



# COLORS OF CARE

*TAKING PRIDE IN AUTHENTICITY AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL  
AT HOLY CROSS HEALTH*



HOLY CROSS HEALTH'S  
**LGBTQIA+**  
NEWSLETTER

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# FROM THE EDITOR: Embracing Diversity through *Colors of Care*

BY CANDACE BUSTAMANTE, BSN, RN, BSc

I am delighted to welcome you to the inaugural issue of *Colors of Care*—Holy Cross Health's first LGBTQ+ newsletter. Our mission is to foster inclusivity, wellness, and a sense of belonging for all within our Holy Cross community. In this newsletter, you will find insights from Holy Cross voices, patient care strategies, and practical tips on mental health, spiritual growth, and self-care. We'll also spotlight community initiatives and provide ways for you to make a meaningful difference. A special focus will be on LGBTQ+ health, addressing barriers to care, and healthcare disparities, as well as showcasing how Holy Cross is working to bridge those gaps.

At Holy Cross Health, our commitment to diversity and equity is rooted in our Catholic values of reverence, justice, and safety. This summer, we proudly earned the distinguished "LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality High Performer" designation from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a recognition of our mission to be a compassionate and transformative healing presence for all. As healthcare providers, we are called to create spaces where every person feels safe, respected, and valued—caring for the human being before us with humility and without judgment. Inclusive care, like that at Holy Cross, is essential for holistic well-being and positively impacts both patients and colleagues.

At a time when our world can feel divided, we are reminded of the power of community. As Harvey Milk once said, "Hope will never be silent." The resilience and strength of the LGBTQ+ community inspire us all, even in the face of adversity. Recent milestones, such as historic LGBTQ+ representation in the November elections, highlight the progress being made. Leaders like Sarah McBride, the first transgender member of the House of

Representatives, Emily Randall, the first out queer Latina elected in Washington, and Julie Johnson, the first out LGBTQ+ person from the South to hold office, are powerful reminders of what representation means for future generations.

I invite you to be part of this journey. Attend our events, join our S.P.I.R.I.T. Committee, and share *Colors of Care* with your family, friends, and colleagues. Most importantly, tell your stories, and listen with an open heart to the

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stories of others. Together, we can create a community where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued. 🌈

*Candace Bustamante, BSN, RN, BSc is the Clinical Education Coordinator for the Community Health & Well-Being Department. With a diverse healthcare career spanning 16+ years, she is dedicated to fostering inclusivity, health, and community connection. With a passion for creating programs that make healthcare accessible and approachable, she brings both heart and expertise to her work. When not working on initiatives to improve community well-being, Candace enjoys exploring new recipes, uplifting others, and finding common ground in unexpected places.*



# LIVING MINDFULLY DURING THE HOLIDAYS

BY MARY CARTER WARREN, D.MIN

**The holidays are upon us**--lights, trees, presents, Santa, holiday greetings, Christmas sweaters, Costco, Walmart, and every other big box store and retailer has sold out of their best (and often biggest) decorations. The Christmas/holiday specials are on every network and streaming channel, promising love and connection no matter how much conflict in the beginning of the show. How can I be intentionally mindful during this month? How do I not get pulled into the noise of the holidays and find space for what I actually feel and care about?

I'm suggesting a strategy that comes from ancient spiritual traditions: **mindfulness**.

Mindfulness means paying attention *in the moment* to what I'm thinking or feeling, and in paying attention, to name it but not judge it. Those are two steps--**naming and judging**. Perhaps in that moment when everybody is celebrating and seems so happy, I am able to stop and name that today, in this moment, I'm not all that happy or conversely, I am ecstatically happy. Naming how I feel or what I'm thinking is the first part of mindfulness.

**"HOW DO I NOT GET PULLED INTO THE NOISE OF THE HOLIDAYS AND FIND SPACE FOR WHAT I ACTUALLY FEEL AND CARE ABOUT?"**

The second part is to **practice not judging** how you think or feel, a more difficult step. It means being mindful of how I am, and not judging it as "I should be feeling happy". Or, given the world situation, "I have no right to feel happy when others are not." This step of self-awareness, of mindfulness, helps us to let go of the expectations of others to be other than we actually are. It also helps us to give ourselves permission to participate (or not) in what makes others happy without judging their decisions.

