, through the National Institutes of Health, is intended to stimulate high-impact research that may lead to groundbreaking opportunities for prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in drug abusers. Smith and his colleagues will use this $2.5 million grant over the next five years to develop a system that integrates patient demographics, geographic location, drug use and HIV strain data to map patterns of new HIV transmission hotspots.

This information will be used to tailor prevention resources that can be made quickly available to specific groups at risk for HIV infection, with the goal of stopping disease transmission, particularly among illicit substance abusers.

Dr. Smith says he was drawn to medicine and to HIV research as a means to exercise his “scientific curiosity, solve real-world problems, and directly help communities affected by HIV and AIDS.” He graduated from East Tennessee State University medical school and then completed his internship, residency, and chief residency in Internal Medicine at UC San Diego, followed by a fellowship in Infectious Diseases. In 2003, he joined the UC San Diego faculty and is currently Associate Professor of Medicine in Residence.

“UC San Diego is a top (if not ‘the’ top) HIV research institution,” Smith says. “Throughout the AIDS epidemic, UC San Diego has been at the forefront of almost all major HIV discoveries. UC San Diego has a long track record of thinking in big ways, and doing big things. I think this ethos comes from our great group of friendly, helpful, and highly collaborative investigators.”

When Dr. Smith is not in the lab, you will find him collaborating on committees and review panels for such groups as NIH Study Sections, the AIDS Clinical Trials Group focused on the cure agenda, The International Symposium on NeuroVirology, the International AIDS Society, and the HIV Dynamics and Evolution conferences.

Dr. Smith is equally dedicated to community service. He is a permanent member of the San Diego County HIV Planning Council, and Chair of that Council’s Standards of Care Committee. He is also the Board President of Christie’s Place, a non-profit organization serving women and families affected by HIV in San Diego. And he serves as Medical Director of the Tuesday and Thursday Night Clinics at Family Health Services, which provide healthcare for gay men and transgendered persons.

Dr. Smith’s work, by no means stops at the United States border. He is fully engaged in UC San Diego’s efforts to fortify testing, treatment and prevention protocols in other countries, having established labs in both Mozambique and Romania. His travels find him leading research teams with a healthy blend of scientific rigor, passion and levity.

Dr. Sanjay Mehta, Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases at UC San Diego has traveled with Dr. Smith, and says, "Davey has projects ongoing on five continents, all of which are shaping the way we understand how HIV causes disease, and how best to manage it in different social and economic situations. It’s not a stretch to bet that he will be working in Australia soon, although Antarctica may be a longshot. I’m lucky to have had the opportunity to work with him on several of those projects, and I have learned much about how sociopolitical differences affect the way HIV is managed around the world. One other thing that I have learned is that if this HIV stuff gets boring for him, he’ll do great as the next host of "Bizarre Foods" on the Travel Channel, as he’s willing to test his palate all over the world."
Dr. Smith recognizes and appreciates how UC San Diego has already shaped the way HIV is treated on a global scale. He says, “UCSD has made a considerable impact on the global HIV epidemic: identifying drug resistance and superinfection, the development of the first, second, and third generation of HIV drugs; determining crucial aspects of HIV transmission; developing research and healthcare in resource-limited settings—the list goes on. And, we continue to be leaders in the international HIV research effort from HIV prevention to cure research to vaccines. Our commitment to these efforts has never wavered.”

When Smith steps out of the lab and away from his many projects, he has the opportunity to indulge in another passion: poetry. He brings the elegance and precision of his research practices to this medium while invoking stories of life, death, and a journey through the world. Several of Smith’s poems have been published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

At the end of the day, we find in Davey Smith a steadfast optimism grounded in a sense of purpose. “I think we will find a cure and vaccine,” he says. “You have to think you can—before you can.” Meanwhile, “I will use every single tool in our toolbox to prevent HIV transmission within communities. I will work with my friends and collaborators to make more tools,” because, though a cure may be on the horizon, “we should not sit around waiting for one.”

