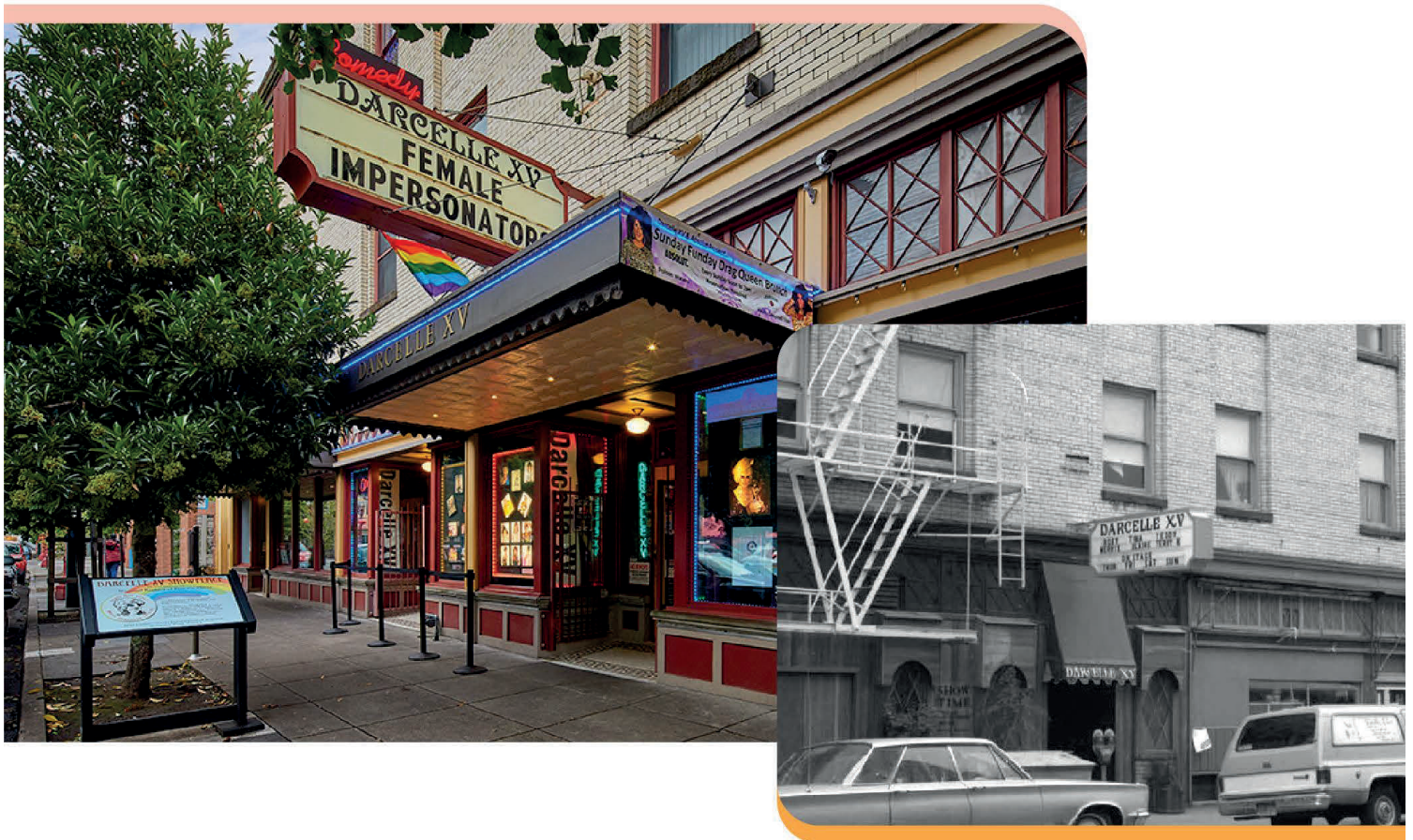


LGBTQ+ History in Portland, Oregon

A Historic Context Statement



Historic Context Statement Prepared by Cayla McGrail
for City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

October 2024

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About City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

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HIV/AIDS Impacts in Portland

On the morning of February 27, 1989, activists convened outside Portland's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) offices (511 NW Broadway), marking a significant moment in the ongoing struggle against human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). Individuals hailing from Seattle, San Francisco, and Portland converged to lend their voices to a nonviolent civil disobedience event organized by Portland's chapter of AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP).⁶⁷⁷ Their collective aim was to spotlight the FDA's role in perpetuating a "murderous AIDS policy," a reference to the agency's refusal to release vital treatments. Amidst chants of "ACT UP! Fight Back! Fight AIDS!" echoing through the streets, one activist handcuffed himself to the doorknob of the FDA office, symbolizing ACT UP's determination to confront the government's ineffectiveness in tackling the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This demonstration not only drew attention to pressing HIV/AIDS treatment issues but also underscored burgeoning nationwide solidarity within HIV/AIDS activist movements. It signaled expansion of AIDS activism into regions beyond established epicenters of San Francisco and New York with the Pacific Northwest firmly joining the ranks of those demanding urgent national action to address the epidemic. By day's end, the impassioned protest resulted in the arrest of approximately twelve individuals, further highlighting the unwavering commitment of AIDS activists.⁶⁷⁸

Action by ACT UP/Portland, other chapters, and additional activists through the late 1980s and 1990s led to substantial changes. For instance, the FDA accelerated its approval process for HIV/AIDS drug treatments, and Portlander Joe Doherty remembered individuals being able to walk out of care facilities like Portland-based HIV/AIDS hospice Our House due to the changes in medication.⁶⁷⁹ Further, legislative and funding increased services and support, as government action finally addressed the medical and social crisis.

"HIV/AIDS Impacts Portland" explores a range of initiatives and grassroots efforts that emerged during the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s. Widespread stigma, lack of institutional support, and increasing numbers of HIV/AIDS diagnoses in Portland challenged and influenced medical institutions and society to respond. Organizations like Cascade AIDS Project, Oregon Minority AIDS Coalition and service providers like Juniper House and HIV Day Center filled the gap of mainstream health services. Local activism during the late 1980s and 1990s raised awareness, disputed stereotypes, and generated

⁶⁷⁷ AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power formed in New York City in 1987 as a "grassroots political action group" seeking to "bring widespread attention to the AIDS crisis." For additional history on ACT UP, see NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project, Historic Context Statement for LGBT History in New York City, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, May 2018, 66, 68- 71.; Sarah Schulman, *Let the Record Show: A Political History of ACT UP NEW York, 1987 – 1993*, ; Sam Sanders, Jinae West, Andrea Gutierrez, Sylvie Douglis, Liam McBain, Manuela Lopex Restrepo, Jordana Hochman, "ACT UP: A History of AIDS/HIV Activism," NPR, June 18, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/06/16/1007361916/act-up-a-history-of-aids-hiv-activism>.

