



The Red Letter

Fall 2012

House of Ruth Turns 20 Looking Back

175 Families are served this year at House of Ruth.

1997

1992

The number of known, diagnosed cases of AIDS in KY tops 1,000. By year's end 1,179 Kentuckians will have been diagnosed with HIV since 1982.

House of Ruth becomes a nonprofit and serves 8 families in its first year.

1995



343 Kentuckians will be diagnosed with AIDS in 1995. This year marks the peak year of AIDS diagnoses.

Collaboration including House of Ruth founders and doctors at U of L start WINGS Clinic, an all inclusive HIV/AIDS health clinic.



72 Families are served this year at House of Ruth.



The original logo for House of Ruth

"I don't think we thought we would be here 20 years. I really did think there would be a cure by now for it. The hope was that we would see House of Ruth close and that we would have accomplished our mission and in reality 20 years later that is not true. It will take a lot longer" - A House of Ruth Founder

How It All Began

The vision that became House of Ruth was born in 1991, when a group of eight long-time high school friends from Presentation Academy held their annual day-after-Christmas gathering. They were Sharan Benton; Anne Bindner; Liz Bindner (deceased); Elizabeth (Betty) Blandford, SCN; Sharon Cook; Sharon Gray, SCN; Rebecca Miles, SCN; and Marilyn Spink, SCN (deceased). The topic of women and AIDS came up. Women in Louisville and nationally were contract-

ing HIV, and they weren't telling anyone about it. These women were alone and had nowhere to turn for help for themselves and their children. There was no social service agency to call, no place to go if you were a woman with HIV. The group of friends decided they had to do something to address the unmet need locally. So that evening, each one plunked down \$5 as a symbol of their commitment. And House of Ruth began. The agency incorporated on August 6, 1992.

On paper, House of Ruth's purpose was to provide advocacy, information, education, and support services. But the intent of the founders was so much more -- to walk with women and their children infected with AIDS, partnering with them so they knew they were not alone. The eight friends' vision was to bring to life their shared goal that every person has the right to live with dignity, especially in the face of debilitating illness, stigma, and eventual death.

MISSION STATEMENT

House of Ruth is a nonprofit community-based organization caring for families and individuals with or affected by HIV/AIDS. We provide a holistic client-centered approach for housing and advocacy programs. This includes: life skills, children's programs and other support services to help strengthen lives.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Elizabeth Scott
Kentucky Child Protective Services

Rev. Sandra Snowden
New Zion Baptist Church



1999

House of Ruth is gifted St. Matthew church building.

Louisville, Lexington, and Henderson pass local ordinances banning discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations because of a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Opponents voice concerns that passage of such ordinances will lead to the spreading of AIDS.

2000

Serving 220 women and 190 men, House of Ruth has diversified along the way, not only focused on women, but the HIV/AIDS community as a whole.

2001

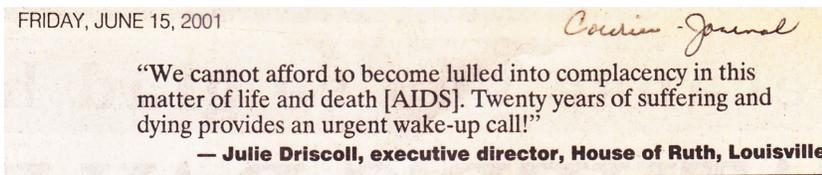
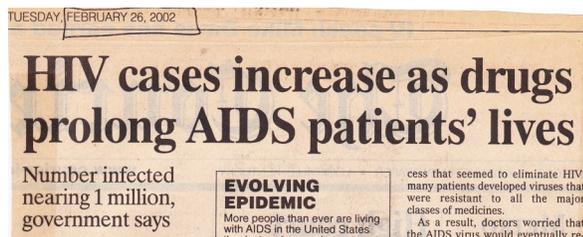
House of Ruth acquires Glade House.

2003

WAVE 3 reports people are dying because they can't afford their medication. AIDS treatments cost more than \$9,000 per year.



Over 4,300 people in Kentucky have been diagnosed with AIDS.



A Miracle for House of Ruth

With client numbers steadily rising through the mid and late '90s, House of Ruth was in desperate need of more space. At the same time, the St. Matthew United Church of Christ congregation in Shelby Park was aging and decreasing in size as families headed for the suburbs. The membership sought out a social services agency that would occupy the church building and continue serving the needs in the neighborhood and beyond. With the help of New

Directions Housing Corporation, they found House of Ruth. St. Matthew sold the building on East St. Catherine Street to House of Ruth for \$1.00. Agency staff and volunteers moved to the St. Matthew building in October 2000. Following renovations, a formal dedication took place in April 2001.



House of Ruth has risen from modest efforts in the early 1990s to become Louisville's main resource for AIDS assistance. Its new home (picture above) will be officially dedicated Apr. 4.

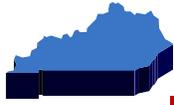
House of Ruth to Dedicate New Facility Apr. 4

House of Ruth, Louisville's premiere AIDS agency, will be holding an open house and ribbon cutting ceremony at its newly renovated campus at 607 E. St. Catherine St. on Apr. 4 from 2:30-5:30 pm. The agency's new home is located in the

former fellowship hall has been renovated into office space, thanks to the Louisville board of aldermen and the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels. In addition, a house on campus is being renovated into two two-bedroom housing units.

