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Report design by Rachel Schreiber
Fifteen years ago, a group of sex workers and their allies had a radical yet simple idea that would have manifold reverberations throughout political and healthcare landscapes. Rather than being the subjects of public health scrutiny and pathology, they posited: what if sex workers were to be the determiners of their own needs, and the agents of their own health and wellness? The idea was born out of a long and varied history of sex workers being treated as victims, pariahs, and problems in need of solving from a moral and criminal framework. The catalyst for the idea occurred when a sex worker called COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) from jail, having had her blood forcibly drawn by the SFDPH STD Prevention & Control unit. Led by Margo St. James, the resulting collaboration between COYOTE, the Exotic Dancers Alliance, City Clinic (SFDPH STD Prevention & Control), and UCSF, would birth the first Peer-Based Occupational Health & Safety Clinic for the sex worker community.

Fifteen years later, the St. James Infirmary has become an internationally recognized model for community-based healthcare, a leader in the global fight for sex worker rights, a hub of community organizing and advocacy, and a center of research and education for the general population. We've taught in universities and lectured to law enforcement, presented at conferences around the world, launched a ground breaking media campaign, and published three books. We've collaborated with dozens of organizations and won some hard fought policy victories.

23,000 clinic visits later, we still serve as the primary care provider of choice to many of our original community members while new community members come through our doors each week. We still provide gender-affirming informed-consent hormone replacement therapy under the supportive guidance of Chuck Cloniger. We still provide acupuncture and massage through our holistic services program. We still provide condoms, clean socks, syringes, and referrals to sex workers on the streets of the Mission, Tenderloin, and Polk. We still provide peer counseling, where sex workers can talk to other sex workers about whatever is going on in their lives. We still provide dinner and a movie, and community gathering space. We still cultivate a space of learning from one another, developing skills together, and creating jobs as service providers to one another. And we still do it all for free.

In honor of our 15-year anniversary, I hope you will enjoy the following report on our work. When you finish it, I hope you will imagine what we can do in the next fifteen. The history of the sex worker rights movement and the St. James Infirmary is a rich one. With the continued support of people like you, our momentum will gain in the quest for liberation from poverty, stigma, criminalization and harm, and towards rights, respect, and wellness.

In community,

Stephany Ashley
Executive Director
For the past seven years the St. James Infirmary had our very own Saint for an Executive Director (ED). "Saint Ho’s Up," as officially ordained by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, also known as Commissioner Akers, led us through the good times and the hard times, and made SJII what it is today. Naomi came to SJII in 1999 as a community member, and soon began volunteering, serving food and doing street outreach. Soon thereafter she became the Outreach Coordinator before landing in her leadership role as ED.

In addition to her successful hustle, Naomi brought us great political savvy, vision and guidance. In her time as ED, she published a health assessment of San Francisco Exotic Dancers, founded the RenegadeCast, which utilized social media as a health promotion tool for sex workers, and spearheaded the publication of the third edition of our Occupational Health & Safety Handbook.

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She served on the Sex Worker Global Working Group of UNAIDS, where she addressed the White House on International AIDS Day recommending meaningful participation of sex workers in research, program planning/evaluation, and policy work; the decriminalization of sex workers; and the removal of the anti-prostitution pledge required for countries and agencies receiving US HIV prevention funding (PEPFAR).
Naomi led us to recent victory in ending the practice of police confiscation and use of condoms as evidence of prostitution. She currently serves as a San Francisco Entertainment Commissioner, with the appropriately assigned badge number 415. While we are lessened by Naomi’s departure from the position of ED, we are thrilled to have our own personal Saint now serving on our Board of Directors.

Naomi with former SJI Administrative Assistant Malcolm Hamilton.

XV YEARS OF COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, City Clinic [SFDPH STD Prevention & Control], Desiree Alliance, DOPE [Drug Overdose Prevention & Education] Project, Glide, Harm Reduction Coalition, Human Rights Watch, Immune Enhancement Project, Mission Neighborhood Resource Center “Ladies Night,” National Reproductive Justice Network, New Leaf, Positive Directions, + SHE, San Francisco AIDS Foundation, San Francisco Sex Worker Film Festival, Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP), TGIJP [Transgender, Gender-variant & Intersex Justice Project], TRANS Thrive, UCSF, Walden House

Sex work is real work.

“Not all sex workers need to be saved. I’m a sex worker and I love my job.”
XV Years By the Numbers

23,228
Clinic visits.

3,500
Unique clinic participants.

+3,000
Transgender Health Visits.

+11,000
Hot meals served.

+5,000
Acupuncture & massage treatments.

1,000
Unique sex workers receiving healthcare services each year.

70%
Participants had never discussed sex work history in a healthcare setting prior to SJI.

65%
Participants who’ve self-identified as LGBT.

XV Years of…

Physical exams, evaluation & treatment of acute and chronic medical conditions such as asthma, skin conditions, respiratory infections, abdominal pain, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, anemia. Reproductive healthcare, gynecological & urological care. Pap smears, breast exams, colposcopies, testicular exams, & prescriptions. Contraceptive counseling, free birth control, emergency contraception, IUDs & Depo-Provera. Peer and mental health counseling. Wound & abscess care, vaccines & flu shots. Confidential counseling and testing for HIV, gonorrhea, chlamydia, herpes, hepatitis C & syphilis. Onsite treatment for gonorrhea, chlamydia, & syphilis. HIV & STI testing and counseling at Nob Hill Theatre, Eros, Ladies Night, 6th Street Syringe Exchange, Occupy SF, & Project Homeless Connect. Free meal night for LGBT homeless youth. Outreach and volunteer work at Folsom Street
Muni buses displaying de-stigmatizing messages about sex workers.