⁶⁷⁸ Michael Ambrosino, "ACT UP zaps FDA in Portland," *Just Out*, April 1, 1989, 23. Ambrosino was among the individuals arrested, detained at the federal courthouse, and strip-searched by U.S. Marshals. For more information, see "ACT UP Strip search produces federal suit," *Just Out*, October 1, 1989, 12.; Inga Sorensen, "Justice Served," *Just Out*, July 21, 1995, 15.

⁶⁷⁹ "ACT UP Accomplishments – 1987 – 2012, ACTUP, <https://actupny.com/actions/>; Oral interview with Joe Doherty and Kay Gage, by Ernestina Fuenmayor and Cayla McGrail, June 15, 2023, unrecorded.

funds to support people with HIV/AIDS. Portland's response to HIV/AIDS stemmed from the city's resilience, network of community care, and collaboration of diverse demographics developed before, during, and after the late 20th century.

Portland's HIV/AIDS Healthcare Systems

Medical and Scientific Research

Oregonians' attention and involvement in HIV/AIDS medical and scientific research surged following the state's first case of Kaposi sarcoma (KS) reported in August 1981, notwithstanding the relatively fewer reported case numbers compared to other states containing the most significantly impacted cities.⁶⁸⁰ In 1982, Dr. David Regan, a blood disease and cancer specialist affiliated with the Northwest Cancer Research Center at Providence Medical Center (4805 NE Glisan St.), utilized the center's blood testing machines to detect blood abnormalities, including those abnormalities related to the developing health crisis.⁶⁸¹ Providence's 1982 testing was ahead of commercial blood tests, available starting in 1985, and elevated the Research Center to become Oregon's "No. 1 AIDS tracker" by analyzing blood samples.⁶⁸² By 1983, Regan and the center's team tracked 40 cases of blood abnormalities related to HIV/AIDS.⁶⁸³

Through the early and mid-1980s, medical researchers worked to better define the disease. To recognize broader demographics impacted by the quickening mortality rate, such as children, women, non-LGBTQ+ people, and hemophiliacs, in 1982 the CDC introduced the term Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and a case definition of AIDS.⁶⁸⁴ By 1984, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced the identification of retrovirus HTLV-III (named HIV in 1986) as the cause of AIDS and the development of a blood test.⁶⁸⁵ Blood testing development was imperative, as additional research and reports suggested blood exposure and transfusions were responsible for transmitting AIDS.⁶⁸⁶ The initial

⁶⁸⁰ Alan K Ota, "Immune disease research priority for health agency," *Oregonian*, February 27, 1983, D8, 3M; "Oregon considered low-risk area for AIDS," *Oregonian*, August 17, 1983, B2, 3M; Tom Hager, "AIDS: Deadly Enigma," *Oregonian*, October 2, 1983, NW8.

⁶⁸¹ Portland Providence Medical Center acquired one of three Cytofluorograph machines in the nation to test blood cells. Detecting levels of "helper" T-cells, which help the immune system, determine HIV/AIDS diagnosis. See Ann Sullivan, "Human blood cell 'sorter' captures medical attention," *Oregonian*, Tuesday, September 23, 1980; Hager, "AIDS: Deadly Enigma," *Oregonian*; "A Timeline of HIV and AIDS,"

⁶⁸² The Food and Drug Administration released the Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA), the "first commercial blood test...to detect HIV" on March 2, 1985. It was designed to screen blood banks, not to diagnose patients. For more information, see, Abbott, "How One Test Changed HIV," Products and Innovation, Newsroom, Abbott, November 27, 2019, <https://www.abbott.com/corpnewsroom/products-and-innovation/how-one-test-changed-HIV.html>; Merrill Fabry, "This is How the HIV Test was Invented."; Oz Hopkins, "Additional test reduces doubt in AIDS," *Oregonian*, April 25, 1985, D1-D2.

⁶⁸³ Hager, "AIDS: Deadly Enigma."

⁶⁸⁴ On September 24, 1982, the CDC's *MMWR* used AIDS for the first time and defined it as "a disease at least moderately predictive of a defect in cell-mediated immunity, occurring in a person with no known cause for diminished resistance to that disease." See "Current Trends Update on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)—United States," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 31, no. 37 (September 24, 1982): 507-508. 513-514.

⁶⁸⁵ Lawrence K. Altman, "New U.S. Report Names Virus That May Cause AIDS," *New York Times*, April 24, 1984, Section C, Page 1.

⁶⁸⁶ On December 10, 1982, *MMWR* reported a "suspected case of transfusion-associated AIDS in a 20-month-old San Francisco infant who had none of the known risk factors for AIDS." The March 4, 1983, *MMWR* article, "Current Trends Prevention of

blood tests introduced in 1985 detected the “presence of antibodies to the virus”; these tests were not intended for diagnosing HIV/AIDS itself as the virus could be present without corresponding antibodies.⁶⁸⁷ Reportedly, 20% of 1,400 Oregonians who tested in 1985 received positive results, a relatively low number compared to cities like San Francisco, but nonetheless a concern.⁶⁸⁸ Considering potential reliability issues, and the urgent need for tests to be accurate and accessible, Portland-based biotech firm Epitope Inc. (formerly at 1920 NW Johnson St., Suite 110) spearheaded national HIV/AIDS testing through the late 1980s with a commercially viable diagnostic test.⁶⁸⁹ By October 1987, Epitope’s test was extensively utilized in the U.S. and Western Europe to confirm positive HIV results.⁶⁹⁰

While blood testing refined through the late 1980s and early 1990s, experimental treatments of limited drugs attempted to respond to the evolving medical crisis.⁶⁹¹ Often, treatment options largely focused on managing opportunistic infections and symptoms rather than directly targeting the virus. The FDA approved azidothymidine (AZT) in 1987 as the first antiretroviral drug shown to slow the progression of HIV. Yet, AZT caused much concern due to its “unprecedented” approval process, potential side effects, high cost, and access. In 1988, Portlander Dr. Mark Loveless explained that “third-party providers such as insurance companies and welfare agencies are paying for the drug, often only when the criteria on the product insert are met. [Many individuals] do not meet the arbitrary criteria,” leading to individuals splitting dosages with others and finding AZT without prescription.⁶⁹² “There are desperate things being done by people feeling desperate about their [HIV/AIDS status],” Loveless summarized.⁶⁹³ Within a few years, the FDA approved additional potential drugs like didanosine (DDI), which was cheaper than AZT.⁶⁹⁴

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS): Report of Inter-Agency Recommendations” noted the “possibility of acquiring AIDS through blood components or blood” based on “several cases in persons with no known risk factors who have received blood products or blood within 3 years of AIDS diagnosis.” See Institute of Medicine (US) Committee to Study HIV Transmission Through Blood and Blood Products, “History of the Controversy- HIV and the Blood Supply,” in *HIV and the Blood Supply: An Analysis of Crisis Decision making* (National Academies Press, 1995), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK232419/>.