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**Into Africa (excerpt)**

Back when the sun was closer to the ground

Before my plane descended into Africa

Back when the dawn did not signify a new day

It was the same day as the day before

and the day before that

and the day before that…

Back when there was one continent,

One word,

One Prayer,

One Music…

Davey Smith, MD

*Dedicated to Dr. Leland Rickman*
100²
San Diegans coming together to stop HIV/AIDS
AIDS RESEARCH INSTITUTE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Help us reach our 2013 $10,000 goal!

HIV will never cure itself...

At the UC San Diego AIDS Research Institute, we are all about one thing: fighting HIV & AIDS locally, nationally and globally. Our researchers are recognized worldwide as setting the standard for testing, treatment and prevention strategies. UC San Diego researchers and clinicians include many of the most dedicated minds in the battle against HIV.

We ask you to stand with them!

Our 100² donors are individuals who are dedicated to pledging $100 per year toward research that may one day lead to the end of HIV & AIDS. Novel approaches are being developed and implemented by UC San Diego researchers to reduce the risk of transmission and protect our population. With easy automatic once-yearly or quarterly deductions, you can be a part of the solution. To join us in this effort, please contact Ian Morton at imorton@ucsd.edu or 858-822-2321. We hope to have our first 100 donors by World AIDS Day—December 1, 2013. Will you be one?

Let’s stop HIV in our lifetime.

http://ari.ucsd.edu
Jae L. Hansen wears multiple hats: artist, UC San Diego employee, husband and an HIV+ man. He also belongs to a specific demographic within the HIV community: a person who was diagnosed before antiviral medications were introduced into the population. Diagnosed in 1994, Jae was told to prepare himself for dying. This was the status quo for that period of time; individuals were selling their life insurance policies and preparing themselves and their friends and families for their passing.

Employed as a paramedic and firefighter, Jae was faced with some tough decisions after his diagnosis. He found himself at a crossroads as he tried to determine his legacy beyond his work in the emergency response field. Little did Hansen realize that someone else would see the spark that would lead to his contribution to the archives of HIV/AIDS history.
It is another beautiful San Diego afternoon as Hansen settles in for an interview with his husband, Tim Emery. The sun shines through the windows of the vegan café, reflecting the hope and optimism of Hansen’s “Survivors Exhibit.”

There is always a period between receiving one’s HIV + diagnosis and the time, if ever, that one can transform that experience into something positive and meaningful. It has been nearly 20 years since Hansen learned his status, and he has made the journey from preparing to die to learning to live again.

Like so many individuals, Hansen had put long-term dreams and aspirations behind him, as he was cautioned not to plan for more than 9 to 10 years of life. With only AZT on the market at that time, the quality of life in those remaining years could not be guaranteed.

About two years into his diagnosis, new HIV/AIDS medications were introduced, including the first protease inhibitors. Suddenly, new hope was available to HIV+ individuals. Many, like Hansen, found an opportunity to reinvent themselves and start over. Ready to end his career in medicine and emergency services, Hansen began his new journey.

Eight years ago, and 12 years into his diagnosis, Hansen met Emery, now his husband. Knowing that Jae was searching for a new direction in life, Emery gave Hansen a Canon Rebel, one of the first digital cameras on the market.

Hansen’s love of photography began as a child. Portraiture was a special interest, and Hansen’s younger sister was one of his first models. Emery’s gift rekindled Hansen’s passion for photography, leading to his new career.

In Hansen’s own words, “What I really love about portraiture is that I love to capture that person. I want to capture their personality.”

Shortly thereafter, while attending a Dining Out For Life event, Hansen began musing about turning his photography into a project. His thought was to create a calendar or coffee table book with photography featuring “long term” survivors of HIV/AIDS—persons diagnosed before 1996. He had no idea that the project would become a full traveling art exhibit.

Fred West, friend and UC San Diego employee, was at the table that night and offered up his thoughts about the project’s evolution. “The Survivor Project is very different than its original ideal,” West says. “It has become a much more of a dynamic and interactive exhibit, especially when viewing the entirety of the project in a single venue.

