

UNITED IN GRATITUDE & ACTION



Welcome to the 4th Quarter Newsletter!

As we enter the final quarter of 2024, we reflect on the spirit of gratitude that comes with the holiday season. At Open Door Health Center of Illinois, we are incredibly thankful for the support of our volunteers, sponsors, and community members. Your generosity has allowed us to continue providing essential services such as education, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment for those impacted by or at risk of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, while also supporting the LGBTQ+ community.

This season, we invite you to join us in celebrating the important work Open Door does by attending one of our upcoming events. On November 17th, we're hosting the Chocolate Drop Drag Benefit Brunch, a fun and lively event featuring six fabulous performers, a delicious brunch, and a signature Chocolate Martini. We're also proud to be raising awareness for

HIV and AIDS in the Latinx community at our National Latinx HIV & AIDS Awareness Day celebration on October 15th, followed by our World AIDS Day Celebration on November 23rd.

As the year comes to a close, we are reminded that this work is only possible because of the support from individuals like you. Your contributions help us continue our mission of providing vital healthcare services, raising awareness, and combating stigma. We encourage you to consider making a donation this Giving Tuesday on December 3rd to ensure that Open Door can continue serving the community.

Thank you for being a part of our journey and for helping us make a difference in the lives of those we serve. We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events and celebrating the impact we've made together.

Upcoming Events

National Latinx HIV & AIDS Awareness Day Celebration
October 15th from 6 PM - 9 PM
Casa Michoacan
340 Grand Blvd, Elgin, IL 60120

Halloween Bowling Party
Sunday, Oct 27th, 1:00-4:00 PM
St. Charles Bowl
2520 W. Main St, St. Charles, IL

2024 Chocolate Drop Drag Benefit Brunch
November 17th from 11 AM - 1:30 PM
The Highland Loft Event Venue
168 E Highland Ave, Elgin IL 60120

World AIDS Day Celebration
November 23rd from 12 PM : 3 PM
Casa Michoacan
900 Roosevelt Rd, West Chicago, IL 60185

Giving Tuesday
December 3rd
Donate to Open Door

CAB Holiday Party
December 14th
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
330 Griswold Street, Elgin IL, 60123

For the events in underlined, registration is required. To register, please click [HERE](#).



From the Executive Director

So much has happened since we last chatted. Summer has come and gone. Now we are looking forward to our end of the year activities. Open Door continues to be your "go to" organization for prevention and education needs regarding sexually transmitted infections

I want to send a shout out to Denika McMillen, who was recently recognized for her ongoing commitment to the LGBTQIA+ community from Naper Pride. We're so fortunate that she came to Open Door to revitalize our behavioral health services.

We're proud to announce a new provider, Tom Torrez. Tom did an internship with us and said yes, when we reached out with a job offer. He will work out of our Elgin location. Amauri joined us recently as the Medical Assistant in Elgin. Our long-term supporter, Danise, received her own honor of distinction from Elgin Community College. We are truly blessed with greatness.

Some of you were with me at the 2024 AIDS Run/Walk. I am grateful for all those individuals and organization who continue to fight the good fight. I have known some of you for many years, and you continue to inspire me. Your words of wisdom and compassion make me a better person. This weekend I felt energized hearing the stories from my sister and brother walkers.

One of the first people I met through my work at Open Door was Norma. She took me under her wing and helped me navigate through the diverse service lines funded by the Chicago Department of Public Health and the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. When Open Door was in a pinch, she was the first person I reached out to. She was there when I needed her. Love and hugs to you, Norma.

In the coming months, we will be busy. In October we have a Halloween Bowling event and a Latinx HIV/AIDS awareness program. Did I mention Chocolate? November 17th, we will be hosting our first Chocolate Drop Drag Brunch? We couldn't pull off a full on All Things Chocolate event, so we are starting small. I hope to see you there. Also, in November, specifically the 23rd, we will be having a World AIDS Day program with our friends at Casa Michoacan.