Mindfulness can bring me the awareness of what I see as possible in this moment now. There is a special kind of personal peace when we learn to be mindful in the moment and let it be enough.

**We are enough. You are enough. Just as you are. Just as I am.** 🌈

**Mary Carter Warren, D.Min.**, serves as the Mission Leader at Holy Cross Health, where she oversees Mission Integration Essential Services, including ethics, spiritual care, and ministry formation, while collaborating with leadership to advance the organization's Catholic healthcare mission. She played a key role in establishing the Legacy Program, which nurtures the spirituality of colleagues and educates them on the values of Catholic healthcare. With a doctorate in ministry and over 25 years of experience in education and peacebuilding, she has also served as founding director of the Center for Peace and Justice at St. Thomas University and held leadership roles with the School Sisters of Notre Dame.



# AN ARTHRITIC HIP OR KNEE DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE, NO MATTER HOW WE IDENTIFY

*Physician's Perspective*

BY WILLIAM A. LEONE, MD, FACS

An arthritic hip or knee problem can stop anybody in their tracks. An individual from the LGBTQ+ community is no different and no less affected than anyone else. Sadly, these individuals may feel more constrained in finding a caring, nonjudgmental environment where they will receive excellent care and a team who really listens to their concerns or fears about undergoing surgery. If their problem with their hip or knee is accurately diagnosed and optimally managed, like all individuals, they can return to their full and active lifestyle, pain free.

I think most of us take for granted a lot of "little things" until we lose them, like being able to get up after a great meal and walk for enjoyment. Arthritis does not discriminate. It can lead to painful, stiff, and often deformed joints that take away our joy and our mobility.

Historically when one developed an arthritic hip or knee, there wasn't much anyone could do to help them. Over time, joint destruction gets worse with more discomfort and less movement. When the arthritis effects one's hip or knee, it can have a negative effect on one's ability to remain active, independent and fully engaged in their life. This all too often leads to depression, isolation, and despair.

Hip or knee replacement surgery has wonderfully revolutionized our ability to treat people who are suffering with an arthritic hip or knee. Both hip replacement and knee replacement are considered two of the greatest surgeries that "improve quality of life" developed over the past century. What has changed wonderfully in my career and which continues to improve is how much faster I see my patients recover and how much more confident I am in helping someone achieve a "perfect result." I consider a perfect result when someone is able to return to all the activities they enjoy and have "forgotten about" that their hip or knee was replaced. It is when they share with me after how grateful they are and that "the whole experience"

was as good as it could be. I'm constantly reminded why I became a doctor.

This journey begins with someone admitting to themselves that they have a problem that is not going away by itself and that they need someone to help them. This decision is highly individual and we all decide at a different point. When we do decide to seek help, we then need to find a physician and environment

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where we feel safe and cared for. An environment that is clean, together, caring, and non-judgmental. A physician who is engaged, who listens to your concerns and the events that led up to your symptoms, and who follows through. And is surrounded by a team that is compassionate, knowledgeable and truly helps you through the process. It requires a thorough physical exam and often x-rays or other studies. It then requires a real conversation between you and your physician so that you fully understand what's causing your pain and what steps can be taken to help you. There are many conditions that can cause joint pain and an accurate diagnosis is imperative.

If it is determined that you've developed an arthritic hip or knee, then it's important to understand how advanced the condition in your joint is. There are many nonsurgical treatments which can improve symptoms.




Often these are appropriate and effective. Unfortunately, these “conservative” treatments don’t reverse the arthritic condition but hopefully “slow things down.” These include NSAIDs, physical therapy, braces, modalities like ice and heat, and sometimes injections. When these treatments are not effective or no longer effective, joint replacement becomes an option.

There is an “epidemic” of hip and knee replacements being performed in this country and around the world. Each year more people than prior years undergo these surgeries. This includes people from all spectrums of life. In my practice I see more individuals in their 20s and 30s as well as 80s and 90s who make the decision to no longer live with a painful arthritic hip or knee and to proceed with surgery than ever before. They dream of again becoming active. Each of us has our own dreams for how we want to live our lives and almost everyone has at some point said “enough.” There is no right answer.