“I have the distinct pleasure to have met a lot of the first year participants. I’m always astounded how many of the people have made positive changes in their lives post-diagnosis, i.e., reconnecting with family, becoming sober, or continuing on with education. I cannot help but being moved at the courage of the survivors who have offered their images and stories to be part of this project.”

The Survivors Exhibit is about the stories of each individual photographed. Subjects are asked to choose the location of the photo shoot and to provide their own story, in their own language. It is essential to recognize the unifying facet of this project: each subject was diagnosed before the availability of antiretroviral medications. Each diagnosis was delivered as a death sentence.
Hansen also stresses how the photo’s environment is a key part of the individual’s story, which is why the subject, not the photographer, chooses the setting. For Hansen, comfort and familiarity are just as vital as the perfect light or aperture.

Hansen credits Emery as an integral participant in each photo shoot. “Most people who are not professional models tense up in front of the camera,” Hansen explained. “Tim sets them at ease and takes them completely away from what we are doing. In between photographs, we talk about their lives and families and, in the end, get the natural expression of the participant. It’s a more personal interaction for us.”

The Survivors Exhibit has been a mainstay in San Diego County community events such as the UC San Diego World AIDS Day exhibitions and the A. Brad Truax Awards ceremonies. One of Hansen’s true goals, however, is to take his work to areas of the country where HIV/AIDS is not talked about. He believes that these photographs and stories provide an education as well as a path to begin the conversation about living with this disease.

Hansen and Emery are applying for 501(c)(3) status so they can grow this self-funded project. Because HIV knows no boundaries, they hope to increase the collection with portraits from all areas of the world. Funding would allow this duo to honor the spirit of the project in its efforts to show the multi-cultural face of survival in the HIV/AIDS global community.

“A key component and goal,” said Emery, “is to show age, gender, sexual orientation, region, ethnicity. Anyone who represents a diverse community of hope.”
Hansen told his own story and described the support he received while coming to terms with his HIV status. During a time when he needed to rely on Ryan White coverage, he began receiving his medical care at UC San Diego’s Owen Clinic. Hansen credits his physician, Dr. Theodoros Katsivas, for a large part of his own self-acceptance.

“He changed my life,” Hansen said. “He respected me and made me feel like I was a person. There were times, in my HIV days before coming to UCSD, that I didn’t feel that sense of care. Now, as a UC San Diego employee with benefits that give me more options, the Owen Clinic is still my choice for care.”

Emery added, “One of the things I appreciate about Dr. Katsivas is that he stays current on treatment options. He is incredibly knowledgeable and our care at the Owen Clinic is extremely comprehensive. It’s not just about writing you a prescription, but addressing our mental, emotional and even nutritional needs.”

Hansen and Emery have found a calling in creating their mark in the archives of HIV history and have found peace with their own status through the process. In summing up the goal of The Survivors exhibit, they agree that it is simple: hope. Hope for the future, hope for better days and hope for a cure.

**For more than 30 years, the UC San Diego Owen Clinic has been committed to providing outstanding service to clients while training the next generation of HIV specialists from around the world. In addition to the most up-to-date antiviral therapy, the Clinic’s client-centered comprehensive suite of services include nutritional services, mental health services, smoking cessation and substance abuse programs. In line with the ARI’s mission to contribute to the greater community, the Owen Clinic also houses the AIDS Education and Training Center. This mini-residency training program is designed for primary care providers who currently care for, or are willing to care for, HIV-infected individuals.**

**Marissa’s Story:** I was just 8 years old when I found out that I was HIV positive. I had lost my mom the year before from AIDS, and now I was told I had ten years to live. I didn’t really understand. I thought I was going to be like my mom, dying in a bed. They told me not to tell anyone that I had HIV, and that if I got hurt and started to bleed, not to let anyone touch me. I learned quick that not everyone would accept me like my godparents did....

As I got older, I decided to educate myself so I could teach others, especially my young peers. It was a long – and at times dark and lonely – journey to become confident. My HIV support group helped me to find my voice. When I was 12, I told the group I was not ashamed that I had HIV. I held my head high with the biggest smile – it was so FREEING! Soon after, I began public speaking.

