

### NEWS highlight

# HUG IT OUT

Ten South Florida HIV nonprofits receive grant money for the holidays

Dori Zinn

Everyone could use a little holiday hug, especially the nonprofits who are working hard at HIV/AIDS groups in the community. Luckily, The Campbell Foundation recognizes these nonprofits in need.

The "Holiday Hugs," or grants, are awarded every year to AIDS research and other HIV-related groups. For the last 20 years, The Campbell Foundation has awarded money to HIV/AIDS research and outreach work, and this year, 10 out of 13 grantees are in South Florida.

While South Florida gets most of the attention for Holiday Hugs, other groups across the country are recognized. Robeson Health Care Corporation in Lumberton, North Carolina was part of the 2016 grant group for their work following Hurricane Matthew earlier this year. McGregor Clinic in Fort Myers and AIDS Service Association of Pinellas in St. Petersburg were also recognized this year. But local organizations are among the most recognized, and for a good reason.

Ken Rapkin, executive director of the The Campbell Foundation, says it was the HIV outbreak locally that prompted the group to concentrate here.

"We used to give Holiday Hugs across the county, but since South Florida started to lead the nation in new HIV infections a few years ago, our board of directors decided that our [end of the year] grants should be concentrated in Florida to support those nonprofits that serve the HIV-plus community each and every day," Rapkin said.

The staff at Sunserve, who received one of the "Holiday Hugs" grants.

Photo Credit: The Campbell Foundation



Among the newly recognized was Wilton Manors-based SunServe. The group's main mission is promoting healthcare to everyone in the LGBT community, and that includes those living with HIV/AIDS.

Mark Ketcham, SunServe's executive director, was pleasantly surprised when he learned SunServe was a grant recipient of this year's Holiday Hugs. All recipients are selected by The Campbell Foundation and do not apply, so no one knows who is being awarded until the the announcement.

"We have many folks who have HIV that get mental health and psychiatric services and can't pay so this will help cover those costs," Ketcham said. "It would help subsidize 30 HIV clients over the course of a year."

All recipients get \$5,000 apiece, bringing the total of this year's awards to \$65,000. This is up from 2014 when each winner got \$2,000 each. To date, The Campbell Foundation has given \$1.2 million to direct HIV services since Holiday Hugs started 20 years ago.

"Once the rates of new infections started

spiking in South Florida, we made a decision that the funds were needed right here in our own backyard," Rapkin said. "We firmly believe that people living with HIV/AIDS require safety nets and services."

The full list of 2016 awardees are:

AIDS Service Association of Pinellas (ASAP)/Empath Health, St. Petersburg,  
Broward House, Ft. Lauderdale  
Care Resource, Miami/Ft. Lauderdale  
Children's Diagnostic & Treatment Center, Ft. Lauderdale  
Comprehensive Care Center (NBHD), Ft. Lauderdale  
FoundCare, West Palm Beach  
Latinos Salud, Wilton Manors  
Legal Aid HIV/AIDS Law Project, Ft. Lauderdale  
McGregor Clinic, Fort Myers  
Poverello Center, Ft. Lauderdale  
SunServe, Wilton Manors  
Tuesday's Angels, Ft. Lauderdale  
Robeson Health Care Corporation, Lumberton, N.C. **SFGN**

The Campbell Foundation was founded in 1995 by the late Richard Campbell Zahn to support HIV/AIDS clinical research. To date, \$10.4 million have been granted to funding HIV/AIDS research, which includes the \$1.2 million that goes to direct services like SunServe.