⁶⁸⁷ Since the release of antibody testing in 1985, several concerns arose surrounding its reliability, including “time needed to develop a positive antibody,” that would show up in testing. Further, the release of this 1985 test focused on protecting the national blood supply. See Hopkins, “Additional test reduces doubt in AIDS,” D2.; Hopkins, “Portland company works on test to diagnose AIDS infection,” B1.; Jay Brown, “HTLV III antibody test—don’t take it,” *Just Out*, May 1, 1985, 6.; Thomas S. Alexander, “Human Immunodeficiency Virus Diagnostic Testing: 30 Years of Evolution,” *Clin Vaccine Immunol* 23 no. 4 (April 4, 2016): 249-253.; Merrill Fabry, “This is How the HIV Test was Invented,” *TIME*, June 27, 2016, <https://time.com/4377408/history-hiv-testing/>.

⁶⁸⁸ “20% positive rate at state alternative sites,” *Just Out*, April 1, 1986, 8.

⁶⁸⁹ Epitope Inc., originally named Immunologic Associates, Inc. when formed in 1979, relocated to Beaverton by 1987. See Oz Hopkins, “Portland business arms biomedical arsenal,” *Oregonian*, December 29, 1983, B6, 3M; Michael C. Hubbard, “Sees no Connection,” Letter to the Editor, *Oregonian*, April 6, 1985; Donald J. Sorensen, “Epitope leader of NW Stocks,” *Oregonian*, March 3, 1987, D8, 3M.; Oz Hopkins, “Portland company works on test to diagnose AIDS infection,” *Oregonian*, October 5, 1986, B1.; Jack Riley, “Oregon firms make medical news,” *Just Out*, May 1, 1989, 5.

⁶⁹⁰ “Epitope to Buy Back Some of Its Stock,” *Oregonian*, October 28, 1987, Sec. C7.

⁶⁹¹ Jeffrey Zurlinden, “AIDS 101,” *Just Out*, October 1, 1989, 6.

⁶⁹² Doris Wisher, “AZT: Genie or viral treachery?,” *Just Out*, February 1, 1988, 14.; Alice Park, “The Story Behind the First AIDS Drug,” *TIME*, March 19, 2017, <https://time.com/4705809/first-aids-drug-azt/>.

⁶⁹³ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁴ Katrin Snow, “DDI in Portland,” *Just Out*, November 1, 1991, 12.

Drug combinations, referred to as drug “cocktails,” became increasingly common though no cure for HIV/AIDS was discovered by the mid-1990s.

Health Services and Care

During the early years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, national and local networks of institutions and grassroots initiatives increasingly collaborated to address the multifaceted needs of individuals with HIV/AIDS. Hospitals, hospices, clinics, and community-based care programs played vital and complementary roles in providing medical treatment, care, psychosocial support, medical research, and advocacy. Grassroots care programs filled gaps in mainstream healthcare systems, offering much more personalized support, assistance with daily living activities, and community support. Together, these diverse institutions formed a comprehensive network, striving to alleviate suffering, promote dignity, and combat stigmas.

By the early 1980s, Oregon Health and Science University’s Russell Street Dental Clinic (214 N. Russell St.) provided pivotal care persons with HIV/AIDS who had dental needs yet could not receive care at other dentist offices.⁶⁹⁵ Significantly, Russell Street started “writing the manuals on how to treat AIDS patients because [they] had the experience.”⁶⁹⁶

With rising numbers of people with AIDS (PWAs) across the nation and Oregon (an estimated 13,000 to 18,000 Oregonians in 1988), hospitals experienced being “stuck with having very little resources available” for HIV/AIDS care.⁶⁹⁷ Dr. Robert Lawrence, Chief of Allergy and Immunology at Kaiser Permanente’s Immune Deficiency Clinic, stressed that increasing numbers of Oregonians with HIV/AIDS would “need help along the line” and hoped that “more cost-effective” avenues could provide comprehensive and compassionate care.⁶⁹⁸ Additionally, misinformation and stigmatization influenced many hospitals, nursing homes, and healthcare staff to refuse care of people with AIDS.⁶⁹⁹

Alternative grassroots care quickly emerged nationwide and in Portland in response to the lack of support and pervasive discrimination experienced by individuals with HIV/AIDS in most medical institutions. Driven by individuals and organizations, these often LGBTQ+ -led initiatives reflected the phenomenon of “every gay community across the nation [having] organized some sort of support group and/or fundraising activity” starting in 1981.⁷⁰⁰ Physicians, people with AIDS, and other committed activists played central roles in delivering medical care during the 1980s. Notable initiatives include the Cascade AIDS Project (CAP), end-of-life care initiated by Juniper House (2006 SE Ankeny St.), and HIV day centers.

⁶⁹⁵ Russell Street Dental Clinic was established in 1975 and assisted Portlanders with low to no income.

⁶⁹⁶ David Rosenstein Oral History, interviewed by Gary T. Chiado, August 17, 2014, OHSU Oral History Program, Oregon Health and Science University, <https://digitalcollections.ohsu.edu/record/3271?ln=en&v=pdf>.

⁶⁹⁷ Patrick O’Neil, “Programs to Help Families, Friends of AIDS Patients,” *Oregonian*, August 15, 1988, C1.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁹ Patrick O’Neill, “A Place to Call Home,” *The Sunday Oregonian*, November 15, 1987, Sec. 3M-B.

⁷⁰⁰ “Topic AIDS,” *Just Out*, January 6, 1984, 4.