I didn’t think my story would make an impact in others’ lives. But it did, and I was hooked. I attended Ryan White Youth Conferences to learn more. I met kids from around the U.S. and the world. Listening to their stories was so powerful. Soon, I was leading empowerment workshops and touring with the national speaking group, Who’s Positive, with some great young positive people – sharing our stories and educating other youth.

I learned that educating others about HIV and helping other HIV+ people is my passion. It’s something I would love to do the rest of my life. I am going back to school so that one day I can start my own non-profit organization. I applied for a twenty thousand dollar scholarship and got it!

I am on a good path right now. I know where I want to go in life. May not know the exact path, but I know the dream! My health is great. I am a survivor – of not just HIV but other challenging life events, too. I am a fighter and that will never change! I love life too much to give up.
San Diego Leads the Way in HIV Testing Strategies

By Joshua Romero and Ian Morton

In April 2011, Susan Little, MD, of the UC San Diego AntiViral Research Center (AVRC) embarked on a mission: choose two zip codes and try to test every adult in those communities — no pre-qualification or need to be at high risk, just adherence to the 2006 CDC guidelines that recommends all adults be screened for HIV. The question: How do you make this happen?

Lead the Way was the answer — the nation’s first comprehensive test-and-treat model of HIV prevention. With a community-based marketing campaign, employment-friendly hours and an inclusive and convenient testing site, Dr. Little’s project has yielded impressive results, increasing testing in the community, and identifying a number of new HIV infections.

This initiative serves as both a community resource for free, confidential HIV testing, and as a research project to determine the barriers and motivators to HIV testing. As the movement toward normalizing HIV testing in the U.S. strengthens, it is important to understand why people do or don’t get tested.

The First Steps: Lead the Way had a strategic goal of providing HIV testing to every adult within the 92103 and 92104 zip codes of San Diego, the city’s Hillcrest and North Park neighborhoods. To catch public attention in these two zip codes, a provocative ad campaign was launched, featuring community and business leaders wearing the signature Lead the Way blue bandage and asking, “Would you or wouldn’t you?”

Rarely had the San Diego community seen such a diverse group of business owners, activists, religious leaders and notable figures standing behind one cause.
The billboard campaign, bus shelter posters and flyers sparked curiosity in the neighborhoods. Speculation grew as renovations began at a former Starbucks location at the corner of Park Boulevard and University Avenue, on the border of the two zip codes. Lead the Way’s striking blue graphics, covering the length of the storefront’s windows, again asked the community, “Would you or wouldn’t you?”

**The Storefront:** On May 11, 2011, the Lead the Way storefront opened its doors and an HIV testing site with a new vibe was introduced to the community. Gone was the clinical setting with hard plastic chairs and outdated magazines. This storefront site is all about incorporating the style of the surrounding community and creating a relaxing atmosphere. Flat screen televisions stream HIV facts and pictures of the program’s role models. Top 40 music plays as patients lounge on comfortable couches. To make HIV testing more convenient for local employees, the storefront established noon to 8:00 p.m. hours on weekdays, as well as Saturday hours. Bilingual testing counselors ensure that Spanish-speaking clients receive information in their primary language. Lengthy risk assessment forms and questionnaires were replaced by a short iPad survey.

**The Survey:** It’s not enough to make HIV testing readily available to the community. Lead the Way also looks to determine why or why not individuals choose to get tested. A five-minute survey is offered to Lead the Way participants on an iPad, asking about their knowledge of Lead the Way, their barriers to and motivators for HIV testing, and their knowledge about HIV treatment. There are no HIV risk assessment questions or uncomfortable sex histories, making testing more accessible to first-time testers and those tired of answering the same questions every time they re-test.

Lead the Way isn’t just about making testing more accessible in the community. It’s also about identifying new HIV infections as soon as possible.