"Oh absolutely it was a miracle, we had many miracles through this whole thing. We would get down to nothing and someone would give us a donation."

- A House of Ruth Founder



2007

House of Ruth provides services for 1,124 individuals.

2009

152 new cases of HIV are diagnosed in the Louisville area.



2012

2008

House of Ruth provides services for 1,300 individuals.

2011

House of Ruth provides 25,000 TARC tickets to clients to help with transportation to medical and counseling appointments, plus work and school.

Louisville has the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS in the state, a record we have maintained since reporting on AIDS began.



The "House" Grows Larger

In 2001, Community Health Trust, a local nonprofit devoted to public health needs of gay, lesbian, and transgendered individuals, approached House of Ruth about assuming ownership and operation of its Glade House. Glade House had been a haven for those infected with AIDS for more than 15 years. In its early days, Glade House primarily provided shelter and care for those with no home

or family. As medical treatment for HIV/AIDS evolved, so did Glade House services, all the while maintaining the founding ideology that people infected with HIV who had no place to go would have a place there. As the average life span of AIDS patients began to increase, the focus shifted to helping people learn to live with the disease and providing them a way out of hopelessness.

Remembering the Past, Looking to the Future

For over 15 years, though not consecutive, Jim Oetken served on House of Ruth's Board of Directors. He says he has stepped down for the final time in June 2012! Jim had a personal interest that inspired his involvement. His gay son, Paul, had friends who were infected. Jim is proud to have been involved with House of Ruth and its accomplishments over the years. "I believe in the cause as much now, maybe more, than I did in

Jim Oetken
20th Anniversary
Celebration Chair



the early days of my involvement. The dedication of both staff and Board has continued to inspire me." As Chair of the 20th Anniversary Celebration Committee, Jim looks forward to the upcoming event on September 16. "It will help remind us of our past, as we look forward to the next 20 years."

The Journey Continues...

As House of Ruth looks beyond the first 20 years, our ideal would be to work ourselves out of business, and fast! Medical interventions continue to advance, with the F.D.A. having just approved the first preventive medication for HIV/AIDS. The challenge will be to make it and other life-prolonging treatment both affordable and accessible to all who need it, especially in urban enclaves of the U.S.

As long as HIV/AIDS remains a public health crisis for the urban poor, our work at House of Ruth will continue to be vital. Without it, clients like 28-year-old Karen, a single mom of a preschooler, would have no place to live and most likely no way to support herself and her 3-year-old. She came to us from a homeless shelter, HIV-positive, pregnant, alone, and terrified. We provided her an apartment and connected her with prenatal resources. When her son was born healthy, it was a victory for Mom and staff alike. Today, Karen has secured her GED and a job. She continues to live in an apartment owned by us and pays rent. She also has a car, a significant other, and dreams for her and her son's tomorrows.

Please help us to help all the Karens, until HIV/AIDS is preventable for everyone, regardless of ethnicity, country of origin, income, gender, or sexual orientation. Here's hoping we're long out of business before another milestone anniversary rolls around.



House of Ruth

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



20th Anniversary Celebration

Presented by

Porcini/Farmer Children's Foundation and Frazier History Museum

Join us in celebrating our founders and 20 years of caring for those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. The event will take place at The Frazier History Museum during the opening weekend of the award-winning exhibit **Diana: A Celebration**. Experience the life and humanitarian work of one of the most remarkable women of the 20th Century. The exhibition features more than 150 personal items, including her royal wedding gown, 28 designer dresses, priceless jewels, rare home movies, and personal mementos.



Leave Your Mark At House of Ruth

A 20th Anniversary commemorative wall designed by local artist and ceramic sculptor John McCarthy will be installed this year at House of Ruth's administrative offices. Twenty panels will make up the wall and will be designed by the purchaser, with assistance from the artist. We invite you to be a part of this piece of history by purchasing a panel, including handprints, to honor or remember people or groups that have been significant in the fight against HIV/AIDS. To learn more about purchasing a panel, contact Cindy Good, (502)587-5080 ext. 23. Preview panels will be on display at our 20th Anniversary Celebration, and panels may be purchased that evening.



20th Anniversary Celebration

September 16, 2012: 5:30 - 11 p.m.

Frazier History Museum: 829 W. Main

\$100 per person *Anniversary Celebration* including

5:30 – 7:30 p.m.: Heavy hors d'oeuvres and open bar

Music by Bourbon Baroque

Admission to **Diana: A Celebration**

Frazier permanent exhibits open

7 – 7:30 p.m.: 20th Anniversary Program

7:30 – 8:30 p.m.: Coffee and dessert bar

Entry to *After Hours on the Rooftop*

\$40 per person *After Hours on the Rooftop* including

8 – 11 p.m.: Dancing under the stars with local DJ

Taco bar by Taco Punk/cash bar

Admission to **Diana: A Celebration**

Frazier permanent exhibits open

For tickets visit www.houseofruth.net

or call 502.587.5080