Cascade AIDS Project (CAP)

In 1983, Phoenix Rising (408 SW 2nd Ave., Suite 420) established Cascade AIDS Project (CAP), a reflection of LGBTQ+ Portlanders' commitment to combating AIDS. Comprising physicians, Portlanders with AIDS, and other dedicated activists, this branch of Phoenix Rising swiftly developed educational materials and programs to aid Portlanders affected by the epidemic.⁷⁰¹ Within two years, CAP became an independent entity, consolidating various burgeoning initiatives into its portfolio, including a fundraising committee (Cascade AIDS Network), an education and risk reduction committee (CAP Committee), a direct services program (Community Health Support Services/ Personal Active Listener Board), and a financial assistance program (Brinker Fund Board).

As CAP transitioned into an independent organization, it continued the information sessions initiated by Phoenix Rising. Sexual health information sessions occurred at various locations across Portland, including CAP's office, (408 SW 2nd Ave., Room 427), the Portland Building (1120 SW 5th Ave., 2nd floor, Room B), and Overlook House (3839 N. Melrose Dr.)⁷⁰² CAP initiatives also had a dedicated space within the Majestic Hotel & Club Baths (303 SW 12th Ave., later Club Baths) for awareness, testing, and counseling related to HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted infections.⁷⁰³

Through these efforts, CAP and other healthcare providers made LGBTQ+-focused sexual health resources available to Portlanders through the latter decades of the 20th century. As of 2024, Cascade AIDS Project (520 NW Davis St., #215) is the "oldest and largest community-based provider of HIV services, housing, education, and advocacy" in the Pacific Northwest.⁷⁰⁴

Juniper House

As the HIV/AIDS epidemic became entrenched in Portland, the need for end-of-life care facilities became evident.⁷⁰⁵ Initially, end-of-life care often came from partners and friends, especially for those rejected by families and other care support due to stigma. While many hotels across the nation became informal hospices, people quickly realized that those dying of AIDS and AIDS-related complexes required specialized care, as they often experienced long stretches of feeling well, to the point at which an individual became terminal was difficult to pinpoint—unlike with many cancers, for example.

⁷⁰¹ "Chicken Soup brigade aim of PGMC and CAP," *Just Out*, May 25, 1984, 5.; W.C. McRae, "News from CAP," *Just Out*, October 1, 1986, 11.

⁷⁰² Addresses from CAP's Fall 1989 Education Programs schedule advertised in *Just Out*, October 1, 1989, 10.

⁷⁰³ The room CAP used has not been identified, and one letter to the editor mentioned that CAP staff initially would join the bathhouse users to offer condoms but were later scarcely seen and "never left the room the club [had] set aside." See Brown McDonald, "C.A.P. Receives grant for condom campaign," *Just Out*, August 1 1985,7.; Kohl, *A Curious and Peculiar People*, 255.; Jon Sauer, "Reality Check," *Just Out*, January 23, 2004, 4.

⁷⁰⁴ "Our Story," About Us, About, Cascade AIDS Project, <https://www.capnw.org/>.

⁷⁰⁵ The following information on Juniper House is summarized excerpts from the 2024 draft National Register of Historic Places nomination for Juniper House. See Ernestina Fuenmayor with Shayne Watson, "Juniper House," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form.

Starting on February 11, 1987, Portlanders John Trevitts, Doug Foland, and Jan Weyeneth set the goals and aspirations for a dedicated HIV/AIDS end-of-life care facility. They aimed to create a centrally located facility requiring minimal modifications. Trevitts invested 80 percent of the funds needed to start the project and leased a house located in Portland's Buckman neighborhood as Foland began rallying volunteers. During this period, the address of the nondescript converted Craftsman style residence was kept secret to maintain the privacy of the residents and to avoid hostile reactions.

Operating between May 6, 1987 and September 1989, Juniper House (2006 SE Ankeny St.) played a revolutionary role. Staff and volunteers addressed the vital needs of 90 individuals in a compassionate, home-like environment at a time when most mainstream healthcare facilities refused to admit individuals with HIV/AIDS due to widespread social stigma and fear of transmission. "Although the purpose of the old house [was] to serve the dying, it remain[ed] a place of life and laughter." Foland spoke in 1987 that the house built "a sense of community" for residences. People were active doing work around the house, authored a journal, and designed an AIDS Quilt panel. Additionally, Juniper House participated in various media efforts aimed at increasing public awareness and reducing stigma by showcasing residents' experiences in KGW-TV and Oregon Public Broadcasting documentaries in 1987 and 1988.

Despite ceasing operations in September 1989, Juniper House influenced later care initiatives. As the first such facility exclusively for people with HIV/AIDS in Oregon, Multnomah County requested detailed documentation of care protocols to guide future efforts. Weyeneth later opened Our House (currently at 2727 SE Alder St.), another HIV/AIDS end-of-life care facility.

HIV/AIDS Day Centers

Day centers materialized in the 1990s as a novel avenue to support and care for people with HIV/AIDS. Though no cure was found at the end of the 20th century, medical improvements with AZT meant those with HIV/AIDS were generally living longer by the 1990s; people continued to face physical, mental, and social challenges.⁷⁰⁶ Portland's HIV Day Center (first at 3835 SW Kelly St., currently at 2941 NE Ainsworth St.) launched in May 1990 to address these needs. Daily meals, snacks, basic nursing services, and resource referrals were coupled with a vibrant social setting offering a spectrum of events, forums, lectures, and gatherings.⁷⁰⁷ As the inaugural free-standing, community-based program of its nature in the United States, the HIV Day Center set a standard for an inclusive space where individuals living with HIV/AIDS could connect, share experiences, and derive assistance within a supportive and nurturing environment.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁶ "The First AIDS Drugs," CCR Landmarks, Center for Cancer Research, National Cancer Institution, <https://ccr.cancer.gov/news/landmarks/article/first-aids-drugs#:~:text=In%20a%20randomized%20trial%2C%20it,the%20perinatal%20transmission%20of%20HIV.>

⁷⁰⁷ Various ads, *Just Out*.

⁷⁰⁸ "HIV Services," Our Programs, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, <https://emoregon.org/hiv-services/>.

HIV/AIDS Activism

As the epidemic unfolded in the early 1980s, numerous advocacy and support organizations driven by a shared commitment to addressing the needs of people with HIV/AIDS emerged. Recognizing the importance of consolidation and efficiency, many of these entities merged over time to pool resources and expertise for enhanced quality of services that could better meet escalating demands. Ultimately, these groups assumed pivotal roles in raising awareness, generating crucial funds for individuals living with HIV/AIDS, delivering essential services, offering compassionate care, and organizing for change. The proliferation of these organizations stands as a testament to the magnitude of the crisis and the remarkable resilience of diverse populations in responding to HIV/AIDS. While too numerous to detail, a selection of actions, organizations, and places are highlighted below to showcase the diversity of HIV/AIDS activism.