**The Early Test:** HIV testing is offered in different areas around San Diego County. Currently, most free HIV testing sites use HIV rapid tests, or antibody testing, which detects the presence of antibodies — the body’s natural immune response to HIV infection. While these
tests detect the body's natural immune response to an HIV infection—antibodies. While these tests are able to give people results in minutes, the antibodies they detect can take three to six months to be detectable in the blood. Lead the Way uses a different kind of HIV test. The NIH-funded Early Test offers a more recent and more definitive HIV status than a rapid test. The Early Test is a nucleic acid test that looks for parts of the virus itself, instead of antibodies, and can detect HIV infection as early as one week after exposure.

The Results: In the nearly two years since Lead the Way began, preliminary data show a 25% increase in the number of Early Tests given to community members. The AVRC has nearly doubled the number of HIV-infected individuals it identifies in San Diego County. Additionally, many more Latinos are getting tested. Latinos have been underserved in the past, despite a high risk for HIV infection. Prior to Lead the Way, this community had a history of relatively low rates of HIV testing with the Early Test.

The Next Steps: Lead the Way is ready to grow! Based on successes in the 92103 and 92104 zip codes, the team hopes to open a site for the 92113 and 92114 zip codes in southeastern San Diego. These neighborhoods contain high concentrations of communities of color and low-income families, two groups that are historically underserved and at high risk for HIV infection. At a community discussion panel on February 7, 2013, in honor of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, southeastern San Diego community residents expressed their desire for testing, treatment and prevention resources equal to those in other San Diego communities. In response, Dr. Little intends to bring Lead the Way to the heart of southeastern San Diego.

As data are analyzed from the first two years of Lead the Way, Dr. Little and her team continue to explore approaches to make HIV testing accessible throughout San Diego and to encourage all San Diegans to make HIV testing part of their routine health screenings.

by the numbers: 1708 participants enrolled 1426 free, confidential HIV tests 18 HIV diagnoses, 5 of them acute HIV infections in just 9 months.
ARI Sponsors and Donors

The UC San Diego AIDS Research Institute is supported entirely through contributions. Our sponsors and donors support activities, including:

- We promote the exchange of scientific and clinical knowledge among our researchers and the San Diego community.
- We help our scientists raise funds to purchase essential equipment and supplies.
- We publish newsletters, resource guides and sponsor training seminars.

We would like to thank some of the foundations and companies that have generously supported the work of the AIDS Research Institute in 2012:

The James B. Pendleton Charitable Trust
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Community Partnerships:
ARI Education in Action

Y.E.S. San Diego

Y.E.S (Youth Empowerment Summit) San Diego was San Diego County’s first full day conference for LGBTQ youth, their allies, parents and guardians. Seeing the disproportionate level of mental health challenges, HIV infections and homelessness with LGBTQ youth and young adults, The AIDS Research Institute joined forces with Mental Health America of San Diego to produce this free event. The Summit included LGBTQ business, arts and political leaders who spoke to the youth and parents about their own journeys, peer-led workshops covering a range of topics including sexual & mental health, spirituality, career and advocacy opportunities, and a closing concert by songwriter, activist and recording artist, Eric Himan! This year’s event will be October 5, 2013. For more information, go to: https://ari.ucsd.edu/yessandiego

World AIDS Day at UCSD Campus

December 1, 2012, marked World AIDS Day and, as always, the UC San Diego campus was fully engaged. Coordinators at the LGBT Student Resource Center and Student Health Services took on the challenge of organizing a week’s worth of event for students, faculty and staff. Highlights included a community resource fair and HIV testing coordinated by the AIDS Research Institute (ARI) and AntiViral Research Center (AVRC); a special presentation regarding “Gender Violence and HIV” by Anita Raj, PhD, Professor in the Division of Global Public Health; the moving “Survivors Exhibit” by Jae Hansen; San Diego, UC San Diego-specific panels of “The AIDS Quilt” and music performances by UC San Diego musicians, faculty performers, and the San Diego Women’s Chorus. For more information go to http://lgbt.ucsd.edu/worldaidsday/.
Community Partnerships:
ARI Education in Action

“A Woman’s Voice”

