

VOLUME 1

COMMUNITEA

A Look from the Inside

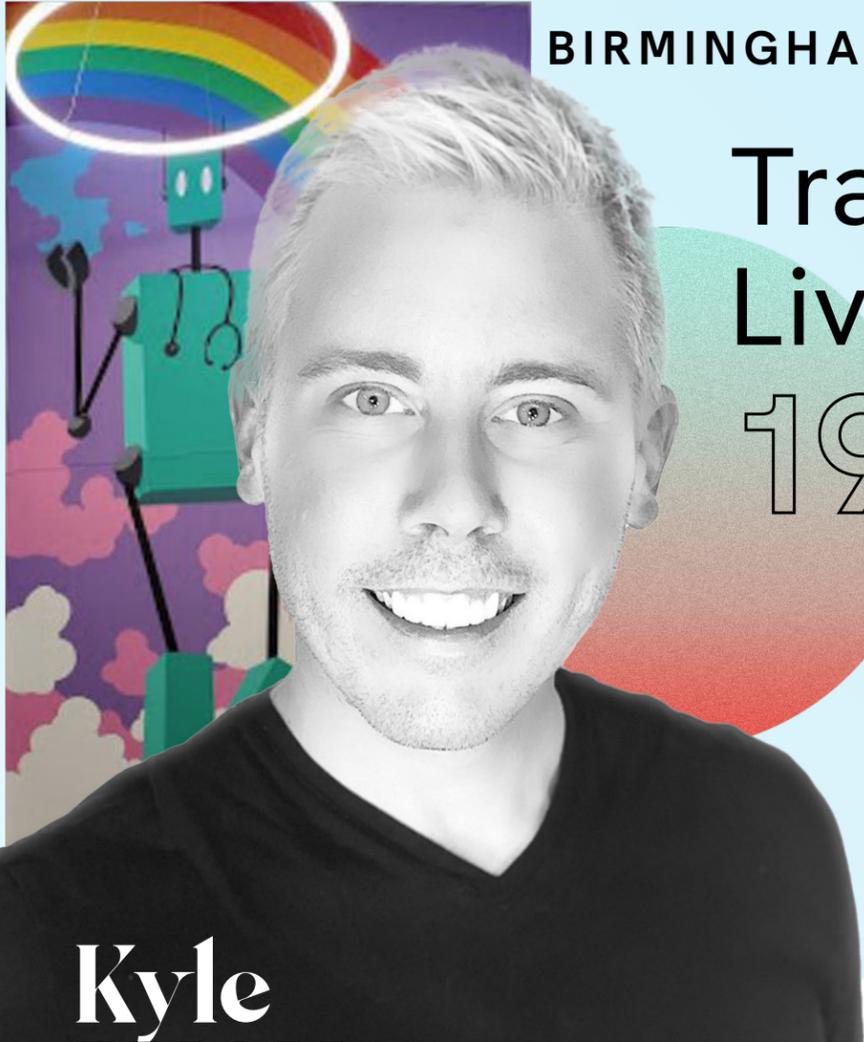
Highlighting Community
Engagement among
Community-Based
Organizations

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BIRMINGHAM AIDS OUTREACH

Transforming Lives Since 1985



**Kyle
PUGH**

Development Director

Birmingham AIDS Outreach

Birmingham, Alabama

EHE Jurisdiction: Alabama

After graduating from the University of Alabama, Kyle moved to Birmingham and began a career in visual merchandising for Macy's. During that time, Kyle was a volunteer with Central Alabama Pride, eventually going on to become President of the Board for three years during the time of marriage equality and the Pulse tragedy. When BAO started the process of opening the Magic City Wellness Center (MCWC) in 2015 they recruited Kyle to be Project Director based on his success with Central Alabama Pride and his trusted status with the LGBTQ community. In 2018, Kyle moved into the role of Development Director for Birmingham AIDS Outreach. Kyle and his husband Shaun have been married since 2015 (during the three weeks Alabama had legal marriage equality before it became legal nationwide).

Q Tell me a little bit about yourself and your organization.

A I joined Birmingham AIDS Outreach in 2015 as a Project Director for the Magic City Wellness Center. In 2016, I became the Director of Magic City Wellness Center and in 2018 became the Development Director for Birmingham AIDS Outreach.