Awareness and Fundraising

Emerging in 1983, and intensifying through the 1990s, volunteers, friends, chosen family, organizations, and institutions rallied together to lead HIV/AIDS awareness and fundraising campaigns to support Portlanders with HIV/AIDS. Awareness and information of mitigation behaviors and measures, such as practicing safe sex with condoms, was imperative during this time. Condoms emerged as focal points in numerous education campaigns and protests, particularly following revelations that latex condoms were effective in preventing HIV/AIDS transmission. Condoms marked a symbol of “not only *safe* sex . . . but *safe sex*,” for activists who did not shy away from sexuality and sexual diversity within awareness initiatives.⁷⁰⁹ Many nationwide and in Portland emphasized that queer people were especially pivotal in *safe sex* initiatives, as they “have always known that sex is not, in an epidemic or not, limited to penetrative sex . . . *It is our promiscuity that will save us.*”⁷¹⁰ In 1985, CAP received \$1,880 from the Venereal Disease Action Council to distribute condoms in Portland bars and baths, influencing the formation of Bartenders Against AIDS to assist the distribution.⁷¹¹ Grants for CAP campaigns continued to expand through the late 1980s, with Oregon Health Division allocating \$10,000 in 1988 for enhanced campaigns that included condom distribution in Portland bars, conducting safe sex seminars, and crafting targeted advertisements to promote condom use.⁷¹²

Activists and organizations tirelessly sought funding for critical research, medical care, and essential living expenses through an array of events. Given the lack of equitable government funding, grassroots fundraising played a pivotal role in filling this gap. Campaigns engaged with all Portlanders in unique and

⁷⁰⁹ ACT UP/ San Francisco, “Our Goals and Demands,” (informational flyer), 1988, quoted in Joshua Gamson, “Rubber Wars: Struggles over the Condom in the United States,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1 no. 2 (October 1990): 277.

⁷¹⁰ Douglas Crimp, “How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic,” *October*, 43 (Winter 1987): 253.

⁷¹¹ “CAP Receives grant for condom campaign,” *Just Out*, August 1, 1985, 7.

⁷¹² Notable, CAP advertisements were pulled from TriMet buses within a week following a critical article in *The Oregonian*. See David Reinhard, “AIDS Prevention or gay promotion?,” *Sunday Oregonian*, July 3, 1988.; Craig Harris, “AIDS Ads Removed from Tri-Met Buses” *The Oregonian*, July 13, 1988, sec. B01.; “Tri-Met adamant, ads banned permanently,” *Just Out*, September 1, 1988, 9.

creative ways. For instance, some Portlanders took to the streets in CAP's annual "From All Walks of Life" which kicked off in 1987 at Tom McCall Waterfront Park (98 SW Naito Parkway). The event gained momentum and increasingly garnered support from political and public figures, including Portland Mayor Bud Clark, Oregon Governor Barbara Roberts, the executive director of the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon Rev. Rodney I. Page, State Representative Gail Shibley, and Multnomah County Commissioner Gladys McCoy.⁷¹³

Portland's art scene also heavily fundraised for HIV/AIDS support. Created by figures from Portland's visual arts community, such as Larry Kirkland, John Forsgren, and William Jamison, alongside Dr. James Sampson and Sara Perry, chairwoman of the Metropolitan Arts Commission in 1987, "ART/AIDS" aimed to establish sustainability funding sources for long-term healthcare and draw attention to the profound cultural, social, and medical ramifications of HIV/AIDS.⁷¹⁴ Cultural institutions such as Portland Performing Arts Center (1111 SW Broadway), Powell's Books (1005 W Burnside St.), Oregon Art Institute (1219 SW Park Ave.), Portland Art Museum, and Jamison's own gallery, Jamison / Thomas Gallery (217 SW 1st Ave.) participated.⁷¹⁵ In 1988, Cinema 21 (616 NW 21st Ave.) hosted Portland's first lesbian and gay film festival with a screening of *On the Brink: An AIDS Chronicle* to raise funds for Juniper House.⁷¹⁶

Funding to support people with HIV/AIDS changed in the 1990s, particularly with the 1990 federal enactment of the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resource Emergency (CARE) Act. The CARE Act "created the largest federal outlay for services to people in cities and states hit hardest by the AIDS epidemic."⁷¹⁷ Portland's cumulative cases of HIV/AIDS in 1994 permitted the city to receive grants available for areas with 2,000 or more cases, marking "the first time since the act's passage in 1990 that the region was eligible for Title I funds."⁷¹⁸ Multnomah County Chair Beverly Stein soberly reflected in 1995 on the ability to majorly expand services: "it's sad that we've reached the point where we've become

⁷¹³ "1200 from all walks of life raise 90,000," *Just Out*, September 1, 1987, 3.; "From All Walks of Life," *Just Out*, July 1, 1987, 10.; "From All Walks of Life raises \$115,000," *Just Out*, October 1, 1989, 17.; "From All Walks of Life," *Just Out*, October 1, 1993, 14.

⁷¹⁴ Jonathan Nicholas, "Artistic endeavor," *Oregonian*, July 17, 1987, C1.; W.C. McRae, "Artists plan AIDS fundraiser," *Just Out*, August 1, 1987, 10.; "ART/AIDS benefit," *Just Out*, September 1, 1987, 19.; "ART/AIDS: Galleries, bookstores plan AIDS benefit," *Just Out*, October 1, 1987, 6.; "Tour helps AIDS patients," *Oregonian*, October 3, 1987, B2, 3M.; Barry Johnson, "Who's Taking Part Art Community Works to Help AIDS Patients," *Oregonian*, October 9, 1987.; Beverly Butterworth, "Gallery-Hopping Benefit Raises Funds for AIDS Care," *Oregonian*, October 18, 1987, 2.

⁷¹⁵ "ART/AIDS schedules weeklong benefit," *Just Out*, April 1, 1989, 10.; Paul Pintarich, "Kincaid, Lebowitz Schedule April Readings," *Oregonian*, April 4, 1989, D6.; Phil Hunt, "A Lot of Art in a little time," *Oregonian*, April 21, 1989, F22.; Stuart Tomlinson, "Special Show, Special Cause," *Oregonian*, April 21, 1989, F6.; Jay Brown, "'G' word taboo at ART/AIDS," *Just Out*, May 1, 1989, 4.; William Jamison, "Concerns misplaced?," *Just Out*, June 1, 1989, 4.

