



The Newsletter
of Caracole

Living

FIGHTING AIDS A STEP AT A TIME

Caracole supporters will return to the beautiful grounds of Spring Grove Cemetery and Arboretum on **Sunday, April 9th** for Caracole's 5K Run/Walk for AIDS. We're anticipating a large crowd of runners and walkers to join us for our fourth year traversing 3.1 miles of the historic arboretum. Starting at 9 am and followed by a post-race celebration and awards ceremony, the 5K will help to raise awareness about the impact of HIV/AIDS in our community.

General pre-registration is \$25. To pre-register for the event, please visit caracole5kforaids.rallybound.org and sign up today! Overall male and female winning runners will receive \$100 gift cards. First male and female in each division will receive a medal. We hope to see you at Spring Grove this April. Grab some folks and **Run. Walk. Fight AIDS.**



Above: *And they're off!* Runners start the first leg of our 2016 5K for AIDS at Spring Grove Cemetery. (Photo credit: Chris Gerrard)

Official Race Entry Form

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Gender: M ___ F ___ Other ___ Age (on race day): _____

Shirt Size: adult S M L XL XXL child S M L Email: _____

Address: _____ Daytime Phone: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Waiver: In consideration of the acceptance of my entry, I hereby waive on behalf of myself, my heirs, executors, and assigns, any and all claims of any nature arising from or due to my participation in the 5k for Aids. I also hereby release Caracole, Steve Prescott, all sponsors, workers, officials, and volunteers from any and all claims arising from or due to my participation in this event. I agree to follow all the rules of participation and acknowledge that the race committee may refuse or return my entry at its discretion. I understand the risks for such a run or walk, and have

Letter from the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

It's been awhile since our last newsletter and we're excited to share all of the changes happening here at Caracole. Thank you for taking the time to read this and stay current on our agency. 2017 marks our 30th year of providing services to the community and we could not be more proud of the work we've accomplished!

As we reminisce on our journey, we've noticed that the Caracole of today looks vastly different from the Caracole of our beginning. Yet, we continue to honor our roots and remain devoted to our clients by adapting our services to best fit their needs. One of the largest changes we faced this past year was assuming the responsibility of HIV testing, prevention and education after Planned Parenthood funding was threatened. With the hard work of staff from both agencies, this transfer of services was seamless and you can read more about the success of our new program later in this newsletter.

In another effort to best meet our clients' needs, we have been busy at work restructuring Caracole House from a transitional housing program to a permanent supportive housing program. This meant closing the buildings in Roselawn that have housed this program since 1989. While it was difficult to say goodbye to such a remarkable part of our history, we are very excited about our plan for our new Caracole House. We know this program will be forward-thinking and will help us in meeting the needs our clients are currently facing.

We are grateful for your interest and are proud to share our news with you. It is because of friends like you that we have been able to provide consistent support to those living with HIV in our community for 30 years. Thank you for your continued dedication to our mission.

Sincerely,



Linda Seiter
Executive Director

We are happy to honor the following individuals and organization at our Annual Meeting on Thursday, April 20th at the United Way of Greater Cincinnati.

Caracole Living Award

Sharon Foster

Sr. Grace Murphy Award

Kelli Halter

Melissa Lanier Award

Toyota - Northern
Kentucky Spectrum

Special thanks to Jeff Thomas Catering for providing the refreshments for the evening!

CARACOLE'S CFO RAISES FUNDS A DOLLAR AT A TIME

On Sunday, April 17, 2016, Caracole and the Imperial Sovereign Queen City Court of the Buckeye Empire (ISQCCBE) partnered to host the Miss Northside Drag Competition for its fourth year. The event is a turnaround show where Caracole staff and volunteers dress in drag and perform to raise money for the agency. Three staff members and four volunteers participated in last year's event and helped to raise more than \$1,200 as well as community awareness about Caracole and its services. Among the performers was 2015 winner Eileen Dover who, despite her passionate performance, did not manage to keep the crown. Instead, The Marquessa (who by day goes by Mark McComas aka Caracole's Chief Financial Officer!) took the title of Miss Northside 2016. Mark's first performance as a drag queen was pure gold *reigning* in more than \$250 with his performance (pun intended). Said one Caracole employee of McComas' performance, "If we didn't already love him, this event would certainly have endeared him in our hearts!" Thank you to The Marquessa and the other performers for an entertaining evening of fun-raising. Caracole would like to thank the comedic genius of our Master of Ceremonies Brooklyn Steele-Tate and members of the ISQCCBE for applying heaps of makeup to our performers to get them "stage ready." The Miss Northside Drag Competition returns Sunday, April 30th at the Northside Tavern. We hope to see you there!