Make sure you have your Twitter feeds going on the December 1st to hear from supporters of Open Door. Giving Tuesday is December 3rd, and I hope you are in a giving mode to send us a donation. Our client Advisory Board is hosting a holiday party on December 14th. All these events can be found on our website and are included in this newsletter.

If you find yourself around, stop in and say hello. If I don't see you, remember to vote and have a great holiday season and I will catch up with you in 2025.

Perry Maier

NAPER PRIDE DIRECTOR'S AWARD RECIPIENT



**Denika McMillen,
LCSW**

Congratulations to Denika McMillen!

Open Door is proud to recognize and congratulate Denika McMillen, our Behavioral Health Therapist, for receiving the prestigious Naper Pride Director's Award at the 2024 Naper Pride Fest. This award highlights Denika's outstanding service, dedication, and leadership in supporting the LGBTQ+ community. We are honored to have such a compassionate and dedicated individual as part of our team at Open Door. Congratulations, Denika, on this well-deserved recognition!

Board Talk

After being diagnosed with HIV/AIDs in 2011, Terry became a patient with Open Door Health Center of IL, an organization he credits with saving his life. Terry initially joined the Board of Directors in 2017, took a hiatus from his board work in 2019 and rejoined the Board in June 2023. Terry has been able to bring his unique perspective as a client to creating the framework for the organization's strategic vision and growth. Terry has led the way in fundraising on behalf of the Open Door Health Center and the AIDS Foundation of Chicago during the annual AIDS Walk and Run events. Terry

has walked in AIDS events in New York as well. Splitting his time between Chicagoland and New York, Terry has maintained an active presence in both geographic regions through his art gallery, Ross Contemporary, and his CPR/AED/Lifeguard training company, Second City CPR Training. Terry's artists frequently donate their work to raise funds for AIDS/HIV and LGBTQ+ causes. In addition to operating both businesses and volunteering with Open Door Health Center of IL, Terry managed to find time to work on the 2020 presidential campaign of then candidate Michael

Bloomberg. Terry has been an ardent advocate, making sure that all voices are heard. Terry currently resides in Carol Stream, IL

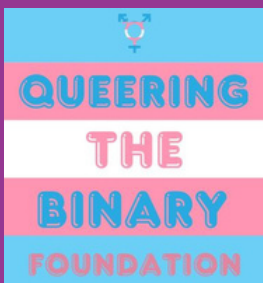


*Terry Ruggio Ross
Member at Large
Board of Directors*

Organization Spotlight

This quarter, we would like to spotlight Queering The Binary Foundation, an organization dedicated to supporting transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming individuals across Illinois. The foundation collects donations of clothing, accessories, and beauty products for individuals aged 7-80+, providing pop-up closets and donation boxes for the trans/GNC community to shop for free. For others, a "pay what you can" model is used, serving as their primary form of fundraising. Beyond clothing, Queering The Binary hosts private parties, craft and community nights, and educational webinars on gender and sexuality. They also offer end-of-life services, make deliveries, and help create trans closets, fostering inclusion and support throughout the community.

For more information visit:
<https://queeringthebinary.org/>



Employee Spotlight

Thomas Torres joined the staff of Open Door Health Center of IL in June 2024. Originally working as an intern with ODHC in 2023, Thomas was "inspired" to return to the Center as a Nurse Practitioner. Thomas has found great meaning in his role, stating, "Being a new provider in the community where I grew up is truly a blessing. The opportunity to give back and help improve healthcare standards is beyond my wildest dreams."



*Thomas Torres
Nurse Practitioner*

Thomas is excited to embrace the mission and values of Open Door in his interactions with patients and community members. As he grows in his new role, he hopes to increase his leadership and accountability within the organization.

Looking to the future, Thomas is confident that with the excellent staff at Open Door, the organization will continue to adapt to meet the evolving needs of the community. Through teamwork, he believes they will maintain high standards of practice and achieve optimal healthcare outcomes for our patients.

On a personal note, Thomas is recently married and is open to any and all suggestions on how to maintain a long and happy marriage.

Welcome, Thomas. We're so glad you're here!

