

NEWSLETTER

EMBRACING HOPE

SPRING EDITION 2025

Welcome to the 2nd Quarter 2025 Edition of the Open Door Health Center of Illinois Newsletter!

This quarter, we're embracing hope: Hope for healthier communities, brighter futures, and compassionate care for all. At Open Door, we believe that hope fuels healing, and we remain dedicated to providing comprehensive, patient-centered care that uplifts individuals and families.

FROM WINTER TO SPRING

For more than 48 years, Open Door has been a source of hope and healing for the Fox Valley region and beyond. We are dedicated to fostering a future where everyone has access to inclusive, compassionate care. By breaking down barriers and bridging healthcare gaps, we strive to create a healthier, more equitable community where hope thrives and well-being flourishes.

NATIONAL MONTH OF HOPE

At Open Door Health Center of Illinois, we believe that hope is a powerful force in the journey toward health and wellbeing. During the National Month of Hope, we want to emphasize the importance of resilience, support, and access to care, especially for those managing chronic conditions like HIV and AIDS. Hope is not just a feeling; it is found in action, in the ability to access essential medical services, mental health resources, and programs like PrEP and insurance navigation. By ensuring our patients have the tools they need to stay undetectable and healthy, we offer more than just medical care, we provide the reassurance that a brighter future is possible. With the unwavering support of our community partners, we will continue to stand as a source of hope, empowerment, and healing for all who walk through our doors.



FREE STI TESTING

MONDAYS 9 AM-4 PM

FREE STI TESTING

ELGIN OFFICE

1665 LARKIN AVE.

TUESDAYS 9 AM-4 PM

FREE STI TESTING

AURORA OFFICE

157 S LINCOLN AVE.

The National Month of Hope occurs every April, symbolizing renewal and new beginnings. As spring brings new life after winter, it reminds us that no matter our hardships, a fresh start and brighter future are possible. April was designated as National Month of Hope in 2018 by Mothers in Crisis to convey the importance of hope around the world.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

From the Executive Director: A Season of Hope
Happy Spring! Even with snow on the first day, there's a feeling of renewal in the air—and at Open Door, there's much to celebrate. We held three powerful events during the 1st quarter honoring Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, Women and Children HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, and Trans Day of Visibility. Thank you to all who made them meaningful.

We welcomed a new full-time nurse practitioner (formerly an intern!)—a sign of hope for continued, compassionate care. I'm inspired daily by the stories of those living with HIV who bravely share their journeys. You are the heartbeat of our mission.

This issue centers on hope for health, access, equity, and each other. As Christopher Reeve said, "Once you choose hope, anything is possible." Please consider joining us as a volunteer—we need you. And remember when someone falls or feels lost, may we be the ones to offer a hand. That is my hope.



perrym@opendoorclinic.org



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PERRY MAIER



@ODHCIL.ORG



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HOPE



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

After volunteering with Open Door Health Center of Illinois for several years, Jamie Venson joined the staff of the organization in 2024. Hired as a Community Health Navigator, Jamie sees his role as one that allows him to connect communities of people with the care and services they need to live long, healthy lives.

Jamie came to Open Door because of his personal desire to do something selfless in an effort to help support others. He sees a greater need in the community for the services that Open Door Health Center provides and an opportunity to be a liaison between the community and Open Door Health Center. According to Jamie, "My goal is to remain client-focused and available when people need me. I also want to continue to meet people where they are and remain free from judgement. Looking toward the future, Jamie Venson's hope is that Open Door will be committed to putting resources into the communities most affected by stigma, discrimination, and systematic barriers to care and services. He hopes Open Door will listen to the voices of the communities they serve and make sure the organization is available with the resources needed.

Jamie describes his "biggest accomplishment" thus far as becoming a licensed rapid HIV and HCV tester along with all the knowledge about the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community and the education about the medications and services that help individuals living with diseases receive the help and support they need.

If you see Jamie out and about in the community, be sure to stop him and say hi. Open Door is so glad he is part of our staff.



STAFF SPOTLIGHT
JAMIE VENSON



@ODHCIL



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BOARD TALK

Dr. Filmore joined the Board of Directors in June 2023 and began his term as Treasurer in 2025. He has been a client of Open Door since the 1990s and, because he is “living a very different life now”, he is looking to give back. Dr. Filmore’s vision for Open Door is that the organization will be thriving, and that the Aurora location will finally have a beautiful new home to match its sister branch in Elgin! Dr. Filmore intends to utilize all his skills, talents, education, experience, and social capital/resources to help make ODHCI the leading Queer and Trans-affirming Social Service agency in Illinois.

Dr. Filmore wants the public to know his past is one filled with addiction, sex trafficking, forced sex work, homelessness, a plethora of crime and criminal activity, and finally prison but that was not the end of his story. Dr. Filmore currently is a Professor with Antioch University New England (online Master Counseling program), a Clinical Family Therapist with Footprints to Recovery (Elgin), a Clinical Therapist with The Filmore Foundation (online private practice) and a Drag Queen & President, Drag Is Art, LLC. He currently lives in DeKalb, IL.

