

In the Know-Now

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PRAXIS Housing Inc.

Notes from the North American Housing and HIV/AIDS Research Summit IV

In June, Svein Jorgensen and Floyd Cuevas travelled to Washington DC to attend this important conference, the theme of which was *Mobilizing Knowledge: Housing is HIV Prevention and Care*. Over the course of three days, the presentations explored the relationship between housing status and health outcomes for people living with and those at risk for HIV/AIDS leading to improved public health policy and services.

At the summit, the main presenter was the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN) whose mandate is to provide leadership and advance policy for the treatment and care of persons living with HIV in Ontario, Canada. A non profit funded by the AIDS Bureau, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, they serve as a network which develops partnerships with community-based AIDS service organizations and researchers from universities and hospitals and continues to be a great model for service providers in the US.

This year, presentations included housing as a factor in HIV prevention as well as a plenary session focused on unique barriers to HIV prevention and care faced specifically by women. Another important presentation was given regarding human rights associated with HIV travel and immigration, an issue that has been previously highlighted on the Praxis blog.

The National AIDS Housing Coalition has been sponsoring this event since its first Summit in June 2005 and is now considered the preeminent conference on HIV/AIDS housing policy in North America.

The Story of My Success Part II

Now we shall enter into part two of my success story at Praxis. My next encounter was with Mr. Allan Padilla (Caseworker). Similar to Ms. Daniels, Mr. Padilla was very patient and passionate about helping clients seek knowledge as well as gain success here in Praxis. Allan's discussion groups provided a wealth of knowledge for all that attended on various topics such as life skills, seeking and maintaining recovery, managing money and treatment adherence.

The thing that I like most about Mr. Padilla is the fact that he participates in our groups and lets the clients run them. He always says that he learns just as much from us that we learn from him. It was in one of his dynamic sessions that I heard about the Workforce Development Program and it was also in his group where I first heard the name Mr. Charles Lewis. Little did I know about the tremendous impact that Mr. Lewis would have on my life.

Part III coming next, the rebirth...

Part I of Ralph's story can be found on the Praxis Blog. Ralph Green is a Praxis Peer Educator and Guest Blogger.

Praxis Announces New CEO



Pictured: Svein Jorgensen

Praxis is pleased to announce that Svein Jorgensen has been named Praxis CEO by the Board of Directors.

"The Board of Directors felt it was important to promote from within as this is a key value for the agency. Svein has been an integral, essential part of Praxis for the past twelve years. His proven dedication to our clients and staff made him the ideal person to take on the role of CEO," said Praxis Chairperson Steve Warren.

Mr. Jorgensen is currently spearheading the purchase of the Lincoln Hotel in Brooklyn, the first

Praxis-owned site for transitional housing. Recently Praxis was awarded the NY/NY III grant by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for permanent supportive housing. Mr. Jorgensen has been leading the effort to identify land and develop a 40-unit building which will be the first Praxis-owned permanent supportive housing site.

Another Praxis Success Story...



Pictured: Ramon Valasquez

You might recognize Ramon Valasquez if you've ever attended a Praxis event. Or you might recognize him from our website as he's been featured in several of our videos. Ramon was a Praxis client who has continued to exceed society's expectations.

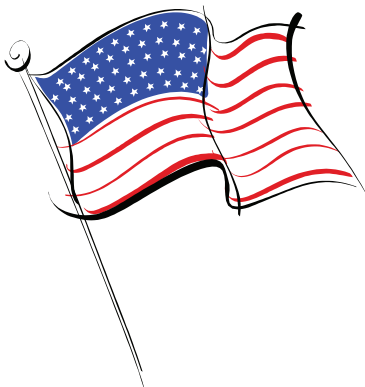
Ramon came to Praxis after spending 17 years in prison. During this time, Ramon began peer educating. "I wasn't arrested, I was rescued," Ramon likes to say. Through the prison PACE program, Ramon helped fellow inmates with their discharge planning, locating programs, and references to HASA.

When he was released in June 2007, Ramon was himself referred to a Praxis facility by HASA. While living at Praxis, Ramon continued to help those in similar situations. He was active in recruiting people for the Massage Therapy Program, and was a key volunteer in the voter registration drive at Praxis.

Ramon can tell you every significant date in his life- from the day he arrived at Praxis, to the day he got his own apartment, 20 November 2007, 2 days before Thanksgiving. He's been in the same apartment for nearly three years now and is Chairman of the Advisory Board of his residence, a supportive housing/ independent living facility located in Brooklyn.

"A lot of people are scared to change. It took me 14 years to change my life." Ramon has been sober for 19 years now. Initially diagnosed with HIV in 1984 and homeless, it took him until 1990 to get sober and to start getting healthy. Ramon personally knows the importance of treatment adherence. His own brother died from not maintaining his drug regimen. "It's important to take them the right way. If you stop taking them, it's like playing Russian roulette." Ramon has been HIV+ for 25 years.

Now, Ramon is working with Praxis as a Treatment Adherence Program Peer Educator at the St. Nicholas. "I want to stay with Praxis for what they did for me. I took from society and I want to give back." As a Peer Educator, Ramon helps clients obtain identification documents, educates them on their HASA rights, escorts clients to appointments, and advocates for clients. "If you can help one person, that's a good goal." Ramon knocks on the doors of rooms and encourages residents to take an active role in changing their lives. "One guy usually shoves people away, but the way I approach people, it made him sign up. It's important to listen, I don't take it personally." Ramon vows to continue helping people till the day he dies.



Brooklyn HIV Care Network

The Brooklyn HIV Care Network is having a General Meeting on Thursday, 23 July from 11:00am - 02:00pm. The meeting will be held in the Central Brooklyn Public Library located at 10 Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn, NY 11238. Lunch will be served from 11:00am - 12:00pm. To confirm your attendance, please contact Dana Burnett, Program Assistant at (718) 613-8138 or email dana.burnett@nychhc.org.

Thanks to Praxis resident/blog contributor Ian for the tip!

Praxis on the Web

Praxis is making its presence known on the internet. Not only is the blog updated regularly, but we've also set up a Facebook group, which you can find through a link at www.praxishousing.org. To contribute to the blog or even just post a photo, contact Manager of Communications, Inga Hyatt at ihyatt@praxishousing.org.