Gratitude during the Holiday Season

As the holiday season begins, we take time to reflect on all we are grateful for. At Open Door Health Center of Illinois, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the volunteers, sponsors, and supporters who have helped us fulfill our mission in 2024. Your contributions have enabled us to provide education, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment services for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, especially to those in the LGBTQ+ community.

Gratitude has been shown to improve health, happiness, and resilience. As you gather with loved ones, take a moment to express appreciation for those who have supported and inspired you. Small acts of gratitude—whether in conversation or through practices like journaling—can make a big difference in well-being.

We are deeply thankful for your support and look forward to continuing our mission together.



Maintaining Mental Health During the Holiday Season

The holiday season can bring joy but also significant stress, especially for those managing mental health challenges. According to a NAMI study, 64% of people with mental illness feel the holidays worsen their conditions. Stress can trigger symptoms of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and depression, making it essential to prioritize mental health.

To cope, NAMI suggests:

- Set boundaries and accept your needs
- Practice gratitude and maintain a balanced schedule
- Engage in relaxation techniques and daily exercise
- Prioritize self-care, healthy eating, and sleep

- Avoid alcohol and drugs
- Spend time in nature and volunteer to connect with your community
- Seek support from friends, family, or mental health professionals if overwhelmed

By incorporating these practices, individuals can better manage holiday stress and protect their mental well-being.

NAMI California. (n.d.). Maintaining mental health during the holiday season. Retrieved from [NAMI California website](https://www.namicalifornia.org/maintaining-mental-health-during-the-holiday-season/)



National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day

October 15 is National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day (NLAAD). NLAAD was first observed in 2003 by the [Hispanic Federation](#) and the [Latino Commission on AIDS](#) (LCOA). NLAAD is an opportunity to help address the disproportionate impact of HIV in Hispanic/Latinx communities, promote HIV testing, and stop HIV stigma.

This observance is also a community mobilization effort that helps promote effective ways to prevent, treat, and stop the transmission of HIV among Hispanic/Latinx people.

The NLAAD 2024 campaign

brings together communities, service providers, and organizations providing services to Hispanics/Latinxs throughout the U.S. and territories under one theme: "Start Treatment. Stick to It. Get Better." This year's campaign is directed at the entire community but focused on people who live with HIV. The campaign urges them to choose one of the many treatment options to maintain their health, reach undetectable viral load and do not pass the virus to others (treatment as prevention).

This year, the LCOA is hosting a NLAAD webinar series. The

webinars are open to everyone. The sessions will include time for Q & A's and the recordings will be posted on the NLAAD website. All webinars will provide interpretation in Spanish. Review the webinar list and register now to take part in these important conversations. For more information on NLAAD events and resources, visit www.nlaad.org.

[\(n.d.\)](http://HIV.gov), National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day. Retrieved from <https://www.hiv.gov/events/awareness-days/latino>



15%

of Latinos living with HIV DO NOT KNOW they have it



Latinos who are unaware cannot take advantage of HIV treatment and may unknowingly transmit HIV to others.

Raising Awareness for HIV and AIDS in the Latinx Community

At Open Door, we are dedicated to raising awareness and providing vital services to those impacted by HIV and AIDS within the Latinx community. This October, we are proud to host a special event in honor of National Latinx HIV & AIDS Awareness Day.

Join us on October 15th at Casa Michoacan in Elgin, IL from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. for an evening of inspiration, empowerment, and community support. The event will feature personal stories from individuals living with HIV and AIDS, a warm meal shared together, and an empowering presentation by Angie Holgin on overcoming challenges. In addition, we will offer free on-site HIV

and STI testing.

This is a chance to learn more about Open Door's role in supporting the community, as well as the importance of early diagnosis and treatment. We encourage all community members to attend, be inspired, and take advantage of this opportunity to learn and get tested.

There is no fee to attend, but registration is required. Scan the QR code on the flyer or click [HERE](#) to register and join us in our mission to combat HIV and AIDS in the Latinx community. Together, we can make a difference.

