



Vance North Necessities of Life Program Commemorates 30 Years of Service

Spring 2016 marks the 30th anniversary of one of AIDS Project Los Angeles's most critically needed services—our Vance North Necessities of Life Program (NOLP) food pantries. Since we launched NOLP in 1986, it has provided groceries and hygiene products to Angelenos living with HIV/AIDS. Each week, NOLP gives out thousands of bags of groceries to APLA clients, serving nearly 2,000 people yearly, most of whom live at or below the poverty line. Over the last 30 years, NOLP has distributed approximately 2.7 million grocery bags to those in need.

When Ken and Alfia Hollywood founded their Food Distribution Center, no one imagined that it would grow into the nation's largest network of food pantries serving people with HIV/AIDS. Today, the program—which was renamed in 2011 in memory of APLA client and supporter Vance North—

gives out groceries, hygiene items, and cleaning supplies from eight locations throughout Los Angeles County—from Long Beach to Lancaster.

“Our 30th anniversary reminds us of how far we’ve come and how much work still needs to be done,” NOLP Program Manager Tonya Washington-Hendricks says. “We have constantly evolved to better serve the needs of the clients, but one thing has remained constant—the dedication and support of our community.”

NOLP's name says it plainly: the services it provides are necessities of life for thousands of people in Los Angeles County. APLA clients regularly deal with complex medical and financial challenges. Finding nutritious food can be nearly impossible for people who experience factors like unemployment and disability. For people living with HIV/AIDS, it can be even more difficult to develop a regular, healthy diet and achieve the best quality of life possible.

Because of these extra challenges people living with HIV/AIDS face, NOLP also began providing bilingual nutritional education to clients in 2004, with classes on diet and nutrition, cooking demonstrations, as well as exercise and fitness opportunities such as yoga. “Nutrition education is important because clients not only need food, but they have a lot of other issues related to their nutrition,” NOLP Nutrition Specialist Janelle L'Hereux says. “Diabetes, high blood pressure, and health issues that sometimes come with HIV medications—these are all things that can often be managed or prevented by food and lifestyle choices.”

Community support is vital in keeping the NOLP food pantries operating. Washington-Hendricks points out that more than 50% of the food NOLP distributes comes from supermarket partner donations and via food drives. Even more importantly, the hands-on work at the pantries relies mostly on community support. “For every one member of our staff we have maybe three to five volunteers working in our program,” Washington-Hendricks notes.

Even the program's namesake commemorates the efforts of generous members in the community. In 2011, philanthropist Bob North and his wife, Lois, donated \$3.5 million to the program, in memory of their son, Vance, who died of AIDS-related complications in 1995.

Today, clients can access groceries at locations in Long Beach, South Los Angeles, Pasadena, Claremont, Santa Monica, Lancaster, North Hollywood, and The David Geffen Center in Mid-City. Washington-Hendricks says that a future goal for the program will be to incorporate a mobile food pantry that will be able to bring both food and nutrition education to individuals who struggle to reach one of the eight current locations due to health issues, lack of transportation, and other challenges.

“Thirty years for NOLP means we are surviving, we are evolving, we are supported,” Washington-Hendricks says. “But we must be able to maintain the quality of the program in order to reduce the burdens HIV and AIDS bring to thousands of people in Los Angeles County.”

Look back at 30 years of NOLP with [a video](#) that features, staff, volunteers, clients, and more.



Commemorating and Growing

Taking a moment to think about how far we've come and getting ready for what's next.

My recent updates in *Optimist* have noted the significant program growth and other exciting changes going on at both APLA and APLA Health & Wellness—all thanks to your generous support. There are many more to tell you about this spring, and they are also bookended by important anniversaries that speak to our mission to alleviate the suffering caused by HIV and to end AIDS once and for all.

One of the milestones we are commemorating this year is the 30th anniversary of our Vance North Necessities of Life Program (NOLP), the nation's largest network of food pantries serving people living with HIV/AIDS. What started as a small food pantry in 1986 has now distributed more than 2.7 million bags of groceries and hygiene items to low-income people living with HIV/AIDS.

It is safe to say that those who started our food pantry did not think it would still be here in 2016. They surely hoped and prayed that it would not need to be here. Unfortunately, it is still very much necessary. Fortunately, you, our generous supporters, understand that NOLP is absolutely critical for many of our clients. We continue to be re amazed and humbled by the dedication and support you provide to make sure people who need our help continue to receive it.

