



Project Chicken Soup

December, 2011

Mission Statement

Project Chicken Soup is a non-profit organization that prepares and delivers free, nutritious, kosher meals to people in the greater Los Angeles area living with HIV/AIDS, cancer and other serious illnesses. These services are provided with love and compassion to all persons regardless of faith or religious belief.

Vision Statement

Project Chicken Soup provides nutritious food and comfort to make a difference in the lives of people in need, serving them with dignity and respect in a nurturing environment. We do this out of an abiding sense of love and justice, seeking to heal the world through service to humankind by providing nourishment and empowerment to those we serve.



Katie, Rod and John

BRAN LEAVES BOARD

By Paul Chitlik

After more than twenty years of service, past president of Project Chicken Soup, Rod Bran, has left the board of directors. "It just became apparent that I was stretched too thin between work, PCS, and my family, so, since PCS has strong leadership in its current president and

vice president, I decided I could leave the board without a guilty conscience," Rod told me in a recent conversation. Rod first joined PCS in the late 80s when it was just a small group that had started at BCC.

Numbering about 10 volunteers, they got together at Temple Knesset Israel in Hollywood to cook for 20-30 clients under the auspices of the Jewish Family Services.

Rod soon was scouring the local food bank for kosher items which he would load into his SUV and bring to the kitchen. At cookings, since PCS was so starved for cash, the volunteers would pass a basket and basically self-fund. They had a pair of stoves with six burners. Their storage space was a single closet.

Before long, the kitchen moved to the Hirsh Family Kosher Kitchen on Fairfax where the organization began serving more than a hundred clients and had a full time Executive Director paid for by the Jewish Federation. When the Federation decided to terminate the program, Rod and a few others didn't think it was appropriate to cut off service to PCS clients since there was still a significant need. With the Federation's blessing, they took over the organization and retained the right to lease the kitchen on a monthly basis.

For close to ten years, Rod planned the menus, created the shopping lists, maintained the volunteer, client and donor data bases, and headed up grant writing and fundraising. Until the hiring of the current Executive Director in 2004, PCS was an all-volunteer organization, but if truth be told, Rod was the lynch pin of the organization.

When Rod stepped down from the presidency, he remained on the board as an advocate of expanding our service population and number of cookings. His vision is due to be realized in the

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coming year now that we've moved into our own kitchen (something he pressed for, for many years). In fact, Rod was instrumental in securing our new kitchen for PCS expansion.

While Rod no longer sits on the board, he is still consulted by board members for his years of expertise in leading the organization. We appreciate his contributions to the growth of PCS and wish him the best in all things. Thank you, Rod.

**Project Chicken Soup
Board of Directors 2011-2012**

Jody Zucker, President
Kim Cascio, Vice President
Robert R. Johnson, Secretary
Arthur Zweig, Treasurer
Paul Chitlik, Immediate Past President
Susan Higgins
Mollie Pier

Cathryn Friedman, Executive Director
Mark Katz, Medical Advisor

**Project Chicken Soup
Founders Board**

Rod Bran
Martin Bernstein
Sherry Elkin
Carole Lazarus
Mollie Pier
Myra Shapiro

Cooking Dates - 2012

January 8 and January 22
February 5 and February 26
March 11 and March 25
April 15 and April 29
May 6 and May 20
June 3 and June 24

Please call 310-836-5402 or send an email to info@projectchickensoup.org to reserve your space on the volunteer list!

**AIDS at 30 Years
Back to the Beginning: A Reflection**

By Mark Katz, MD

It had only been a little more than a decade since the Stonewall riots announced "gay liberation." After years of swirling on dance floors (not all of us, but some for sure!) to songs with titles only the future would be able to deem prophetic ("Stayin' Alive," "I Will Survive"), the community that was just finding its place in the world was forced to confront the challenge of a lifetime.

The first cases of gay men dying from immune system disorders were published on June 5, 1981 – the day considered the onset of the epidemic. In cities such as Los Angeles, however, health care providers had already seen, in the prior one to two years, some cases of gay men becoming ill with unusual infections.

The medical community did not know why these cases of *Pneumocystis* pneumonia or Kaposi's sarcoma were cropping up, but as they were ascribed to the gay community, the acronym GRID (Gay-Related Immunodeficiency) was born. It wasn't until more than a year later, on September 24, 1982, that the term Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome was coined by the Centers for Disease Control.

Los Angeles, one of the three major epicenters in the U.S., was thrown into a maelstrom, first by not knowing what caused it, and ultimately, by the lack of effective treatments. In early 1985, when I moved to Los Angeles from Wisconsin, I had never met a person with AIDS. (That was soon to change...)

Funerals and memorial services became as commonplace as parties used to be; most of us who were alive at the time recall the unbelievable experience of leaving one memorial service early so as to attend another one.

Where did the support come from in those early, dire days?

