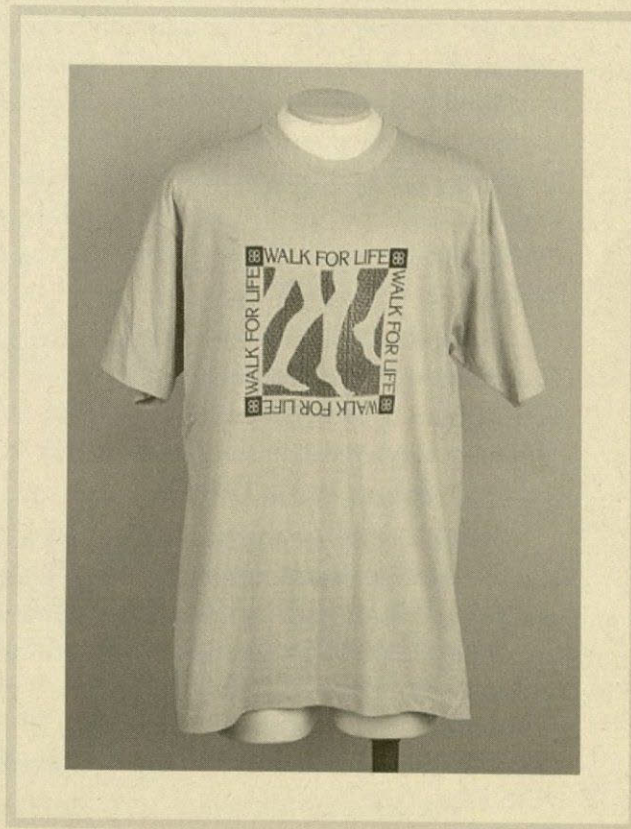


AIDS Service Foundation Archive
C. Stephen Metzler

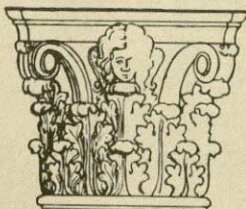
COMMUNITY CURATOR

A Project of the Kansas City Museum at Corinthian Hall



GLAMA Collection
AIDS WALK T shirts
Kansas City Museum Accession No. 2009.25
Gift of Mike Sugnet
Inclusive dates, 1988 - present

AIDS Service Foundation Archive
Kansas City Museum Accession No. 2011.xx
Gift of AIDS Service Foundation
Inclusive dates: 1992 - present



THE AIDS SERVICE FOUNDATION ARCHIVE HAS COME TOGETHER

as many such records do – over time, and somewhat unintentionally. These were the working files of a robust public service organization, saved with that purpose. But these papers, videotapes, photographs and files were not assembled as is commonly associated with museum collections. They were produced as the work product of a grass-roots health care not-for-profit and saved as corporate records, not made as singular works of incomparable quality or price. The meaning and value of such a collection derives from its cultural and social context. The AIDS Service Foundation Archive is important and interesting for what it evidences, not for what its elements intrinsically are.

This folder is an effort to present basic supporting evidence about how the Foundation came to be, and why the Archive is housed at Kansas City Museum. To do this requires some context of early AIDS activism in Kansas City. A full history of Kansas City's particular responses to HIV/AIDS awaits scholarly attention to the archives now kept by the Museum.

The AIDS Service Foundation and its satellite organizations are significant characters in the community for the past quarter century. The actions of the founders and present directors reflect national and international trends in approaches to managing HIV/AIDS. Any future story of Kansas City would be incomplete without including the tales of the Good Samaritan Project, Kansas City Free Health Clinic, HARC-Mart (replaced in this partnership by Hope Care Center in 2007), Save Home and the countless individuals who've contributed to the effort.

The AIDS Service Foundation Archive began with accession of a collection of AIDS Walk T-shirts assembled by Mike Sugnet. Objects like clothing do not function in isolation but in a cultural context populated by other related objects. The AIDS Walk T-shirts serve to remind us of the particular social climate that greeted those first walkers in 1988. They also document how AIDS advocacy has become more mainstream, as is recorded on the shirts in the logos and names of growing numbers of corporate and individual sponsors supporting the Walk.

Begun in 1988, AIDS WALK continues to be one of the primary and most public efforts to increase awareness of HIV/AIDS and to raise funds for direct services. 1988's Walk started at Frank A Theis Park near the Country Club Plaza and included under 100 walkers. The Kansas City Parks and Recreation department provided a portable sound stage, and funds raised were tallied telethon-style during the day. Participation in the Walk climbed as did the number of persons in Kansas City coping with AIDS – patients, caregivers and survivors.

