AIDS/HIV Resources, Inc. official after yearlong trial run

Shanti and Willamette AIDS Council merge into new organization

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Lane County's two HIV/AIDS service organizations, Shanti in Oregon and the Willamette AIDS Council, have officially merged after a successful yearlong trial.partnership.

As of July 1, the combined forces are known as HIV/AIDS Resources, Inc.

Geena Southworth, former Executive Director of Shanti, will retain her position with the new group. Southworth said the merger began in early 1991, when Willamette AIDS Council, because of some "organizational difficulties," moved into the Shanti office.

Shortly thereafter the boards of directors for both decided on a trial partnership with an aim toward coalescing. Southworth said the move

made sense for several reasons. "With Willamette AIDS Council doing education and prevention and services for HIV and Shanti doing direct support services, it was confusing for the community," she said. "People didn't know where to go for which services. With one comprehensive organization,

we have more strength." In addition, grant money may be easier to apply for and obtain, Southworth said.

"Some resources will only fund education and others only support services, so before one of us would find out about a grant, but not be eligible for it and not know if other knew about it," she said. "Now we can apply for anything and hopefully be in a better position for funding."

Southworth said the new group will provide the same education, prevention and support services as before with an eye toward expanding, especially in the area of care giving and support services.

A low-income housing project, with the help of Catholic Community Services, is in the planning stages and the group is trying to develop an at-home food service program.

But funding is a constant

problem.

"We need money desperately just to maintain what we're doing now," Southworth said.

Southworth estimates that HIV/AIDS Resources helped educate and served the needs of thousands of people last year. And the need for the services continues to increase, Southworth said. During the first six months of this year, the organization saw as many new clients as all of last year, Southworth said.

For more information on services, donations or volunteering, call 342-5088.



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6 Oregon Daily Emerald Tuesday, July 14, 1992