The gay community – female and male – rose to support each other, in a way I predict will forever be inscribed in the history books. Through our tragic losses, we created the richest, deepest sense of togetherness imaginable.

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The health community – including physicians who themselves had AIDS, and who became activists to propel research and treatments – went from relative ignorance to acquire an awe-inspiring body of knowledge. And since this epidemic occurred at the cusp of the digital age, we could share what we knew more easily than ever.

The spiritual community, through clergy and through other healing modalities, offered hope and support to those who were failing the few treatments we had. ASOs (AIDS service organizations) were created throughout the world, but I have often boasted that in Los Angeles, by our combination of huge population and the way we looked at the world collaboratively, locally we created the most extensive network of services anywhere. Free psychotherapy? A daily support group? Food pantries? Bilingual or hearing impaired services? Home delivered meals? We had it all here.

The government, assailed for having been a deterrent to progress in the early years of the epidemic under President Reagan, ultimately created funding programs and helped people move, along with all the other support systems, toward life rather than towards death.

As we look back 30 years, where are we now?

We do not yet have a vaccine, nor a medication that can actually boost the injured immune system. Our best weapon has been to slow down the virus (which in itself can and does help with immune restoration).

We still have major work to do in equality of distribution of medications and treatments – developing nations have progressed in their abilities to offer meds to all who need them, but a majority of HIV – positive persons who should be on treatment are not.

Within our own communities, the issue of prevention has resurged in the past years. Youth, not having in its collective unconscious what we who lived through the 80s and early 90s endured, are taking risks with sexual and other behaviors that have resulted in (too) many new infections.

But here is some good news: First, we have potent, durable antiviral regimens – with more than two dozen FDA-approved antiretrovirals. And the most commonly prescribed regimen in the U.S. is one pill once daily.

Also, in the U.S., we have succeeded in raising the life expectancy of someone newly diagnosed with HIV, who has access to health care and to

medications, to the same as someone without HIV! While early hopes for a cure have not been realized, HIV truly has achieved the status of “a chronic and manageable disease.”

In the spirit of remembering what we have done, the bridges we have traversed, and to honor those who are no longer with us, please join us this World AIDS Day at the One Archives.

[Editor's Note: Article reprinted from G'Vanim, November/December 2011 with permission from Mark Katz, MD and Beth Chayim Chadashim]

Project Chicken Soup was proud to be a Community Partner on World AIDS Day of



In Memoriam: Avram Chill

By Rabbi Lisa Edwards, Beth Chayim Chadashim

[Excerpted from the eulogy given at Avram's funeral on October 17, 2011 and reprinted/adapted from G'Vanim, November/December 2011 with permission]

In a recent application to rabbinical school, BCC member Avram Chill reminisced about growing up with family members ranging from ultra-Orthodox to Conservative to barely observant. Many were involved in social justice and labor issues and Avram wrote that "the strongest impression I have of the many extended family gatherings we had was that no matter how heated the arguments about either religion or the events of the day, there was always respect shown for each other and a recognition of everyone's value as a human being."

So now we know it was "in his DNA" – that respect he would show others, that recognition of everyone's value as a human being. That sums up a lot of what any of us might say today about Avram Chill.

Avram died the day after National Coming Out Day and just hours before the start of the Jewish holy day of Sukkot. He was not one to hide who he was, putting off rabbinical school all those years ago because he was not about to step back into the closet. Starting in college in the late 1960s, Avram came out early and often – and helped others to do the same by working, for example, for one of the first telephone hotlines, as well as a journal called "Chutzpah," while still an undergrad at the University of Chicago. Years later, using his training as a social worker, he served as the first director of Nechama, A Jewish Response to AIDS, an agency of the LA Jewish Federation that began at BCC and continues to serve our local community as Project Chicken Soup.

Over the past 20 years or so, Avram himself struggled with the vagaries of HIV/AIDS, and perhaps even more so with the drugs intended to assist him in that struggle. However, unlike many who have faced life-threatening illness, Avram stayed focused outward, always looking for ways to make a difference in his *tikkun olam* work through a social action agenda that included marriage equality, political action around AIDS services, work with Jewish World Watch and committee work at BCC.

Rest in peace, Avram, knowing your body wore out long before your influence – for surely your influence will live on and on amongst those of us who knew you.

2011 AIDS Walk Thank You For Your Support!



Team PCS participated in the 2011 AIDS Walk on October 16th and thanks to your support, raised over \$17,000! Thanks to AIDS Project Los Angeles providing us with the opportunity to be a Community Coalition Initiative partner, PCS will receive all funds raised by our team!



In addition to the support received from AIDS Walk donations, PCS and Mollie Pier, Founder and Board Member, received significant media coverage. Visit our home page on www.projectchickensoup.org and take a look!

On December 9, 2011, Councilmembers Paul Koretz and Paul Krekorian will honor Mollie in LA City Council Chambers for her tireless work at Project Chicken Soup on behalf of people living with HIV/AIDS. Look for our report in the next newsletter!