Above: The Marquessa (Mark McComas) is crowned Miss Northside 2016 by ISQCCBE Empress 24 Alana Reign and Emcee Brooklyn Steele-Tate.

The Miss Northside Drag Competition returns Sunday, April 30th at the Northside Tavern. We hope to see you there!

PREVENTION MEETS GOALS

On February 21, 2016, Ohio Governor John Kasich signed Sub. House Bill 294 effectively defunding one of Caracole's vital partners, Planned Parenthood. Because of this legislation, Planned Parenthood's HIV Education and Testing Program ceased to operate - leaving a gap in services to an already vulnerable population.

In 2011 when STOP AIDS closed their doors, there were two essential programs in peril - one was case management services for nearly 750 individuals living with HIV/AIDS - which was assumed by Caracole and the other was HIV education and testing services for the community - which was taken over by Planned Parenthood. Since that time, Caracole and Planned Parenthood had worked in tandem to serve our community in an earnest effort to provide the best services possible and address the public health issue that is HIV/AIDS.

In fact, since 2012, Planned Parenthood had sublet two offices within Caracole's main administrative and case management offices to facilitate seamless services. Five years later, after the largest expansion in Caracole's history, we faced a similar issue - the loss of a program essential to our mission. As a leader in the community providing safety net services to those living with HIV/AIDS, Caracole felt the responsibility to preserve the HIV testing and education programs in our community and assume those services as well. With the growing opioid epidemic, these services continue to be more important than ever. Therefore, on April 1st of last year, Caracole initiated prevention and education services.

After nearly a year of providing these vital services, we are happy to report on the progress of this program. In the first nine months of prevention services, Caracole staff and certified volunteers performed 1,063 HIV tests. In addition, 11,483 individuals were reached through our outreach efforts and 64,110 condoms were distributed to the community. Despite the challenges placed on our agency, we know that this was a necessary risk for us to take as a disruption of these services could have devastating effects on our community.

If you are interested in a HIV test, appointments can be made by calling 513-761-1480. Walk in appointments available Monday-Friday from 9am-5pm or Wednesdays from 9am-8pm at our Northside Office.



Above: Caracole's mobile testing unit travels to Sawyer Point/ Yeatman's Cove for Black Family Reunion to provide outreach and testing. (Photo credit: Adam Reilly)

CARACOLE SAYS GOODBYE

In December 2016, Caracole said farewell to another remarkable year of providing services to the HIV+ community as well as our former transitional housing program and its buildings located in Roselawn. The two adjacent four-unit apartment buildings have been a vital part of our agency since 1989 when, due to a large waiting list for Caracole House which was then a four-bedroom home in Clifton, Caracole's Board of Directors decided to purchase the properties increasing the living capacity by 500%. Since that time, nearly a thousand clients have called Caracole House home.

As our 30th year of service begins, we continue to meet the growing challenges faced by our clients. As such, the closing of our transitional housing is a sign of our commitment to the future and a demonstration of our ability to adapt and meet emerging needs. We are happy about our forthcoming project, the new Caracole House which will be a rent subsidy, site based permanent supportive housing program for single adults. This program will be offered to our highest-needs population and will promote housing stability with the goal of viral load suppression and improved public health. We can't wait to share more about this exciting endeavor—stay tuned!