The Center For AIDS Research and AIDS Research Institute were delighted to be the Presenting Sponsor for the 2012 San Diego HIV Women’s Conference: A Woman’s Voice. This full day of empowerment, education and support was attended by nearly 200 women infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. The program included both educational workshops (presented in English and Spanish) and fun-filled supportive activities such as a fashion show and multicultural panel. Produced by the CARE Partnership, a coalition which includes many of the remarkable female care providers at UCSD, this event has become a safe haven for all women dealing with HIV and AIDS. ARI members were prominently featured as workshop facilitators as well, including Jeanette Aldous, MD, Teresa Oyos, Carmen Cuevas, MSW and Terry Albritton. We were happy to announce our continued “presenting level” sponsorship of this biennial event at a National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day event on March 13, 2013, as a part of our continued commitment to care for women infected and affected by HIV.

The Cure Conference

On November 12, 2012, the UC San Diego AntiViral Research Center (AVRC) and ARI welcomed members of the community to The San Diego LGBT Community Center for “The Cure Conference”. This program was initiated as a result of discussions between AVRC Community Advisory Board (CAB) Member Jeff Taylor and AIDS Research Institute Director, Dr. Douglas Richman at the 2012 Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections. Organized and produced by the AVRC’s Senior Public Information Officer Joshua Romero and the CAB, the community education event featured: “The Berlin Patient,” Timothy R. Brown (the first man cured of HIV infection), UC San Diego ARI researchers Douglas Richman, MD, and Davey Smith, MD, and William Schief, PhD, from The Scripps Research Institute. The presenters shared advances in HIV treatment, vaccine and cure research, followed by Brown’s story of being cured from HIV. With nearly 300 attendees, the question and answer session at the end of the event ignited a great conversation about the journey ahead in HIV cure and vaccine research!
UC San Diego HNRPs Teresa Oyos: 2012 A. Brad Truax Award Winner

Each year, on World AIDS Day, San Diego celebrates innovators in the HIV/AIDS community at the Dr. A. Brad Truax Awards. Named for the well-loved and respected Dr. Truax, a long-time San Diego physician and an early activist in the fight against HIV/AIDS, this honor is awarded to an individual who shows passionate dedication to the San Diego HIV community.

The UC San Diego AIDS Research Institute (ARI) and HIV Neurobehavioral Research Program (HNRP) were thrilled to see one of their own receive 2012’s top honor. Teresa Oyos has been a vital member of the HNRP for nearly 18 years, ensuring that their research projects are accessible to all San Diegans. Having spent the bulk of her adult life advocating for equality, her passion is a perfect fit for HIV research.

Oyos’s story begins in the 1970s, a time of change and progress for the Latino/Chicano community. She first found her activist voice while attending San Diego City College, where she became involved with the Chicano Newspaper, “La Verdad” and the SDSU chapter of M.E.Ch.A. (Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de
Aztlan). Additionally, she spent much of her early efforts advocating for a comprehensive Latino/Chicano studies program throughout San Diego City Colleges. Today, Chicano Studies at Mesa College remains a thriving, well-respected program among San Diego’s higher education institutions.

Oyos’s desire to further delve into women’s rights and to challenge the traditional roles of Latina women prompted her involvement with “Teatro de las Chicanas,” a grass-roots troupe that was part of the national “teatro” movement. Now called “Teatro Chicanas,” this women’s collective continues to inspire change through performance art. A high point in Oyos’s life was the inclusion of her poetry in Teatro Chicana: A Collective Memoir and Selected Plays, published in April 2008.

In the late 1970s, Oyos worked to increase recognition of the gay and lesbian community in San Diego. Over the next decade, Oyos had the opportunity to marry her passion for Latino rights and those of her fellow gay and lesbian people as a co-founder of “Orgullo” (Spanish for pride). Collaborating with Nicole Murray-Ramirez and Adam Gettinger-Brizuela, Oyos created a dialogue among multiple communities whose members identified as LGBT.

The late 1980s and early 1990s brought Oyos to a chapter of recovery. Having benefited from support groups and the 12 step program, Oyos applied her personal experience by working with CRASH, Inc. (Community Resources And Self Help). She also spent a year working with MAAC (Maximizing Access to Advance our Communities) as a drug and alcohol counselor before returning to San Diego City College to pursue her studies in that field.