⁷¹⁶ Ted Mahar, "First Lesbian and Gay Film Festival Offers 12 films during week," *Oregonian*, June 10, 1988.; Ad, *June 1, 1988*, 16, 19.

⁷¹⁷ Graves and Watson, *Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco*, 313.; Also See "Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program," Health Resources and Services Administration, <https://ryanwhite.hrsa.gov/>.

⁷¹⁸ In December 1994, Portland was awarded \$986,510 dollars through the CARE Act. In February 1995, an additional \$1.5 million in supplement funds were awards to the city. Inga Sorensen, "A Grim Milestone," *Just Out*, July 7, 1995.

eligible for these funds, but we're also very pleased we're now able to expand services to people living with HIV/AIDS."⁷¹⁹

Addressing issues of racism, ableism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination pervasive within many mainstream HIV/AIDS service organizations entrenched "in the white-establishment structure" became an increasing priority for many Portland HIV/AIDS activists.

AIDS programs, regardless of where they are, they typically are all white, their staff is all white, with maybe one or two people of color.

— Portland healthcare activist Elizabeth Walker reflecting on HIV/AIDS services in 1989 ⁷²⁰

Elizabeth Walker, Amani Jabari, and other LGBTQ+ Portlanders and Seattleites formed Oregon Minority AIDS Coalition (OMAC, formerly People of Color United Against AIDS) in 1987 to bridge demographic gaps in HIV/AIDS prevention, education, and outreach services.⁷²¹ Initially headquartered at the International Refugee Center of Oregon (IRCO, formerly at 1336 E. Burnside St.), OMAC united several advocacy groups and diverse Portlanders to share materials and advocate for existing programs to become more inclusive, according to the organization's sole paid staff member, Mary Li.⁷²² OMAC supported informational house parties to educate Portlanders on HIV/AIDS, recognizing the significance of people-based strategies, family structures, and community circles.⁷²³ In 1993, the organization under new Executive Director Emmally Williams-Mitchell moved to a "three-room suite at 3415 NE Broadway" where the organization could foster a more inclusive and accessible space for "any and everybody."⁷²⁴

Remembering those who passed from HIV/AIDS and AIDS-related complex (ARC) was another avenue to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS. In 1986, Portland Metropolitan Community Church (2400 NE Broadway Ave.) participated in a global 50-hour prayer vigil initiated by the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.⁷²⁵ Over 200 attendees participated in the city's first AIDS vigil which featured workshops covering topics such as prevention strategies, support for families impacted by HIV/AIDS, and the empowerment of people with AIDS.⁷²⁶ This emotionally powerful event provided a needed forum for education, compassion, and solidarity, becoming an annual event with involvement from additional

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Anndee Hochman, "Elizabeth Waters: Health Activist," *Just Out*, August 1, 1989, 15.

⁷²¹ The Seattle organization became the People of Color Against AIDS Network. Amani Jabari, "Oregon Minority AIDS Coalition," *Rainbow News*, Fall 1989, 7.

⁷²² Andee Hochman, "Mary Li, AIDS educator," *Just Out*, January 1, 1989, 11. Li later became one partner of the first same-sex couple to marry in Multnomah County, leading her to be one of the plaintiffs in *Li & Kennedy V. State of Oregon*. This lawsuit challenged the Oregon marriage statute discriminating against same-sex couples. For more information, see "Li and Kennedy V. State of Oregon, ACLU Oregon, <https://www.aclu-or.org/en/cases/li-and-kennedy-v-state-oregon>.

⁷²³ Mary Li, interviewed by Cayla McGrail, May 22, 2024, not recorded.

⁷²⁴ Irene K. Hislop, "Ready to face the challenges," *Just Out*, January 1, 1993, 12.

Irene K. Hislop, "Ready to face the challenges," *Just Out*, January 1, 1993, 12.; *Out About Town*, *Just Out*, June 17, 1994, 20.

⁷²⁵ "MCC plans AIDS vigil of Prayer," *Just Out*, September 1, 1986, 5.

⁷²⁶ Ibid. Though outside the scope of this project's 1905-1994 period, Lutheran Inner-City Ministries (4219 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., currently Albina Head Start) hosted Portland's first African American HIV/AIDS Vigil in 1999. See Shona Dudley, "Vigil and Vigilance," *Just Out*, May 7, 1999, 9.

congregations and organizations.⁷²⁷ Two years later, in 1988, Portland showcased the final touring display of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt.⁷²⁸ Hosted by University of Portland in the Earl A. Chiles Center (5000 N. Willamette Blvd.), the display was part of quilt creator Cleve Jones's efforts to raise funds and support local communities, spread a message of "compassion and love," and grieve those who had passed.⁷²⁹ Eugene *Oregon Daily Emerald* journalist Kelvin Wee described the impact of seeing the quilt in person: "As I walked into the Chiles Center, I was taken aback by the display. It was draped from ceiling to floor and wall to wall. It was overwhelming and magnificent."⁷³⁰ The poignant closing ceremony on July 30, 1988, featured performances by the Oregon Symphony, Portland Gay Men's Chorus, Portland Lesbian Choir, and various other artists.⁷³¹

Direct Service Organizations

HIV/AIDS services and community care emerged immediately in 1981 as an indispensable lifeline for individuals navigating myriad challenges beyond their health status. As people in the mid-1980s were not only succumbing to AIDS but also persevering through debilitating effects of HIV/AIDS and AIDS-related complexes, a network of volunteer-led programs stepped up to address the diverse needs of Portlanders living with HIV/AIDS. Portlanders were "very active in responding to the AIDS crisis."⁷³² Of the many efforts supporting individuals with HIV/AIDS during the 1980s and 1990s, notable direct service providers included the Brinker Fund, Esther's Pantry, Community Health and Essential Support Services (CHESS), and Personal Active Listeners (PAL) Project.

Chester Brinker / Rose Empress XXIV Esther Hoffman Howard, one of the first Portlanders to pass from HIV/AIDS complications on May 5, 1984 at Good Samaritan Hospital, advised local organizations on the importance of practical support for people with HIV/AIDS before his passing; this subsequently influenced multiple initiatives named in his memory.⁷³³ For instance, his family and close friends established the Chester / Esther Brinker Medical Memorial Fund to offer crucial financial support for Portlanders with

⁷²⁷ For example, the 1987 vigil included Gil Gerald, then "director of minority affairs of the National AIDS Network," and Oregon State Health Division. For additional history on MCC's AIDS Vigils, see Kohl, *A Curious and Peculiar People*, 271-273.