Above: Caracole House operates at this property from 1989 to 2016. (Photo credit: An old friend)

PARTY IN PLAID GETS A PUNK ATTITUDE

On August 27th, the ballroom at the Cincinnati Masonic Center turned into a scene from a Ramones concert. Guests of Party in Plaid and Punk gathered together with their Doc Marten boots, ripped denim and leather jackets to raise more than \$110,000 for Caracole and its mission of reducing the impact of HIV in our community through housing, care and prevention. Volunteer hairstylists offered guests the opportunity to spike and color their hair while MAC Cosmetic artists applied dark eyeliner to complete the punk look! In fact, the Masonic Center didn't just look the part, it sounded that way too— first with four-member band Typhoid Amy and then DJ Pillo spinning the punk-iest rock songs ranging from the Clash to Iggy Pop.

Of course, the evening was a huge success thanks to event co-chairs John Gillespie and Sean Guilfoile and their fantastic committee (pictured top right). The evening's honorees for Party in Plaid and Punk were Freeman Durham and Jim Schwab (pictured bottom right). We were so proud to honor and thank them for all of their contributions to the agency and our mission. Look out for our next addition to the Party in Plaid series in celebration of our thirtieth anniversary! We'll be unveiling the theme soon. Until then, gather all that plaid hanging in your closet in preparation for our fifth year of the great print!



Top: The Party in Plaid and Punk committee pauses from their hard work to pose for a picture at the August 27th event. Bottom: Party in Plaid and Punk honors Jim Schwab (left) and Freeman Durham (right) for their commitment to Caracole's mission. (Photo credit: Liam O'Connell)



Above: Our first Supporter Spotlight is Fedders Feed Seed and Pet Supplies located across the river in Covington, Kentucky. (Photo credit: Joe Harrison, JH Photography)

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT:

Fedders Feed & Seed & Pet Supplies

In Caracole's 30 years of service, we have been the recipient of many wonderful and generous donations from area businesses. For this reason, we wanted to start a Supporter Spotlight section to highlight the kindness of our local partners.

Our first Supporter Spotlight is Fedders Feed Seed & Pet Supplies in Covington, Kentucky. Caracole has always had a soft spot for animals. Every year, our agency organizes Pet Vet Day, an afternoon dedicated to providing free vet care for our clients' animals. Fedders Feed & Seed has been a large part of the success of this event donating cat and dog food for clients to take home with them on this day as well as throughout the year. Since 2012, Fedders has donated more than 722 pounds of cat and dog food to Caracole. Thank you for your generosity and commitment to the community, Fedders! Please consider visiting them at 1550 Russell Street in Northern Kentucky for your spring flowers!

PLEASE JOIN US

Caracole is proud to display the work of local artists in our main hallway on a rotating basis. Every three months a new artist moves in and spiffs up the place with their lovely work! Stop by and check out their offerings (and maybe buy some art!) If you are interested in displaying, please contact Dean Clevenger at dclevenger@caracole.org or 513.761.1480.

PERSONALS

30-year-old AIDS service organization seeking...personal care items!

Personal hygiene products like toothpaste and toilet paper cannot be purchased with food stamps. With the majority of our clients living with less than \$15K a year, we collect donations of these types of items so that our clients do not have to use their limited incomes to purchase these essential products. Can you help us?

We are always looking for organizations and companies to conduct monthly, quarterly or one-time donation drives. If you are interested in learning more about how your group can help Caracole or to make a donation, please contact Megan Green at 513-619-1483 to arrange for a pick up or to drop them off at our Northside office.

Items we are seeking for our personal care item closet include: toilet paper, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, shampoo, conditioner, razors and shaving cream.



Above: Our friends from Citi in Florence conducted a personal hygiene drive for our clients donating over 400 toothbrushes and 500 bars of soap among other essential products. Thanks, Citi! (Photo credit: Dean Clevenger)

CARACOLE ON THE ROAD

In July, the 21st International AIDS Conference opened in Durban, South Africa bringing together nearly 18,000 delegates from over 180 countries to work to strengthen HIV treatment, care and prevention. One of those delegates was our Executive Director, Linda Seiter, who attended the conference to present our poster alongside Dr. Elizabeth Bowen. Dr. Bowen, a colleague of the School of Social Work at the University of Buffalo, utilized secondary data collected by Caracole to pen an abstract entitled, *Housing is Health: Evidence of the Impact of Housing on HIV Health Outcomes from a Harm Reduction Housing Program*. The purpose of the study was to examine the probability of participants in a housing first program achieving viral load suppression by the time of exit and also to determine if there were characteristics that had a strong correlation to healthier CD4 counts. The conclusion of the study found that the majority of participants improved or stabilized their CD4 health while in supportive housing demonstrating the importance of the housing first model in improving outcomes for those living with HIV.