Birmingham AIDS Outreach has been saving and transforming lives since 1985 as Alabama's first AIDS service organization. The agency was founded as a grass roots response to the devastating and fatal impact HIV was having on the Birmingham Community.

Today BAO provides free services to over 800 individuals with HIV each month and reaches thousands more through our many LGBTQ education, research and prevention outreach programs.

The mission of BAO is to enhance the quality of life for people with HIV, at-risk, affected individuals, and the LGBTQ community through outreach, age-appropriate prevention education, and supportive services.

In 2014, BAO changed its mission statement to include the LGBTQ community and founded the Magic City Acceptance Center (MCAC) to address the rising new HIV infection rate among youth ages 13-24. MCAC is a safe and affirming space for LGBTQ individuals of all ages where everyone is celebrated for who they are. Since opening, MCAC has served over 1200 unique youth through their services.

In 2016, BAO opened the Magic City Wellness Center. MCWC is Alabama's first primary care center specifically catering to the LGBTQ community. MCWC provides primary care, women's health services, Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)/Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) services, HIV maintenance, STI treatment and Hormone Replacement Therapy.

In 2020, BAO sought a charter from the State of Alabama Charter School Commission to open the Magic City Acceptance Academy, a charter school for grades 6-12. The Magic City Acceptance

Academy provides a community in which all learners are empowered to embrace education, achieve individual success, and take ownership of their future in a safe, LGBTQ-affirming learning environment. The school is currently slated to open in September 2021.

BAO is also the parent organization for the Magic City Research Institute which leads research efforts that pertain to individuals with HIV and the LGBTQ community and the Magic City Legal Center which employs four full time attorneys in our agency to provide free legal services to the HIV and LGBTQ communities.

Q What is the history of your organization? What inspired your organization to do the work you do?

A BAO has been saving and transforming lives since 1985 as Alabama's first AIDS Service Organization. The agency was founded as a "grass-roots" response to the devastating and fatal impact HIV/AIDS was having on the Birmingham community.





“Without community there cannot be trust or a sharing of ideas in order to improve the client experience.”



Q How do you define community, and how do you see yourself and/or your organizations as part of the community you have defined?

A I define community as a group of individuals with a shared interest, commonality or goal. BAO is in the unique position of being the oldest ASO in the state but also the only one with LGBTQ in our mission statement. By adding LGBTQ we have been able to expand programming to serve in many different capacities. As a result, we have been able to reach out to most every demographic and age group possible. Our programs are always identifying new needs in the community and adjusting or adding programming to address the need.

Q What communities does your organization serve?

A We serve all individuals in our area through HIV direct client services, HIV prevention education, and LGBTQ services for all ages.

Q Tell me about your organization’s engagement work with your community and how you support the community.

A BAO offers free and confidential HIV and STI testing four days a week. We also provide free COVID-19 testing as well. All of our services remain free to our clients. Our LGBTQ programs are offered to all age ranges and include support groups, social groups, and even free mental health services. Our clients with HIV also qualify for free services that include transportation, food boxes, nutritional supplements and medical supplies.

Q What are some successes your organization has had with outreach and engagement?

A Through our partnership with the 1917 Clinic at the University of Alabama-Birmingham (UAB) we were able to expand our food and nutrition program. What was once primarily a box of dry goods is now 100lbs of food given to clients each month and includes fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy products and meats. It has also expanded to include personal care items like cleaning supplies and bath products. As a result of this expansion, clients who had fallen out of care have been re-engaged with the providers at 1917 Clinic in order to gain access to the expanded program (clients are required to be in care to qualify). Our client services team has gone from seeing around 400 clients a month to well over 800 clients each month in a few years since the program started.



Q Why is community important to the work within Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. (EHE)?

A Community is essential when working with any group but especially when it comes to EHE. Without community there cannot be trust or a sharing of ideas in order to improve the client experience. Community is integral to re-engage clients into care and maintain care.

Q How do you collaborate with your health department to engage and support community in EHE?

A BAO has a fantastic relationship with both the Jefferson County Department of Public Health and the Alabama Department of Public Health. BAO collaborates with both agencies on research projects through all areas of our agency as well as PrEP and HIV educational programming. We also refer individuals from our HIV/STI testing to their services when needed and have a “concierge” type service where our staff transport newly diagnosed individuals to their clinic to help reduce any stigma or loss of clients in care.