$18,000
Tuition assistance distributed.

~500
Healthcare professionals, students, and service providers trained by SJI each year.

9,182
Cute outfits acquired from our clothing closet.

+30,000
HIV tests.

+30,000
Outreach contacts made on the streets and in venues where sex workers work.

621,814
Syringes distributed.

Fair, Dore Alley Street Fair, Castro Street Fair, Transgender Health Fair. Peer counseling, risk reduction counseling & psychotherapy. Syringe access & disposal, overdose prevention training, Narcan distribution, satellite syringe exchange. Outreach to massage parlors, strip clubs, internet providers, street workers & SROs. Trainings & support groups offered onsite & at SF County Jail including legal advocacy, drugs & their effect on the body, self care & burnout prevention, sex work & the internet, know your rights, work smarter not harder, harm reduction during the holidays, violence prevention. Peer-based, informed-consent hormone replacement therapy and transgender healthcare services. Acupuncture, acupressure, craniosacral therapy, reiki, Swedish and deep tissue massage, trigger point therapy and Zen shiatsu. Community based research. Cultural competency training for service providers and healthcare professionals. Anti-stigma media campaigns. Publication of three editions of the Occupational Health & Safety Handbook. Political advocacy, community organizing and education.
“Someone You Know is a Sex Worker”

In keeping with our philosophy that social stigma contributes negatively to the health and wellness of sex workers, SJI launched a media campaign in collaboration with Rachel Schreiber and Barbara DeGenevieve. The campaign included ads on Muni buses that ran in October of 2012, and a series of posters and postcards. The goals of the campaign were to illustrate that sex workers are valued members of the community, that sex workers rights are human rights, that sex work is real work, deserving of labor rights. The campaign led to SJI being invited to consult the World Health Organization, in developing International guidelines on reducing violence against sex workers in the context of HIV.
No Condoms as Evidence

In many cities across the US, possession of condoms is used as evidence against sex workers to justify arrest for prostitution. The routine use of condoms as a tool to violate our basic human right to protect ourselves from HIV and sexually transmitted infections, as well as prevent unwanted pregnancies, is unjust and counter to sound public health. Prior to 2013, San Francisco was one of the many cities using condoms as evidence of prostitution and related charges. For nearly 7 years, the St. James Infirmary urged City Officials to cease this practice. As a result of a collaboration between Human Rights Watch, the Human Rights Commission, and the SF AIDS Office, in April 2013 the SFPD and the DA agreed to not use condoms as evidence of soliciting or loitering in prostitution related cases. This is a huge victory for our community.

Occupational Health & Safety Handbook

In an effort to disseminate knowledge and resources within our community, SJI continues to publish the only Occupational Health & Safety Handbook for sex workers. The 3rd edition of the handbook contains 300 pages of information on harm reduction, health, safety and legal rights, along with information on 720 local, national and international resources relevant to the lives of sex workers. The book is distributed to sex workers during outreach, and is available for free download on our website. Health care professionals, professors, and social workers have heralded it as a uniquely valuable resource in understanding the health needs of sex workers.

December 17th

Each year on December 17th, SJI participates in events held to commemorate International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers. The red umbrella, the international symbol of sex worker activism and solidarity, is used during these events. In San Francisco, SJI community members join the international sex worker community in holding a vigil to remember the sex workers who have lost their lives to violence and to speak out against this violence. The names of sex workers who have died are shared throughout the community and read during this vigil. These vigils serve to remind us of our fallen friends and to remind the world around us that we are human and that we deserve protection, justice, and rights.
XV Years of Gratitude to:

Heart Agrimony Photography | Naomi Akers | Gina Alexander
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Orchestra

Heart Ron Braverman
Heart Terrance and Nancy Brennand
Heart Paul Brenner MD
Heart Stivalletta Brett
Heart Donald Breyer | Johanna Breyer | Robert Brixy | Sarah Bromberg | Eric Bruckner | Terry Brumbaugh | R. Buchner | Colleen Buggs | Vern Bullough | John Burton | Jonathan F. Bushnell | California Family Health
Heart Greg Callahan | Mahealani Campbell
Heart Richard Carlie and Joe Gonzales | Carol Leigh Productions | Joseph Carouba | Jeremy Carroll | William A. Caston III | Cedars Sinai Medical Center | Celeste & Danielle
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Heart F. Brawnmeier & Susan Greer | Pratima Gupta | The Soper-Gupta Family
Heart Jessica Higgins | Michael Hill | Spiros Hinz
Heart Yvette Hirth | Hot Desert Knights Inc. | House of Babes
Heart I Wicked Love | Imperial Council Of San Francisco Inc.
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Heart Kelly Gutierrez | Daisy Ha | Jae Koo
“St. James is a wonderful place: a hot meal, non-judgmental counseling, acupuncture, massage, and psychiatric care, not to mention some of the best preventative health care I have ever had. St. James, you make me feel all warm and fuzzy inside, like there is love enough for everyone in the world.” —Participant, 2008


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