OPEN DOOR PRESENTS:
NATIONAL LATINX
HIV & AIDS AWARENESS DAY CELEBRATION

15th October	Casa Michoacan 340 Grand Blvd Elgin, IL 60120 6 - 9 p.m.
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WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Learn about Open Door's vital role in supporting our community.
- Hear powerful stories from individuals living with HIV and AIDS.
- Enjoy a delicious, warm meal with us.
- Be inspired by a special presentation from Angie Holgin on Inspiration and Empowerment.
- Take advantage of free, on-site HIV and STI testing.

EVENT SPONSORS

There is no fee for this event. However, registration is required. To register, please scan the QR Code

Community Resource Highlight: Casa Michoacán

At Open Door, we believe in connecting our community with valuable resources. This month, we are proud to highlight Casa Michoacán, a cultural and educational center established by the Federation of Michoacan Clubs in Illinois (FEDECMI). Founded in 1996 and officially launched as Casa Michoacán in 2004, this non-profit organization is dedicated to improving the lives of Michoacans and the broader Mexican and immigrant communities on both sides of the border.

Casa Michoacán offers a wide range of services, including:

- Cultural Events: From traditional dances to art exhibitions and gastronomic events, Casa Michoacán celebrates and promotes Michoacan culture.

- Educational Support: Programs for primary and secondary school certification, as well as guitar courses and computer classes, help foster personal and professional growth.
- Medical Cards and Food Coupons: Assistance for those in need.
- Civil Registry Documentation: Issuance of birth certificates, repatriation of remains, and other civil registry services.
- Free Legal Advice: Available to community members.

Locations:

- Chicago: 1638 S. Blue Island Ave.
◦ Phone: (312) 491-9317
- West Chicago: 900 E Roosevelt Rd
◦ Phone: 630-520-3482



- Carbondale: 1827 West Main Street
◦ Phone: (618) 457-0055
- Elgin: 340 Grand Blvd
◦ Phone: 630-480-6628

For more information, visit fedecmiusa.org or contact them directly to learn about the incredible services they provide.

DONATE CLOTHES, CHANGE LIVES!

**1-30
NOVEMBER**

DROP OFF YOUR
DONATIONS AT :



**Open Door
Elgin & Aurora
Clinic Lobby**



Fall Clothing Donation Drive

This November, Open Door is hosting a Fall Clothing Drive in support of Queering the Binary Foundation, an organization that provides free clothing and essentials to transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming individuals.

Donation bins will be set up in the lobby of our Elgin and Aurora clinic locations from November 1st to 30th. Items needed include:

- Clothing for all genders and teens
- Wigs, shoes, bags, and accessories
- Chest binders, tucking panties, and undergarments
- Beauty and hygiene products

Support this important cause by donating and helping to empower the community. Learn more at queeringthebinary.org or scan the QR code on the flyer.

Chocolate Drop Drag Benefit Brunch – November 17th

Join us for a fabulous and fun-filled event at Open Door's Chocolate Drop Drag Benefit Brunch, hosted by the one and only Moana Lotte! This exciting event will take place on November 17th from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at The Highland Loft Event Venue in Elgin, IL.

What can you expect?

- Six incredible drag performers
- A delicious brunch
- A complimentary signature Chocolate Martini

This is an event you won't want to miss! If you like, come dressed as your favorite diva and enjoy a morning of entertainment and celebration in support of Open Door Health Center of Illinois.

Tickets are selling fast, so secure yours today! Tables of 8 are also available for purchase, so gather your friends and enjoy this incredible event together. Scan the QR code on the flyer or [CLICK HERE](#) to purchase your tickets and be part of this amazing event.

Sponsorship opportunities are still available! For more information, please contact Danise Habun at (847) 754-8064 or dhabun@msn.com.



Thank You

TO OUR COCOA BEAN RAFFLE BASKET SPONSORS: \$250



Support Open Door this Giving Tuesday – December 3, 2024

Giving Tuesday is a global day of giving, held annually on the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving. This year, on December 3, 2024, we invite you to join the movement and support Open Door Health Center of Illinois.

Your generous donations help us continue providing vital services such as education, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment for those affected by or at risk of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. We are also proud

to support the greater LGBTQ+ community in their healthcare needs.