For more information about BOA and how to get involved, please visit:

- BAOBHM.org
- Magiccitywellnesscenter.org
- Magiccityacceptancecenter.org

You can also follow us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#)



Where Public Health and Social Justice Meet

Theodore H. Noel, II

President/CEO

Guiding Right, Inc.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

EHE Jurisdiction: Oklahoma

Theodore H. Noel, II, is the President/CEO of Guiding Right, Inc (GRI). Mr. Noel is a graduate of the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho where he received a Bachelor of Science degree. Mr. Noel founded the Oklahoma-based, non-profit organization in 1999. GRI is organized to support the health and well-being of racial/ethnic, sex/gender, and other vulnerable populations through leadership, social justice, public, community health-centered practices, and collaborative partnerships. Prior to founding Guiding Right, Inc., Mr. Noel worked as a Program Director for the Community Council of Central Oklahoma, Inc., where he developed and implemented several cultural, educational, and leadership programs in the Oklahoma City Public School System. Mr. Noel has received numerous awards for his work including the Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City, Inc.'s Russell M. Perry Equal Opportunity Award of Excellence. Theodore, his wife Rebecca, and their daughter Sydney reside in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and are active members of the Church of the Living God, (CWFF) Temple-39 where he serves on the Board of Trustees.

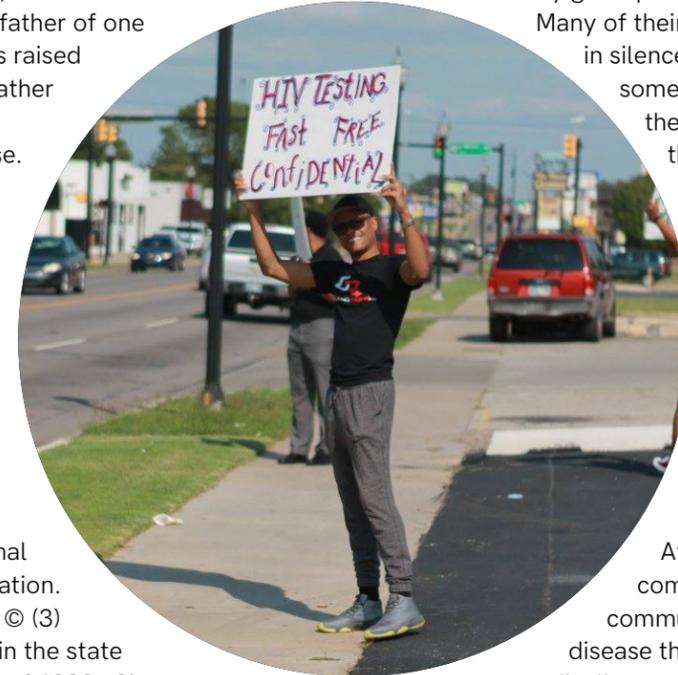
Q Tell me a little bit about yourself and your organization.

A I am Theodore H. Noel, II; lifelong resident of Oklahoma City, husband of 16 years to Rebecca, and father of one daughter, Sydney. I was raised in a household with a father who was a pastor and mother who was a nurse. My parents modeled compassion, respect, and non-judgement toward others. These experiences had a profound effect on me and are fundamentally what drives my work. I am the current President/CEO of Guiding Right, Inc. (GRI) and the original Founder of the organization. GRI is a non-profit 501 © (3) corporation organized in the state of Oklahoma in August of 1999. Since its inception, GRI has operated from an ethos of enhancing the health and well-being of minorities through leadership in social justice, public and community health practices, collaborations, and partnerships. Our mission is to decrease social, economic, and health disparities for minority and other vulnerable populations within Oklahoma City's Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and Tulsa MSA. The vision of GRI is to create self-sufficiency in navigating systems of care, social roles, and economic achievement, while eliminating health disparities among all persons at risk. We envision increasing the quality of life for all citizens of Oklahoma by offering opportunities for youth and adults to acquire knowledge of surviving beyond poverty and circumstances.

Q What is the history of your organization? What inspired you or your organization to do the work you do?

A After graduating from the University of Idaho with a Bachelor's degree in 1986, I returned

home, determined to make a difference in my community. Initially working at an after-school program for minority communities in Oklahoma City, I realized many of my clients were being raised by grandparents and other relatives.



