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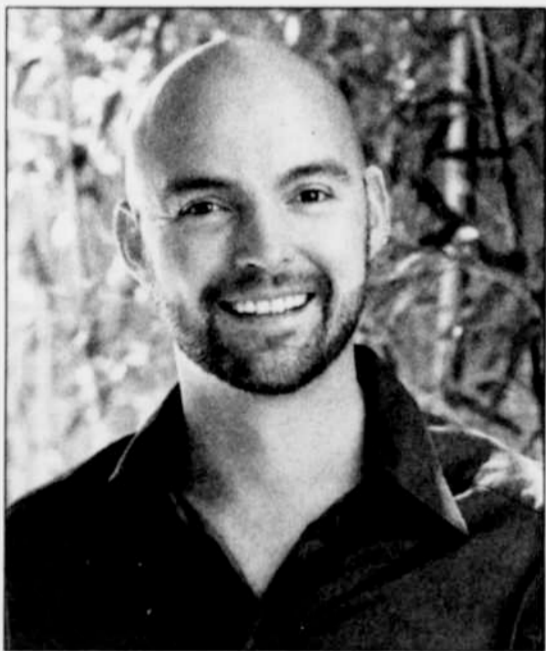


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More Than Meets the Eye

CAP archive project a labor of love for volunteers

BY RYAN J. PRADO

It was announced in March 2010 that the staff at Cascade AIDS Project would begin the very important and very time-consuming process of assembling an archive of their history, to coincide with their 25th anniversary in December. With executive directors having come and gone, volunteers and board members having moved on to different projects and, sadly, many passing away from HIV/AIDS, there existed a chasm in the rich, pioneering history of an organization that has been on the front lines of such a devastating virus. Judith Rizzio, CAP's manager of volunteer resources, knew this, which is why she approached sitting Executive Director Michael Kaplan with the idea of cataloguing the organization's trailblazing journey.

"I walked into Kaplan's office—and this really speaks to who Kaplan is, too," explains Rizzio, "I said, 'It's our 25th, we need to capture this archive.' And he basically said, 'Look, I can't do it, but if you wanna do it I'll support you.' Executive directors don't have the time to do that. I'm the director of volunteers, but he also knows my history [Rizzio has worked in the HIV/AIDS field for 21 years] so he went for it, and I'm grateful that he did."

And the community should be grateful, says Rizzio, as the project is more a community-owned, interactive archive than a sterile filing system. A team of dedicated volunteers scoured the Internet for old news articles, thumbing through documents and pictures, each volun-

teer separating them into an area of expertise. With the eventual volunteering of an archivist and a librarian who painstakingly catalogued whatever it was the rest of the volunteers came across—be it CAP's original incorporation paperwork from December 1985, old T-shirts or outdated HIV prevention posters—the project became as much a labor of love as a housecleaning mission.

Rizzio's contribution to the archive project emerges as among the most heart-wrenching. Her organizing of 31 oral history interviews

with some of CAP's founding members, old staffers and program organizers—as well as those involved with the pre-CAP groups Community Health Support Services (CHSS) and the PAL Program—was transforming for Rizzio.

"To me, that's the most powerful piece of this," says Rizzio. "These people came back—some for the first time, and not everyone left happy. It was really wonderful bringing people together who hadn't seen or talked to each other for years, and who really got to listen to their stories them-

"I think the coolest thing is it's gone way beyond just being an archive of CAP. It's really become this archive of how HIV unfolded in Oregon. Especially in the metro area. That, to me, has been amazing."

-JUDITH RIZZIO,
CAP MANAGER OF
VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

selves again, and cry and share this profound, strange period of time where literally hundreds of people were dying in front of you. I worked at Our House and watched 700 people die there. Every hour-and-a-half I was transported back with these people at a certain time."

These interviews were filmed and are being included as part of CAP's website, as well as for interactive purposes for the archive during

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