

NORTHWESTnews

Directly to the east of Legacy Emanuel Hospital sits a nondescript building that looks like the former family practice clinic it once was. Inside, however, medicine as it is becoming known in the 21st century is thriving.

The facility is home to Project Quest, a unique integrative health center that has continued to expand its programs since its inception in 1989. The organization originally was formed to help people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, and although it still offers a wide array of services to those who fit into that category, its menu now offers something for everyone.

Those who approach Project Quest expecting a traditional medical environment are bound to be surprised. Its philosophy is "grounded in the belief that people thrive when their physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs are effectively met," according to informational materials. In other words, when a client approaches the organization for services, a specialized plan designed to fit the needs of each individual is created.

There is, according to executive director Christy Carl, no rushing people in and out. "A lot of time the practitioners will meet with clients for over an hour," she says.

The organization has four separate programs: HIV/AIDS, Mind-Body Wellness, Eliot Medical Clinic and Arquette Cancer Program. Each one, however, operates under the same mission: "Project Quest seeks to provide services, community and education to people seeking a wellness-focused approach to living and dying; to help people make and sustain lifestyle changes that support healing, health and living life fully; to effectively support people diagnosed with chronic or life-challenging illnesses."

To accomplish that goal, the organization employs medical-osteopathic, chiropractic, physical therapy, naturopathic, osteopathic, Chinese medicine and mental health practitioners who provide services in both individual and group settings. And the client always works in partnership with the practitioners to determine which treatments are most effective.

Common areas of focus include increasing social support, addressing addictions, implementing exercise programs, exploring spirituality and teaching, and learning stress management techniques and assertiveness. The health care team develops a relationship based on a partnership model between clients and practitioners.

Project Quest has had a long, positive relationship with the sexual minorities community, according to Carl, who notes that several of the practitioners are queer. The idea, she says, is that everyone involved wants clients to feel "a sense of community, a sense of intimacy" when using the services.

QUEST FOR HEALING

Integrative health center reaches out to queer community

by Tom Stevenson



Christy Carl wants everyone to feel "a sense of community, a sense of intimacy" at Project Quest

"Those who deal with HIV/AIDS want that kind of care...just as everyone else does," she says. "We work hard to give it to them."

The HIV/AIDS program not only offers crisis intervention to people who are HIV-positive or diagnosed with AIDS but also provides ongoing support to anyone who has faced or been affected by the challenges of those diagnoses. That support might mean receiving traditional or naturopathic medical care; working in support groups with others facing the same challenges; learning about proper nutrition, which Carl says is a huge issue; or going on a retreat in a safe and peaceful environment simply to learn how to live with the complex issues.

A huge part of the programs centers around the idea that "psychological, physical and spir-

itual selves all interact to impact the overall state of health and well-being." For those not used to alternative methods of healing or dealing with disease, that might sound a little strange, but according to Gregg Carigan, a longtime participant in Project Quest programs, it certainly works.

"It really does make a difference feeling like you are the one who is in control. It totally turned things around for me."
—Gregg Carigan

Carigan is a gay man who has been HIV-positive since 1986. Prior to beginning his association with Project Quest, he was an alcoholic who was struggling with a number of issues, not to mention his HIV status.

"They taught me how to appreciate my life in general," Carigan says. "Basically, they helped me find direction in my life. Everyone...has been very supportive. It really is a whole different lifestyle. They allow you to be who you are. You can still be gay. You can still be

whoever you want to be. I never really had a tight community of friends before, but that changed when I started going to Project Quest. Everybody is a part of the community."

Carigan, who was one of the very first Project Quest clients and who remains highly active today, says that with many traditional health practitioners you are treated, or led to feel, like a victim. That is not the case at Project Quest, he says.

"You become a part of it, you are the one doing the work, you are the one who has control," he says. "You are not the victim anymore. It really does make a difference feeling like you are the one who is in control. It totally turned things around for me."

Another Project Quest service that Carl says is important to the lesbian community is the Mardiningsih Arquette Breast Cancer Program, which offers crisis intervention to newly diagnosed women as well as ongoing support to anyone who is facing the challenges of such a diagnosis. "We really do want people to know we have very lesbian-friendly services of all kinds."

Funding issues are also big not only for those who operate Project Quest but also the clients. For some clients, their insurance policies cover most of the services provided. For others, there is a sliding fee scale. For HIV/AIDS clients, there are federal dollars available for some services, including scholarships to the retreats.

Carl says that the organization also uses small grants and donations to continue to provide the services but that additional funds always are needed. "If people would like to help, we certainly would appreciate it."

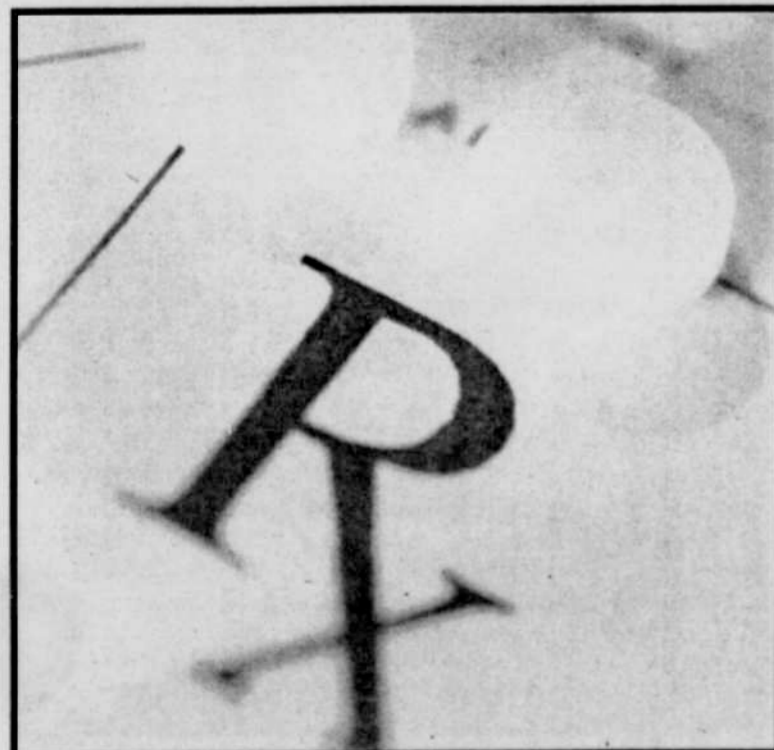
Most important, Carl says she hopes people who are interested in alternative medicine will take the time to stop by and visit. They will see a facility that is painted in warm, soothing colors and rooms filled with comfortable furniture.

They will find hallways lined with the work done by those participating in the Roger Bell Memorial Art Program, which "encourages healing through art and creative expression." The service was founded in 1995 in honor of a former Project Quest board member and community leader.

"We do encourage people to give us a call if they have questions," Carl says. In addition, she is quick to mention that Project Quest periodically offers special programs such as a series of cooking classes for cancer patients, a cancer support group and a three-day psychodrama retreat planned in August. ☐

For more information call PROJECT QUEST at 503-493-0288.

TOM STEVENSON is a Portland free-lance writer.



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