Many of their parents were suffering in silence with HIV diagnoses, some of whom were battling the virus unknowingly. In those times, there were not many culturally and linguistically appropriate HIV Service Organizations in the state of Oklahoma, demonstrating the critical need to bring HIV testing, prevention education and treatment to Black/African Americans in my community. Seeing my community stricken with a disease that could be eventually medically managed was Guiding Right's call to action. The rest, as they say, is history. Fast forward to June of 2020 GRI's clinical arm New Hope Wellness Center opened its doors to offer biomedical services and medical treatment and care for individuals living with HIV.

Q How do you define community?

A While it may sound cliché, community is your Village. I describe my community based on the seven principles of African heritage, Nguzu Saba. One principle in particular, Ujima, collective work and responsibility, guides us to maintain our community together and make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems and to solve them together. My community is comprised of generations of ancestors who pass their wisdom and knowledge down to the next generation. In essence, it is the blended families of relatives and friends working together for one common cause. Our community, the Black/African American community, is so multifaceted.



Q How do you see yourself and/or your organizations as part of the community that you have defined?

A I see myself as part of my defined community, as an elder fulfilling my role to nurture and develop our next generation. Guiding Right, Inc. is an organization for the Black/African American community, from the Black/African American community; for the LGBTQIA2S community, from the LGBTQIA2S community, and for those who living

with and affected by HIV. We welcome all individuals in need.



“I serve alongside an amazing, diverse group of folks to welcome any and everyone in need.”

Q What communities does your organization serve?

A While Guiding Right, Inc. has a focus on the Black/African American community or any racial/ethnic minority individual, we serve with compassion all persons who need us. We do not discriminate on the basis of gender, nongender, race, ethnicity, or religion. At the end of the day, if we can help, we will do so to the best of our ability. I serve alongside an amazing, diverse group of folks to welcome any and every one in need.

Q Tell me about your organizations’ engagement work with your community and how you support community.

A Since inception, Guiding Right, Inc. has solicited community involvement and engagement to guide the development of community programs. Currently, the organization has two Community Advisory Boards (CABs) that offer suggestions for program implementation and guide the organization’s efforts. We work endlessly to uphold the organization’s social justice driven mission, and to support the people of our community.

Q What are some successes your organization has had with outreach and engagement?

A My goal when founding Guiding Right, Inc. was to promote positive health outcomes and reach those who otherwise would not have access to culturally responsive medical services. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, we have engaged creative strategies to ensure we still offer services in a safe and responsive manner. Thus our “Being Safe, At Home” Program was created and GRI began the business of mailing rapid HIV test kits to our clients in need of services. Additionally, we have had great success with our Rapid Start strategy and linking individuals in to care and treatment immediately following the diagnosis of HIV infection.



Q Why is community important to the work of Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. (EHE)?

A Organizations and individuals should not continue ineffective practices of times past and expect to effect change in Ending the HIV Epidemic. It will take the strength, expertise, cohesiveness, and collaboration of multiple sectors including community, policymakers, industry, federal and state-level agencies working together to achieve the goals set forth in EHE of reaching a 75% reduction in new HIV infections by 2025 and at least a 90% reduction by 2030.

Q How do you collaborate with your health department to engage and support community in EHE?

A GRI understands the important role the health department plays in public health and in comprehensive HIV delivery. Our organization works collaboratively and in partnership with the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) for partner notification services, epidemiological data, jurisdictional guidance, potential outbreak trends, and funding opportunities. The OSDH, Sexual Health & Harm Reduction Service, under

the requirements of cooperative agreements with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), has established the Oklahoma HIV and Hepatitis Planning Council (OHHPC). The OHHPC functions as an advisory body to the Department’s HIV Prevention, Ryan White Part B, and Viral Hepatitis Programs. The OHHPC is comprised of no less than fifteen (15) and no more than thirty (30) voting members. At this time four of GRI’s prevention staff are voting members and are highly active in the OHHPC; serving on the Survey/Evaluation Committee (responsible for collecting state surveyed data and evaluation of state prevention and linkage efforts), HIV Prevention and Linkage Committee (responsible for the prioritization of HIV prevention target populations and a set of prevention activities/interventions for each target population) and the Viral Hepatitis C Committee (responsible for planning of hepatitis C activities within the state and growing resources for treatment and care). Our involvement with health department, OHHPC and other local, state, and federal entities is an extension of GRI’s commitment to support the community in Ending the HIV Epidemic.

For more information about Guiding Right, Inc., and New Hope Wellness Center, please visit us online at www.guidingright.org and www.nhwellness.org.

