

AIDS Healthcare Foundation Archives
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THE OUT OF THE CLOSET COLLECTION
ACCESSION NO. #####-##



Dates	1990-Present
Extent	623 digitized items, including documents, photos, audio files, and videos
Creator	AIDS Healthcare Foundation
Access/Use	The digitized collection is open for research. Copyright is retained by the AIDS Healthcare Foundation. Files can be accessed on the database at ahfarchives.org
Language	English
Finding Aid	This guide is available online.
Acquisition/Appraisal	This collection comes in-house from the AIDS Healthcare Foundation and materials acquired from past and current employees starting in 2008.

Description Control

Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: Content Standard. Processed by Hilary Clifford, Lonnetta Johnson, Mary Ann Cherry, and Miki Jackson

Preferred Citation

Archive number, Box number, Out of the Closet Collection, AIDS Healthcare Foundation Archives.

Subject Heading

AIDS Healthcare Foundation
Nonprofit organizations
Safe sex in AIDS prevention
AIDS (Disease)
AIDS (Disease)—Patients
AIDS activists
AIDS (Disease)—Patients—Employment
AIDS (Disease)—United States
HIV-positive persons
Thrift shops

Historical Note

The AIDS Healthcare Foundation founded the Out of the Closet Thrift Stores in October of 1990. The first store was in Atwater Village, California. This “social enterprise” entailed creating a business that generates revenue that goes to AHF’s life-saving services and advocacy. AHF’s thrift stores eventually turned into a nationwide chain with locations in Washington, Texas, Ohio, Florida, California, Georgia, and New York. Hundreds of millions of dollars are raised through the thrift stores. The money all goes to funding the medical care and advocacy programs that help those who cannot afford care all around the world. A unique aspect of Out of the Closet is that it offers free HIV testing in the store. This allows those who are fearful of stigma to get tested and if necessary get connected to treatment all while visiting a thrift store.

Michael Weinstein, co-founder and CEO of AHF, came up with the idea for Out of the Closet in order to expand AHF from a hospice organization to one that provides healthcare. In order to do so, there needed to be significant revenue in order to afford the medication to distribute to those who are unable to pay. Although by 1990 the life-saving treatment for HIV/AIDS had yet to be discovered, however with the money made from OTC, clinics could be set up in order to treat opportunistic infections in those who cannot afford medication any other way. Marc Neighbor, a 28-year-old who previously managed a Salvation Army thrift store, became the first manager of the Out of the Closet in Atwater Village.

By 1998 AHF operated ten Out of the Closet Thrift Stores. Ten years later in 2008, Out of the Closet went national. The first store out of California was founded in Wilton Manors, Florida. A year later in 2009, AHF opened its first “all-in-one” facility called the AHF Magic Johnson Healthcare Center in San Francisco. This “all-in-one” included a pharmacy, medical services, and an Out of the Closet thrift store. Because of this model, patients can access the care that they need without having to travel to multiple locations.

By 2011 AHF was operating 21 Out of the Closet thrift stores. Ninety-six cents out of every dollar made at Out of the Closet goes directly back into AHF’s programs for treatment, prevention, and outreach both nationally and internationally. As of 2017, AHF still operates 21 Out of the Closet thrift stores in 8 states. AHF’s mission statement can be seen on Out of the Closet walls, stating that AHF provides “cutting-edge medicine and advocacy, regardless of ability to pay.”