About 18 years ago, Oyos found in the HNRP an opportunity to meld and enhance her life-long community activism and involvement, and fulfill the role that led to the A. Brad Truax award nomination. Through her work at local gay and lesbian publications and volunteering, Oyos had learned about HIV/AIDS and its impact across the multiple communities with which she collaborated: Latinas and communities of color, gay men, and those struggling with drug and alcohol use. The opportunity to use her advocacy and outreach skills came in the form of a part-time job recruiting subjects for HNRP studies in the Latino community.

Her passion and dedication did not go unnoticed, and Oyos was made a full time HNRP employee within a year. In three years she was promoted to senior outreach representative and now supervises the HNRP’s outreach program.

Oyos and her outreach team recruit clients for the HNRP’s clinical trials throughout San Diego County. A typical day may include giving presentations in HIV community clinics, recovery programs and various community. She is never afraid to share her own life experiences, and this quality has made her well regarded and trusted by her team, research participants and the community.

In addition to her responsibilities at the HNRP, Oyos also serves on The HIV Care Partnership for Women, Children and Families and spent four years on the Human Relations Commission. In 2008, she was honored with the “Heroes, Pioneers and Trailblazers” designation for Lambda Archives San Diego.

Oyos is recognized for her openness and connection to the many communities she represents. Her diligence in keeping HIV treatment and prevention as a focus in all of her outreach and advocacy explains why the Truax award panel chose her for 2012’s top award. We proudly salute Teresa Oyos for her achievements and her well-deserved Truax Award.

The UC San Diego Neurobehavioral HIV Research Program (HNRP) is an internationally respected arm of the University’s HIV programs and serves as the umbrella organization that provides broad scientific and programmatic leadership for multidisciplinary research programs related to the neurocognitive and psychiatric impact of HIV/AIDS. As part of its leadership role, the HNRP stimulates and helps coordinate interdisciplinary collaborative research at the local, regional, national, and international levels, and also serves as a resource for consultation, training and career development for investigators working in HIV/AIDS and mental health.

The HNRP greatly facilitates research progress by identifying and broadly encouraging work on important topics, and by offering the following services to potential investigators:

A. Multidisciplinary consultation and training

B. Coordinated access to data and biological specimens from existing HIV+ and HIV- cohorts, and

C. State-of-the-art expertise with statistics, data management, and recruiting of new participant groups to meet specific needs of the proposed investigation.

The HNRP also supports information exchange among investigators and trainees via web-based resources including access to project reports, links to recent literature and conference materials, webcasts, and support for video conferencing.

http://hnrc.hivresearch.ucsd.edu/
The UC San Diego AIDS Research Institute is an Organized Research Unit that unites and serves all HIV/AIDS programs and investigators at the University. In addition to supporting multiple UC San Diego HIV research programs, our mission is to help our members provide effective HIV treatment, testing, education and prevention services throughout San Diego County. Our programs assist all individuals infected and affected by HIV, including infants and children. These programs include, but are not limited to the following:

**Clinical Trials:**

AIDS Clinical Trial Unit (ACTU), International Maternal Pediatric Adolescent AIDS Clinical Trials Group (IMPAACT), California Collaborative Treatment Group (CCTG), and Studies of the Ocular Complications of AIDS (SOCA).

**Basic/Translational Research:**

Center For AIDS Research (CFAR), Neutralizing Antibody Consortium (NAC), AntiViral Research Center (AVRC), Martin Delaney Collaborative: Towards an HIV Cure, HIV Neurobehavioral Research Program (HNRP), Determinants of HIV Infection, and CFAR Network of Integrated Clinical Systems (CNICS).

**Clinical Care and Training**

The Owen Clinic, Early Intervention and Bridge Programs, The Special Infectious Disease (SPID) Clinic of the VA San Diego Healthcare System, The Early Test Program, and The San Diego AIDS Education and Training Center (AETC).

**International**

Medical Education Partnership Initiatives (MEPI) and the Mexico-U.S. border region HIV/AIDS Training and Research Program.