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA MID-STATES

Creating POSITIVE CHANGES in Our Community

Val Farsetti

Program Manager: VOAFIT, HIV/AIDS Services

Volunteers of America Mid-States

Louisville, Kentucky

EHE Jurisdiction: Kentucky



Val Farsetti has traveled the world working on innovative answers to some of society's most challenging problems. Her passion for community building and expertise in sustainable development has taken her from Asia to Africa to South America. In Kenya, she worked on animal welfare and conservation, finding ways to protect elephants while keeping them from destroying local farmers' crops. She provided medical services in a small village in Belize and supported people with disabilities in Chile. Her work has focused on the intersection between human, animal and environmental health.

As Program Manager for HIV/AIDS Services, Val oversees Volunteers of America (VOA's) free and confidential HIV testing campaign and helps to educate clients and assure they are receiving the services and support they need. "I love community-based work and connecting individuals and resources," Val says, as she works with VOA to advance her life-long commitment to building healthier communities.

Q Tell me a little bit about yourself and your organization.

A My name is Valerie (Val) Farsetti. I am the Program Manager of Volunteers of America Friends Inspiring Testing (VOAFIT), the HIV Services Department under the Volunteers of America Mid-States umbrella. VOA Mid-states as a whole covers Kentucky (KY), Tennessee (TN), West Virginia (WV), and Southern Indiana (IN). In addition to HIV and sexual health services we offer veteran's services, supports for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities, housing services for individuals experiencing homelessness or of low socioeconomic status, a restorative justice program, and a wide expanse of addiction recovery services. VOAFIT is unique in that unlike most of the other programs we are entirely community-based. Our home base is in Louisville KY, Germantown specifically, but we cover all of Jefferson County, KY, some surrounding counties, and southern IN. We offer free testing, sexual health education, and community programs/outreach as our main component for all ages and populations. We also offer case management services including housing assistance for individuals who have HIV and linkage to care services for newly diagnosed individuals. Mental health supports are also available including a one-on-one counseling program as well as group

programming, all designed to help individuals connect with others in similar situations, navigate the medical system after diagnosis, address stigma (both internal and external), disclosure challenges and the challenges that may come with that, as well as any other challenges that may arise from addressing a new health diagnosis while managing everything else going on in one's life. All of our services are free.

Recently we also expanded our Hepatitis C testing opportunities and partnered with the Center for Women and Families, a local shelter serving individuals who have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV), and Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) to examine the intersectionality between HIV and IPV. I'm not sure if you're aware, but those who have experienced IPV are at an increased risk for contracting HIV. This study admittedly focuses on women and seeks to explore that connection and what the commonalities are between the two social issues and risks.

Lastly, we also offer placement for university students interested in macro/community-based practice, which has been a main goal of mine. Especially for social work students (which is my background), it can be hard to find a macro-based placement, but we seek to provide that option by partnering with local universities.

“Our main foundation is composed of the relationships we build by going out and talking to people.”

Q What is the history of your organization? What inspired you or your organization to do the work you do?

A The answer to this question predates me a bit. I’ve only been with VOA for three years, but what I can say is that this year VOA National is celebrating its 125th anniversary. VOA is continuously motivated to create positive change in the lives of people, the community, and the systems that influence our city.

HIV services embodies that. Although we are very young compared to VOA National, roughly 25, we strive to promote positive change and, just like any social service, to eventually work ourselves out of a job and eradicate HIV which is a social issue intersecting each of our primary service programs within VOA.

Q How do you define community, and how do you see yourself and/or your organization as part of the community that you have defined?

A That is a good question. For me, community is made up of people with common interests and common needs, and some without. A healthy community is composed of individuals who strive to build trust and respect in ways which support growth and development of our friends, families, and strangers as one. Positive change. Positive systemic change. That’s why I’m personally in this field, to work in the community and with it to support a stronger system for everyone. Our jobs, as you probably know, take us to all pockets of the community, and our first goal is always the same, to build mutually beneficial relationships so we can help spread awareness of the risks of HIV, connect individuals to services, and support our clients to be stable enough that they will eventually not need us.

Q What communities does your organization serve?