We'd like to congratulate Dr. Bowen on her exciting work along with her coauthors and our own staff members Suzanne Moore, Chrissy Rademacher, Midge Hines and Brent Hartke. Also, thanks to Linda Seiter for representing our agency and sharing our own best practices to improve outcomes along the HIV treatment cascade.

We'd also like to congratulate Suzanne Moore, Chrissy Rademacher and Adam Reilly on their recent trip to San Diego to present this work at the National Harm Reduction Conference.

WORDS TO KNOW

CD4 Count: The number of CD4 cells (often called T-cells) in a sample of blood. CD4 cells are the white blood cells that protect the body from infection. This # shows how well the immune system is working.

Viral Load: The amount of copies of HIV in a sample of blood. The goal of HIV treatment is to get your viral load down to an undetectable level.



Top: Linda Seiter and Dr. Elizabeth Bowen pause for photo at the International AIDS Conference in Durban, South Africa. Bottom: Adam Reilly, Chrissy Rademacher and Suzanne Moore present at the National Harm Reduction Conference in San Diego.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THESE EVENTS!

Caracole's 5K Run/Walk for AIDS

Sunday, April 9th
7:30 AM Registration, 9:00 AM Run/Walk
Spring Grove Cemetery and Arboretum

To register, visit:
<https://caracole5kforaids.rallybound.org/>

Caracole Annual Meeting

Thursday, April 20th
5:30 PM Reception, 6:30 PM Meeting
Fifth Third Convening Center
United Way of Greater Cincinnati

TO RSVP, email RSVP@caracole.org

Miss Northside Drag Competition

Sunday, April 30th
Doors open at 7PM, Show starts shortly after
Northside Tavern

Looking to Volunteer?

Please contact Megan Green by emailing mgreen@caracole.org or calling 513.619.1483

SHELTER PLUS CARE

serves more than 150 clients, caregivers and children, making it Caracole's largest housing program. It is a rent subsidy program offering a permanent housing solution for homeless individuals and families with an adult member living with AIDS. Caracole provides case management and supportive services to help these individuals and families find and maintain safe housing, stay together and live as independently as possible.

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

is a rent subsidy program that serves HIV+ individuals who are considered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to be 'unstably housed.' Similar to Shelter Plus Care, in addition to the rental subsidy, clients in our Permanent Supportive Housing program also receive comprehensive case management and referral services.

SHORT-TERM RENT, MORTGAGE AND UTILITY ASSISTANCE (STRMU)

is a short-term, needs-based intervention to prevent homelessness and promote housing stability for individuals living with HIV/AIDS in our region. The objective is to assist HIV+ individuals with housing costs and support during HIV-related financial crises.

EDUCATION & PREVENTION SERVICES

Caracole provides free, anonymous or confidential HIV and Hepatitis C (HCV) testing as well as education services.

MEDICAL CASE MANAGEMENT

As part of our service-enriched programming, intensive case management services are provided to clients in all of Caracole's programs in order to help limit barriers to accessing care and stabilize and improve health and well-being while empowering clients to become independent and live with HIV/AIDS.

CARACOLE HOUSE

Caracole will reopen Caracole House as a permanent supportive housing program in late 2017. The new Caracole House will be a low barrier, site-based, permanent housing program serving HIV+ chronically homeless and precariously housed clients. The private units will be for single adults and Caracole will provide supportive services for each resident.

PHARMACY SERVICES

Caracole partners with PharmBlue, a mail-order pharmacy that provides HIV and non-HIV medication to all enrolled clients with a 24/7 pharmacy help center. Through this service established by the 340B Drug Pricing Program, Caracole offers co-pay forgiveness to all clients enrolled.

Caracole's mission -

To reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS through housing, care and prevention.