Our clients can now also take advantage of many services at our new sites around Los Angeles County serving communities most in need. The Gleicher/Chen Health Center in Baldwin Hills has a new neighbor—our Education Center, which now houses our HIV prevention and health education programs, along with our Capacity Building Assistance and Community-Based Research divisions. By the summer, we will be launching [Housing Support Services](#) at the Education Center for residents of South Los Angeles, thanks to a grant through the federal Housing Opportunities for People With HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) program.

In addition, we are continuing to expand services at our new Long Beach Health Center. We are beginning free and low-cost mental health services and are well underway on the final phase of construction, which will complete a brand-new dental clinic and additional medical exam rooms. We will, of course, be keeping you up to date with the latest developments this summer.

Of course none of this is possible without community support of our fundraising events, and one of our most popular is coming up. On June 18, we hope to see you at the 32nd annual S.T.A.G.E. benefit, which remains the longest running HIV/AIDS fund-raiser in Southern California. This annual musical extravaganza has a new home this year at the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills. You can purchase your tickets at [stagela.com](#). We are also gearing up for Christopher Street West/LA Pride. We hope you'll say hello to us at our festival booth or march with us in the parade. If you're interested in marching, please sign up at [apla.org/lapride](#).

I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge a sobering milestone this spring: the [35th anniversary](#) of the first reported cases of what came to be known as AIDS. The epidemic is of course, is what spurred APLA into being. We have of lost so many people in these 35 years, but we have made great strides in our management of HIV/AIDS and also combatted homophobia and stigma. Today, we have so many tools to ensure that people with HIV live long, happy, healthy lives. Thank you for standing with us as we continue to bring quality health care to Los Angeles's most underserved communities and fight for an end to the epidemic.

With gratitude,

Craig E. Thompson
Chief Executive Officer
APLA, APLA Health & Wellness



Housing Support Services Expand to South L.A. Through HOPWA Program

Ensuring people living with HIV/AIDS have stable housing improves health outcomes and overall quality of life.

Los Angeles is in the midst of an unprecedented homelessness crisis, with more than 40,000 people now living on the city's streets, based on a recent count from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. Among that number are many people living with HIV/AIDS, and those who do have housing still face uncertainty due to factors such as limited income, lack of resources, and health issues that can cause additional challenges. APLA has long been committed to ensuring

those living with HIV and AIDS have stable housing, which helps improve health outcomes and overall quality of life.

A recent redesign of Los Angeles's [Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS \(HOPWA\)](#) program will expand APLA's housing support services to include more staff and additional resources available to clients living in South Los Angeles. HOPWA is a federal program designed to provide

housing assistance to people living with HIV/AIDS with incomes at or below 80% of an area's median income, along with their families.

By summer, all HOPWA-related services will be available to clients at the Housing Specialty Regional Office in the new Education Center in Baldwin Hills next door to the Gleicher/Chen Health Center. For many HIV-positive Los Angeles residents struggling to maintain stable housing, this shift will mean much easier access to these critically needed services.

The move is part of a trend for nonprofit agencies to coordinate support services with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, which divides geographic areas throughout the County known as Service Planning Areas (SPAs) in order to identify and adequately address the needs of people living in different regions. "Service Planning Area Six, the area surrounding our Gleicher/Chen Health Center, has the second highest rate of HIV infection in L.A. County," APLA Director of Client Services Jeff Bailey says. "The area also demonstrates a history of limited resources focusing on the housing needs of people living with HIV and AIDS."

Bailey notes that that the expansion to Baldwin Hills encompasses services that help clients in other areas as well. "Not only will we have five housing specialists to assess clients' needs and work with clients to develop housing plans," he says. "We will also have a life skills specialist, who will provide employment counseling, personal finance education, and will address barriers that might prevent someone from maintaining affordable, safe, and permanent housing."

APLA has offered housing support to clients since 1990, when it began providing Section 8 vouchers to clients who needed help locating, acquiring, and paying for a safe place to live.

The HOPWA expansion is also forward-thinking, in that it contributes to both local and national plans to reduce and eventually eradicate the burdens caused by HIV/AIDS. "We are demonstrating an important component of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy," Bailey says. "Combined with other efforts like PrEP education, medical and support services, and community-based initiatives, we are demonstrating our continued commitment to play a leadership role in the fight to end HIV."

The Housing Specialty Regional Office in the new Education Center is located at 3741 S. La Brea Ave. in Baldwin Hills. For clients seeking support in central Los Angeles, housing services are still available at the David Geffen Center through a partnership with the Alliance for Housing and Healing.



Volunteer Profile

Giving back and paying it forward.