A As I mentioned, VOA serves a wide expanse of populations. While there is intersectionality between those programs, our department, HIV Services, intersects with them all. Bottom line, VOAFIT serves everyone. If you are having sex, we are here for you. If you have questions but are not having sex, we’re here for you. From the most basic and vanilla of experiences to the kinkiest of the kinks, we got you. Trust me, amongst our very diverse and colorful team, I guarantee we’ve already heard it, we’d love to talk to you about it, and help make sure you are taking necessary measures to be safe. While there are some higher risk populations, HIV doesn’t have a face, so again, we serve everyone: all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, disabilities, etc. You name it, we got you.

Q Tell me about your organizations’ engagement work with your community and how you support community.

A Where to start? Like I said, we are a community-based program. So, our main foundation is composed of the relationships we build by going out and talking to people. Networking with individuals and other community programs



whether they be schools, bars, community centers, recreation centers, clubs, restaurants, barber shops, etc. Anyone who wants to work with us, we will. One of our partners is a tire shop. The manager of the shop is passionate about health and supporting his community, so we work together to provide safer sex supplies to the area and referral services for those who are interested in getting tested. We are constantly working on new strategies for outreach and spreading awareness of the importance of safer sex practices, getting tested and our services. But our main goal is for our partnerships to be mutually beneficial. For instance, sometimes we offer incentives for testing. One of our recent initiatives is to offer vouchers or gift cards to support local Black-owned restaurants and shops. Due to COVID-19 the restaurant industry has been hit hard, and so have our testing numbers and outreach capabilities. Additionally, there is a lot of social unrest, as we all know, that has risen this past year. So, let’s say you come in for a test, as an incentive for coming in you have the option to choose from a couple gift cards/ vouchers, each specific to a Black-owned restaurant, that we’ve already purchased. By doing this, the client gets a free, or almost free meal, the restaurant gets a boost in income, as well as, a likely promise of more traffic to come from the person using the gift card, and we increase our outreach numbers.



A healthy community is made of individuals who respect each other and support one another's growth and development even when interests or beliefs don't always align perfectly.

Q What are some successes your organization has had with outreach and engagement?

A We have had many successes and many varieties of success. Establishing a new site, diagnosing someone at that site, and linking them into care is a success for us. It shows that we are placing ourselves in the right areas for reaching more at-risk people. One of our bigger examples of success, I would say is our youth initiative. Prior to joining VOA, there was no youth initiative within the outreach program here. However, another colleague and I, in the last couple years, have established youth focused programming for testing and education across Metro Louisville. We are now partnered with many of the schools

and community centers around town to guest speak, and offer education to students and testing, if legally age-appropriate. This year, in fact, will be our third Youth Awareness Summit, and we have plans for more expansion with this initiative this year to broaden our outreach and also to incorporate mental health services.

Q Why is community important to the work of Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S.?

A Honestly, at the risk of sounding cliché, a community is everything. As we talked about earlier, a community is more than just people with common interests and common needs. A healthy community is made of individuals who respect each other and support one another's growth and

development even when interests or beliefs don't always align perfectly. That is what we need to truly end HIV. The HIV community within Louisville, let alone our global community, is composed of so many stories, expertise, varying beliefs, fears, and more. Without mutual respect and trust, despite our differences and often celebrating our differences to support growth and development as a whole, truly as one community, then we will always be faced with barriers that make it impossible to eradicate HIV (and ironically keep us employed). Community, compassion, and the joint effort of all of us with varying backgrounds and expertise, essentially a multidisciplinary approach, is how we end HIV. It's not one person at a time, it's one community at a time.

Q How do you collaborate with your health department to engage and support community in EHE?

A So, our local health department is one of our strongest community partners. Since they also have a division of HIV services doing the community

outreach work that we do, we often collaborate on projects or work together to cover various areas of Jefferson County more efficiently. Sometimes it's simply asking for support when one of us needs a helping hand. The health department also has partner notification services, so, although we always offer to help facilitate those challenging conversation for individuals, when we link individuals into care we also refer them to the health department for services regarding partner notification, if necessary. So, they are a strong player in our goal to end HIV.

For more information about VOA FIT, visit our [website](#) or [Facebook](#) page. Again, we are VOA FIT (Friends Inspiring Testing). If you google VOA FIT our multiple social media platforms will pop up. We have [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#). We are even creating our own Tik Tok now. But our [Facebook](#) and [website](#) are the best locations for more information on our services, upcoming events, how to get involved, or how to get a test. You can schedule an appointment online or call us. In fact, if you would rather call or text, you can do so at 502-310-2417. That's my direct work number.