AIDS WALK was originally titled "Walk for Life," partly in deference to changing realities of AIDS care. When the first Kansas City efforts were stirring in the early 1980's, through the Good Samaritan Project, near 100% mortality was

common owing to late diagnosis. As more and earlier diagnoses were received there was a marked shift from a "death watch" approach, and "AIDS victims" were re-christened "PWA's": Persons with AIDS, or described as Living with AIDS. "Walk for Life" was an affirmative rallying cry to the families and friends who urgently sought action in the face of a frightening new disease and its ravages in the community.

The growth of the Walk, and its evolving ideals, can be read in a brief survey of the images on the shirts and how these change over time. Initially the shirts were clustered with dynamic graphics illustrated in bright, engaging colors. This reflects the insistent hope pervading AIDS activism at the time. Lately images on the shirts have adopted a memorial function listing names of individuals who have fallen. Naturally more sobering than the originals, such a shift demonstrates participants' dogged determination in facing the fact that AIDS, while manageable, is still deadly, ongoing now for more than 30 years.

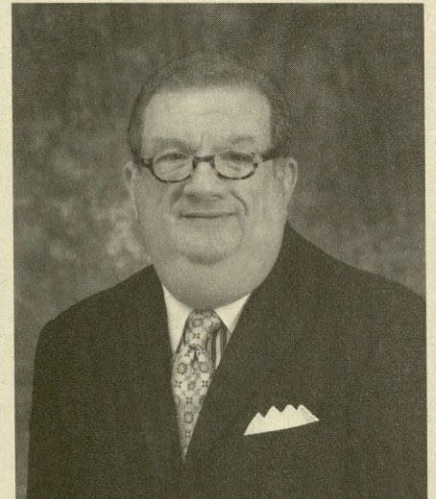
As the Walk grew in scale and impact, it began to be described as *the* AIDS Walk, and was renamed officially in 1995. AIDS Walk Kansas City is one of three allied charitable efforts, including the AIDS Bicycle Challenge and the World AIDS Day Week of Observances (which replaced the Ribbon of Hope annual dinners in 2005), organized under the AIDS Service Foundation of Greater Kansas City. The ASF raises money and awareness for organizations providing shelter, medical care and emergency services for the men, women and children in Kansas City affected by HIV/AIDS. Contributions to ASF benefit equally the Kansas City Free Health Clinic, SAVE Inc., Good Samaritan Project and Hope Care Center as well as the ASF Community Fund. The Fund awards grants to non-profits that service the specialized needs of those dealing with HIV/AIDS and/or promote education and prevention.

The AIDS Service Foundation Archive has found an important and very visible home at Kansas City Museum. ASF seeks, in partnership with the Museum, to preserve in perpetuity evidence of this community's response to one of the most dire health challenges of the 20th and 21st centuries.

(notes for this essay and about the history of AIDS care in Kansas City were provided by Michael Lintecum and the AIDS Service Foundation of Greater Kansas City. Recollections and remembrance of the early days of AIDS activism in Kansas City were provided through interview by Christopher Leitch with Michael Lintecum, Steve Metzler, Terry Newell and John Pinkerton.)

STEVE METZLER HAS A SPECIAL PLACE IN HIS HEART FOR KANSAS CITY. He was born, raised and lives here, and has never even entertained the thought of living somewhere else. His dedication to the city has compelled him to achieve great things as a civic leader, all while standing at the helm of his successful family business.

If Steve and the Metzler Brothers agency have a specialty area, it is their devotion to serving the community. Metzler Bros. insures over 90 local not-for-profits, meeting the insurance needs of agencies from the arts to community centers to those who serve people with HIV/AIDS. His personal altruism includes countless hours dedicated to organizations such as Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey, Aids Service Foundation of Greater Kansas City and the Kansas City Art Institute; serving on boards, planning and steering committees.



The Community Curator program of Kansas City Museum invites historians and history educators from the Kansas City community to share their perspectives on artifacts they choose from the Museum collection. Community Curator lectures are presented with the actual artifact presented along with the observations of our Community Curator.

All images courtesy Union Station Kansas City. Cover image: "Walk for Life" T-shirt, 1988

The AIDS Walk T-shirt Collection and the AIDS Service Foundation Archive are part of GLAMA: the Gay and Lesbian Archive of Mid-America, a collecting partnership that includes Kansas City Museum, the LaBudde Special Collections in the Miller Nichols Library at the University of Missouri in Kansas City and the Jackson County Historical Society.

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