⁷²⁸ San Francisco activist and artist Cleve Jones conceived the quilt in 1985. By 1987, Jones and others began assembling quilt squares commemorating people who passed. See "NAMES project begins assembling national 'AIDS Quilt'," *Just Out*, August 1, 1987, 7.; Jonathan Pearlman, Landmark Nomination for NAMES Project Building/Jose Theatre, San Francisco, 2.; "The History of the Quilt," Quilt, National AIDS Memorial, <https://www.aidsmemorial.org/quilt-history>.; Names Project Quilt Coming to Portland," *Just Out*, February 1, 1988, 7.; Harold Moore, "AIDS Quilt at Chiles Center," *Just Out*, May 1, 1988, 16.; "Names Project opens Portland Office," *Just Out*, June 1, 1988, 12.; "Names Project/Portland established," *Just Out*, August 1, 1989, 12.

⁷²⁹ "Local gay and lesbian community assistance needed for NAMES Project quilt tour," *Just Out*, March 1, 1988, 15.

⁷³⁰ Kelvin Wee, "AIDS Quilt not big enough to soak up tears," *Oregon Daily Emerald*, August 2, 1988, 8.

⁷³¹ "Quilt scheduled announced," *Just Out*, July 1, 1988, 7.; "The NAMES Project Quilt Visits Portland," 32.; Harold Moore, "A Legacy of Love," *Just Out*, September 1, 1988, 14.; Anndee Hochman, *Just Out*, September 1, 1988, 14.

⁷³² Cindy Cumfer, personal communication with Cayla McGrail, April 27th, 2024.

⁷³³ W.C. McRae, "Helplessness, or helpfulness and AIDS: Portland's PAL project," *Just Out*, July 1, 1985, 6.; "Oregon Gay History Timeline," Oregon Queer History Collective, <https://www.glapn.org/6020timeline.html>.

HIV/AIDS; it was later managed by CAP with various benefit events providing funding.⁷³⁴ "As the Brinker Fund board members visited [Portlanders], they quickly realized that, in addition to housing-related support, many needed food."⁷³⁵ As a result, Esther's Pantry became the city's premier "LGBTQ+ affirming shopping-style food pantry" located in the basement of LGBTQ+ bar Embers Avenue (110 NW Broadway).⁷³⁶ Esther's Pantry expanded its offerings in the late 1980s to include personal care items and later clothing with the addition of Tod's Corner (named in memory of Portlander Tod Hutchins who worked with the Brinker Fund).⁷³⁷

Concurrently to Esther's Pantry, starting in June 1985, the non-profits Community Health and Essential Support Services (initially named Chicken Soup Brigade then Community Health Support Services) and the Personal Active Listener (PAL) Project formed to ensure Portlanders with HIV/AIDS received a range of personalized support.⁷³⁸ PAL Training Coordinator Larry Whitson summarized in 1988 "What people need often is practical support: 'Get me to the doctor'; 'Help me figure out how to take care for financial stuff'; 'Listen to me when I'm scared'; 'Hold me when I'm scared.'⁷³⁹ Between the programs' start and early 1986, CHESS/PAL provided "direct service to more than 300 persons, used more than 17,000 volunteer hours . . . [and] managed more [than] 200 fully active volunteers," underscoring the momentous impact of HIV/AIDS in Portland.⁷⁴⁰ In February 1986, CHESS/PAL received significant financial support from Multnomah County Board of Commissioners; the awarded \$30,000 marked "the first time that any government body in Oregon ha[d] provided funding for community based *social services* to persons and families living with AIDS."⁷⁴¹ Recognizing the growing urgency of Portland's HIV/AIDS crisis, CHESS/PAL merged with CAP in 1986 and shared office space (408 SW 2nd Ave., #420). The strategic consolidation, as described by then CAP Executive Director Brown McDonald, intended to bolster outreach, improve

⁷³⁴ "The night Brinker died, Portland bar J.R.'s West (300 NW 10th Ave.) held a drag show and raised more than \$900 to help his parents with medical bills. But his parents didn't accept the money for their own use; instead, they returned the dollars to the community." See Pat Young, "Helping Hand," *Just Out*, March 3, 2000, 7.

⁷³⁵ Ibid.

⁷³⁶ Embers Avenue owner Steve Suss recalled in a 2011 interview the shoppers "remember[ed] the Embers from coming here in their heyday and having a good time. And now that they're close to death and they've lost their prime of youth and don't look good they didn't want to come here anymore. This is not a place for somebody who is sick. It's a place for somebody who wants to get out and have a good time. So we thought it would be best to move it." Associated addresses of Esther's Pantry include a "board member's garage" (no address provided), House of Light (597 N Dekum), 27761 NE Halsey St. It continues to operate today in Milwaukie. See Jaymee R. Cuti, "Under New Management: Esther's Pantry in Reliable Hands," *Just Out*, September 1, 2006, 13.; Oral history interview with Steve Suss, by Danita Doun and Lachelle Ogden, SR 11236, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

⁷³⁷ Hutchins' estate started the Corner. In 1990, the clothing initiate moved to the HIV Day Center. It continues to operate today in Milwaukie. See "Tod G. Hutchins," *Just Out*, August 1, 1988, 22.; "Tod's Corner offers clothing to PWA's," *Just Out*, October 1, 1988, 21.

⁷³⁸ "PAL Project gets Underway," *Just Out*, June 1, 1985, 5.; "The PAL Project," *Just Out*, June 1, 1987, 36

⁷³⁹ Andee Hochman, Larry Whitson: PAL extraordinaire," *Just Out*, June 1, 1988, 15.

⁷⁴⁰ Pat Scott, "'A Need to make a difference' Steve Fulmer and the men and women of CHESS/PAL Project," February 1, 1986, 13.