Like many of APLA's dedicated volunteers, Rob Mozelewski has heartfelt reasons for contributing his time and energy to the agency. Two days a week he assists APLA's staff members and clients at the Vance North Necessities of Life Program (NOLP) food pantry at The David Geffen Center.

It was only a few years ago, however, that Rob was on the other side of the food pantry counter. "I started with NOLP as an APLA client," he explains. "I was truly grateful for the quantity and quality of groceries I received from the food bank, and I wanted to find a way to give back."

Rob got his start in community service at a young age; he was a volunteer page at just 10 years old at Dallas Public Library. "Throughout my life I have found a way to give back to individuals and the communities where I've lived, worked, and played," he says.

At NOLP, Rob works with other volunteers and employees to provide food and personal care items to people in the community living with HIV. Each week, he packs and distributes grocery bags and talks with clients. "The clients light up when they see Rob," says Megan Hall, NOLP's administrative coordinator. "He knows them all and they always give him a big smile and hug."

In April, Rob received the "Spirit of NOLP" award at the 2016 Friends in Deed luncheon, a yearly event that acknowledges the important contributions volunteers make to APLA. For him, the spirit of NOLP is about doing everything possible to address clients' needs. "We can go above and beyond expectations," Rob says. "Whether that means clearing obstacles, consulting on food storage and preparation, or providing a shoulder or an ear as support, we always find some way to help."

"I have volunteered at NOLP ever since I no longer needed APLA's help myself," he continues. "As someone who has needed help in the past, both giving back and paying it forward just feels good."

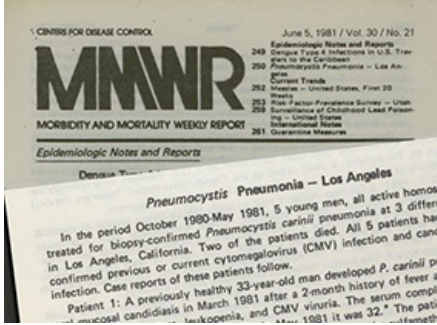
If you are interested in volunteer opportunities with us, please visit apla.org/volunteer for more information.



Say Hello to Charles Robbins, Chief Advancement Officer

We are delighted to welcome our new chief advancement officer, Charles Robbins. Charles comes to APLA with a wealth of experience, having previously held leadership positions at the Trevor Project, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, GLAAD, Project Angel Heart, and most recently The Village Family Services. In his new role, he oversees APLA's philanthropy efforts and advances the mission of the organization.

MILESTONE



AIDS at 35

June will mark the 35th anniversary of the first clinical recognition of what we would come to know as the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. On June 5, 1981, the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* published a piece by Dr. Michael Gottlieb reporting that five previously healthy men, all in their 20s and 30s, had come down with the same rare, life-threatening form of pneumonia. When the story ran in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the Associated Press, doctors from around the country began flooding the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with reports of similar cases. By the end of the year, 270 cases, including 121 deaths, had been reported.

Although the CDC did not come to a consensus on the name Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, or AIDS, until September 1982 (having briefly proposed, among others, such names as Gay-Related Immune Deficiency, or GRID), and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) wasn't discovered until 1983, Gottlieb made history in 1981 by speculating that those five cases "suggest the possibility of a cellular-immune dysfunction related to a common exposure." His brief but astute observations were the precursor to the now ongoing fight to bring AIDS to an end.

We take this moment to honor the millions of people around the world we have lost to AIDS-related causes and reaffirm our commitment to ending the epidemic.

SAVE THE DATES



Christopher Street West / LA Pride

June 10-12

Join us on the parade route at LA Pride on Sunday, June 12, or stop by the festival and say hi!

lapride.org



"Celebrating All Life and Creation" Pow Wow

June 18

Red Circle Project hosts a full day of traditional Native American music, dance, crafts, and food, along with HIV testing and prevention resources.

facebook.com/redcircleproject



S.T.A.G.E. Los Angeles

June 18

Don't miss the longest running HIV/AIDS fundraiser in Southern California. The 32nd annual show takes place at the Wallis Annenberg Performing Arts Center in Beverly Hills! Tickets available now.

stagela.com



Art Project Los Angeles
September 17

Come enjoy a fully catered reception and bid on over 150 different artworks in silent or live auctions at Bonhams in Hollywood. Tickets available soon.

artprojectlosangeles.com



AIDS 2016
July 18-22

The 21st International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2016) will take place in Durban, South Africa, July 18-22. Stay tuned for updates from the event.

We need you to volunteer with APLA!

For more information, contact Jim Williams, our Volunteer Resources program manager, at volunteer@apla.org or 213.201.1379.