Keep an eye on our social media platforms as we'll be sharing special video clips that show the impact of your contributions and how your support drives our mission forward.

This Giving Tuesday, help us make a difference by donating and empowering our community to stay healthy and informed.



SAVE THE DATE



WORLD AIDS DAY CELEBRATION

“Put people first!”

November 23rd from 12 PM : 3 PM

Casa Michoacan
900 Roosevelt Rd, West Chicago, IL 60185

[Click Here to Register](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT MARCOS BOSTHO
@ (847) 508-9358 OR MARCOSB@ODHCIL.ORG

CLIENT ADVISORY BOARD

The Client Advisory Board cordially invites clients & staff, friends & family to:

Social Events:

Halloween Bowling Party

Sunday, Oct 27th, 1:00-4:00 PM
St. Charles Bowl
2520 W. Main St, St. Charles, IL

Holiday Party

Saturday, Dec 14th, 3:00-6:00 PM
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
330 Griswold Street, Elgin, IL

[Click here to register](#)

Need groceries? The Rx Mobile distribution can help. Food is free to all neighbors; no ID, proof of address or income is required. Food is distributed on a first come, first served basis, while supplies last.

Where:
Community Health Partnership
157 S. Lincoln Ave
Aurora, IL 60505

4:30 pm- 6:00 pm

When:
Monday, October 7
Monday, November 4
Monday, December 2



CHP
Community Health Partnership of Illinois
HEALTH CENTERS

WWW.CHPOFIL.ORG

CLIENTS!

WE NEED YOUR PARTICIPATION

Please complete a Client Participation Form after receiving service. Forms may be obtained at the front desk or through your Case Manager. Completed forms are placed in a monthly lottery. Winners will receive a \$25 gift card. Thank you!

Fall Festivities and Fun with the Client Advisory Board (CAB)

by Louis Hobson

President - Client Advisory Board
Open Door Health Center of IL

Hello everyone, and Happy Fall!

Open Door's Client Advisory Board (CAB) has been busy and we're excited to share what we've been up to!

We had a fantastic time at the Annual Picnic on August 17th, which saw a wonderful turnout this year. The CAB provided delicious food and drinks, while attendees enjoyed games like volleyball, cornhole, and bingo. We also held a raffle with great prizes, adding to the fun!

Looking ahead, our next event is a Halloween-themed Bowling Party on October 27th at the St. Charles Bowl. We encourage everyone to come in costume, as the CAB will be awarding prizes for the top three costumes! Space is limited, so be sure to register early on our website to secure your spot—those who register in advance will bowl first!

We're also preparing for our Holiday Party at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Elgin, Illinois, located at 330 Griswold Street. The party will take place on December 14th from 3-7 PM and will feature food, games, and more exciting prizes! Registration is now open on the Open Door website, so make sure to sign up before spots fill up.

We look forward to seeing you at these upcoming events!

Best regards,
Louis A. Hobson

opendoor
Health Center of Illinois

CAB
CLIENT ADVISORY BOARD

HALLOWEEN BOWLING PARTY
October 27th, 2024
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Join us for a spooktacular time at our Client Advisory Board's Halloween-themed Bowling Party on October 27th, 2024, from 1-3 PM at St. Charles Bowl in St. Charles, IL! Enjoy free entry, complimentary shoe rental, and a frightfully fun afternoon of bowling. We encourage all attendees to get into the spirit of the season by dressing in their best Halloween costumes. Don't forget to register beforehand to secure your spot for this fantastic event!

SCAN THE QR CODE TO RSVP

St. Charles Bowl
2520 W Main Street,
St. Charles, IL

For More Info
Visit Our Website
www.odhcil.org
Call or text Carmen Earsery
(331) 222-6062

opendoor
Health Center of Illinois

CAB
CLIENT ADVISORY BOARD

HOLIDAY PARTY
December 14th, 2024
3:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
330 Griswold St, Elgin, IL 60123

There is no fee for this event. However, registration is required. To register, please scan the QR Code

For more information: Visit our website www.odhcil.org Call or text Carmen Earsery (331) 222-6062