IMPORTANCE OF A BOARD

A Board of Directors is essential to Open Door Health Center of Illinois, providing strategic leadership, oversight, and accountability to uphold our mission. Their expertise in healthcare, finance, and advocacy helps expand services, secure funding, and ensure ethical governance. With their guidance, Open Door continues to grow, adapt, and make a lasting impact on those who rely on us for care and support.

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BOARD SPOTLIGHT
DR. JOEL FILMORE
TREASURER



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HOPE

CLIENT ADVISORY BOARD

AIDSWATCH 2025

This year's AIDSWatch was held in Washington DC March 30-April 1. This is like the Super Bowl of HIV Advocacy! People from all 50 states, and some territories, attend this event every year. This year's gathering didn't disappoint.

With the political scene in Washington being "less than perfect", advocacy is especially important. Some of the hot button issues included:

- **Ryan White:** This is one of the main programs that covers vital HIV care for those who can't afford it.
- **ADAP-**This is the AIDS Drug Assistance Program. This vital program pays for the medications that keep us healthy.
- **Aging-**Many people who are Positive are of a certain age and have been living with the virus for decades! Now many are facing age related issues that can be worsened by HIV. This is a developing area, and more research needs to be done.

This year Open Door sent two Representatives to AIDSWatch 2025. They enjoyed the events, and the people they met. We're looking forward to sending more people in the future!



KAREN SMITH

*PICTURED AT AIDSWATCH
IN WASHINGTON DC.*



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HOPE

OUR VOLUNTEERS COME THROUGH

**OUR VOLUNTEERS ALWAYS COME THROUGH!
THANK YOU FROM ALL OF US AT OPEN DOOR**

April is National Volunteer Appreciation month. Open Door would like to take some time to reflect on everything our volunteers do to help our staff, our clients, and our community. Our volunteers come from all different walks of life but have one thing in common. They want to help make a difference in the lives of our clients who rely on Open Door for their medical, case management, housing, and behavioral therapy needs.

There are a variety of ways that volunteers help Open Door. Most of our volunteers help at community events. In 2025, volunteers have helped at our African American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day event, Empower Her-National Women & Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day event, and most recently, Open Door's Trans Day of Visibility: Empowering Trans Voices Event. Other volunteers help at testing events or assist with editing our publications.

Others provide translation services.

If you'd like to help us in our mission and would like to find out more about our volunteering opportunities, please visit our website at www.odhcil.org and click 'Get in Touch.' We will then reach out to you to set up a time to discuss volunteer opportunities that work for you. With hundreds of precious hours volunteered each year, Open Door Health Center of Illinois truly couldn't do it all without our wonderful volunteers!



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT ANA ESPINOZA

Our volunteers have stories to tell. Here's the story of Ana Espinoza. Ana worked as a psychologist for over 20 years under the HIV/STI prevention programs in Mexico and provided behavioral health services for people living with HIV/AIDS. Ana began volunteering with Open Door in the summer of 2021. She has helped with various events and has given presentations in Spanish about mental health and HIV Awareness to diverse community groups. Ana states, "I was very interested in continuing to support people living with HIV in America, as their condition is one where they face stigma and discrimination in the current society. Volunteering with Open Door has given me the opportunity to learn more about how to prevent sexually transmitted infections, and at the same time, share this information with my community and reduce the number of people living with HIV."

**Thank you, Ana, from the bottom of our hearts.
Open Door is grateful for your work on our behalf.
We are better because of you!**

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HOPE

OPEN DOOR 1ST QUARTER EVENTS

OPEN DOOR
PRESENTS:

TRANS DAY OF VISIBILITY EVENT



ARON RYAN



ESO STRINGS



JEFFREY WRIGHT



SPECTRA

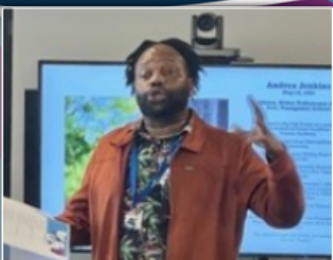


SWEETIE



KAREN MCREADY

NATIONAL BLACK HIV AWARENESS DAY EVENT



JAMIE VENSON



LEE KID

EMPOWER HER EVENT



CLELITA MATHOLE FROM
GILEAD SCIENCE &
MARCOS BOSTHO

GILEAD SCIENCE WAS A
\$5000 SPONSOR OF THE
EVENT

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HOPE

UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE

**APRIL
MAY**

APRIL & MAY EVENTS

FREE HIV TESTING

APRIL 23RD 12 PM-3 PM
AURORA UNIVERSITY

CELEBRATION OF ASIAN PACIFIC HERITAGE

MAY 17TH 1 PM- 3 PM
GAIL BORDEN LIBRARY
270 GROVE ST. ELGIN, IL

PRIDE MONTH EVENTS

QUEERLY BELOVED

JUNE 4TH 7 PM-9 PM
THE CENTRE OF ELGIN

ELGIN PRIDE PARADE

JUNE 7TH 9 AM-3 PM
FESTIVAL PARK ELGIN

AURORA PRIDE PARADE

JUNE 8TH 9 AM-3 PM
AURORA, IL

NATIONAL HIV TEST DAY

JUNE 27TH 10 AM-3 PM
THREE WALGREENS

9 N. UNION ST.
AURORA

100 LINCOLN
HIGHWAY
DEKALB

13 E. IRVING
PARK ROAD
STREAMWOOD