⁷⁴¹ "CHESS Awarded \$30,000," *Just Out*, February 1, 1986, 6.

access to services, and increase fundraising, thereby enhancing support for those grappling with the profound challenges posed by the epidemic.⁷⁴²

Civil Disobedience

Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, HIV/AIDS activists intensified their civil disobedience efforts in response to escalating discrimination, sickness, and death. Notably leading the charge was AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), renowned for their bold and targeted protests of Wall Street, the FDA, the CDC, the Catholic Church, and other institutions they believed to be complicit in the health crisis.⁷⁴³ Though HIV/AIDS activists' civil disobedience radically shaped HIV/AIDS activism, the depth of Portland's ACT UP chapter and other similar activist groups is beyond the scope of this project. Instead, representative moments are touched on to examine how Portlanders engaged with civil disobedience to draw attention to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

HIV/AIDS activist Michael Petrelis, who arrived in Portland in 1988, played a pivotal role in establishing Portland's ACT UP chapter in December 1988; he galvanized local support to prioritize AIDS issues in political organizing.⁷⁴⁴ Regular meetings convened on Wednesdays at Multnomah County Library Central Branch (801 SW 10th Ave.) and in Metropolitan Community Church's basement (2400 NE Broadway) to refine the organization's strategic action plan aimed at dispelling misconceptions and increasing education over the following months.⁷⁴⁵ On December 14, 1988, ACT UP/Portland's inaugural protest targeted KGW-TV offices (1501 SW Jefferson St.) in response to "irresponsible and sensationalized portrayals" of individuals with HIV/AIDS in a *Midnight Caller* drama series episode.⁷⁴⁶ ACT UP/Portland members Carl Goodman, Kelly Tadlock, Steven Squires, and Petrelis were arrested in the television station's office, though no charges were filed.⁷⁴⁷

ACT UP/Portland participated in larger public demonstrations to draw attention to medicine and prevention. First, on February 28, 1989, ACT UP / Portland joined forces with the San Francisco and Seattle chapters to stage a non-violent picket and protest outside of the Portland FDA office.

⁷⁴² "AIDS agencies merge," *Just Out*, June 1, 1986, 4.; "Brown McDonald," Oral Histories, CAP Archive, https://caparchives.org/oralhistory/video-play.php?video_id=19.

⁷⁴³ "ACT UP Accomplishments- 1987 – 2012," ACTUP, <https://actupny.com/actions/>.

⁷⁴⁴ Harold Moore, "What about AIDS?" *Just Out*, December 1, 1988, 15.; Harold Moore, "On the warfront," *Just Out*, February 1, 1989, 11. For additional history on Michael Petrelis, see Michael Petrelis and Sarah Schulman, April 21, 2003, ACT UP Oral History Project, The New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6075fe20d281ea3f320a7be9/t/60da605b28313122d802c124/1624924251882/020+Michael+Petrelis.pdf>.

⁷⁴⁵ Moore, "On the warfront."; Michael MacKillop, "ACT UP Sets Portland agenda," *Just Out*, February 1, 1989, 11.; ACT UP / Portland "Join Us," *Just Out*, November 1, 1990, 33.

⁷⁴⁶ The episode focused on a character deliberately infecting people with HIV. See *Ibid.*; Jay Brown, "'Midnight Caller' episode reinforces ignorance, fear," *Just Out*, February 1, 1989, 4.; "After It Happened," Wikipedia, Last Updated February 27, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/After_It_Happened.

⁷⁴⁷ Brown, "'Midnight Caller' episode."

This protest had clearly been billed as a non-violent act of civil disobedience. I remember because there had been a lot of back and forth at our ACT UP meetings about how to handle this protest. We decided the best way was the nonviolent way. We even contracted the authorities prior to the action to let them know it would be nonviolent. So not only did they know this was going to happen, they knew it was going to be peaceful.

— Catherine Smith reflecting on the FDA protest in 1995 ⁷⁴⁸

Over 200 people attended, with protestors disrupting traffic and vandalizing the building. The bold actions underscored their demands for the release of crucial medications. Within weeks, on March 15, about a dozen members protested condom censorship at *The Oregonian* offices (1500 SW 1st Ave.) by tossing hundreds of condoms and flyers around the office condemning the newspaper's refusal to publish condom information then demonstrating at the main entrance with signs.⁷⁴⁹ ACT UP/Portland member and lawyer Wayne Harris explained the activist group's views: ". . . We question whether Stickel's prudish self-righteousness can justify censorship of public health information to help stop the spread of AIDS and other STDs. Its publisher should be part of the solution, not part of the problem."⁷⁵⁰ During the outside demonstration, Harris announced the group's plan to "randomly place condoms and education material about their use inside newspapers in *Oregonian* newspaper boxes throughout the state" in efforts to share accurate HIV/AIDS prevention information.⁷⁵¹

In 1990, ACT UP/Portland joined national boycotts and HIV/AIDS discrimination awareness campaigns. First, in September, activists emptied kegs of beer on SW Harvey Milk Street in protest of beer companies like Miller funding discriminatory legislatures like Senator Jesse Helms (R- North Carolina) who refused to improve HIV/AIDS funding.⁷⁵² On December 3, 1990, about 50 activists blocked traffic on the Burnside Bridge for National AIDS Awareness Day with protests seeking to draw attention to the 1,000 Oregonians diagnoses with AIDS "while AIDS prevention, education, and treatment services remain grossly underfunded," according to ACT UP.⁷⁵³

While ACT UP/Portland dissolved by the early 1990s, activism continued through different reorganizations of members.

⁷⁴⁸ Sorensen, "Justice Served," *Just Out*, July 21, 1995, 15.

⁷⁴⁹ "AIDS activists toss condoms in Portland newspaper offices," *Seattle Gay News*, March 24, 1989, in ACT UP: The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power Collection, Box 28, Folder 7, New York Public Library, New York City, New York.

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵² "Miller added to boycott," *Just Out*, September 1, 1990, 7.; "Miller/Marlboro boycott rally," November 1, 1990, 33.; "Boycott not over," *Just Out*, December 1, 1990, 27.

⁷⁵³ "Activists block Burnside Bridge," *Just Out*, January 1, 1991, 12.

HIV/AIDS Impacts Portland Summary

From 1981 to 1994, LGBTQ+ Portlanders and allies crafted various initiatives, organizations, and political tools during the HIV/AIDS epidemic to dispel widespread fear and stigma while raising funds and awareness. HIV/AIDS activism in a spectrum of Portland places from end-of-life care facilities to bars, offices to churches, represented a vibrant reaction to intersecting medical and social crises compounded by ignorance and homophobia. By the early 1990s, advancement in care transformed HIV/AIDS from a fatal illness to a manageable chronic condition — something that would not have been possible without this activism. Though access to care remains disparate to this day, HIV/AIDS activism was a crucial cornerstone of LGBTQ+ life; as these activists eloquently proclaimed, “Silence=Death.”⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵⁴ For additional history on “Silence=Death,” see “Poster, Silence=Death,” Collections, National Museum of American History, https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/nmah_1051178; James Emmerman, “After Orlando, the Iconic Silence=Death Image Is Back. Meet One of the Artists Who Created It,” Outward, Slate, July 13, 2016, <https://slate.com/human-interest/2016/07/silence-death-artist-avram-finkelstein-on-history-of-queer-art-and-activism.html>.