I believe so many more people than ever before are deciding to get a hip or knee replacement because we’ve become so much better at pre-empting , preventing, and down-regulating pain after surgery. Still, it is the “fear of pain” that has and continues to prevent a lot of people from going forward with a surgery that can help them, even when it has been recommended.

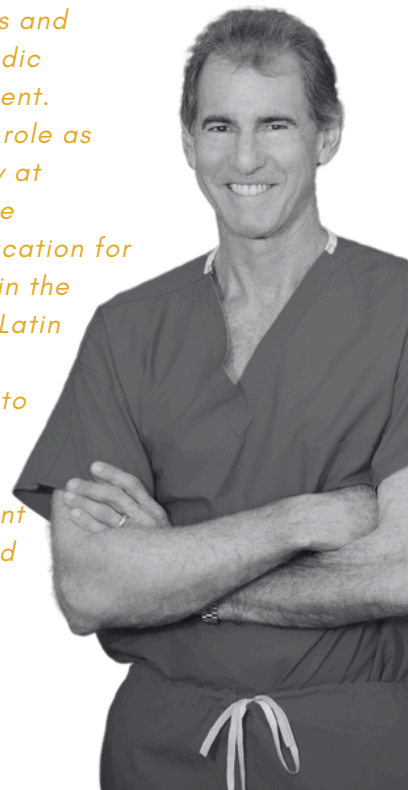
For me, helping someone achieve a “perfect” result after I perform a hip or knee replacement is not just implanting a hip or knee joint that they “forgot” was replaced, but also ensuring that they have the best experience possible. That they feel recognized as an individual, and feel supported by me and my whole team. They should never feel vulnerable or not supported because there is a team with an open door behind them. Countless satisfied patients have shared their [personal testimonials](#) and I encourage you to read through them.

The Leone Center for Orthopedic Care at Holy Cross Health is located at 1000 NE 56th Street in Fort Lauderdale. For more information or to schedule a consultation, please call 954-489-4575 or visit [holycrossleonecenter.com](http://holycrossleonecenter.com). 

**William A. Leone, MD, FACS** is one of the nation’s top orthopedic surgeons who has built his practice at Holy Cross Health. A recognized expert in his field, he has operated on thousands of people with hip and knee conditions from all over the world. He prides himself on solving complex hip and knee problems and is gratified by the profound positive effect that his interventions have had on the lives of his patients.

Dr. Leone founded The Leone Center in 2009 in order to provide state-of-the-art orthopedic care, using proven techniques and technologies in a compassionate, patient-focused way. He uses a range of technologies in his practice, including computer navigation, kinematic sensors and robotics for partial and total knee replacements, and his own invention, the Pelvic Alignment Level (PAL), for implant positioning, balancing and leg length reconstruction during total hip replacements. His meticulous, precise and gentle soft-tissue handling during surgery results in less tissue trauma, bleeding and postoperative pain. This approach consistently produces faster healing and better outcomes.

A sought-after industry consultant for implant, instrument design and clinical application for the orthopedic industry, Dr. Leone has been involved in clinical trials and reviews of new orthopedic techniques and equipment. He has taken an active role as chairperson and faculty at symposiums that provide continuing medical education for hip and knee surgeons in the United States, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition to lectures, he mentors orthopedic surgeons as well joint replacement fellows and medical and pre-medical students in patient care and surgical techniques.



# **WORLD AIDS DAY:** A Call to Action for Florida's LGBTQ+ Community

BY VON BIGGS

On December 1st each year, we are reminded of the profound significance of World AIDS Day. This day is dedicated to honoring those lost to HIV/AIDS and advocating for those living with the virus. In Florida, particularly within the LGBTQ+ community, World AIDS Day serves as a poignant reminder of the ongoing battle against HIV/AIDS and the resilience of those affected.

## **The Evolution of World AIDS Day**

Established in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first global health day aimed at raising awareness about the AIDS pandemic. Initially focused on children and young people, it helped reduce stigma and broaden recognition of the epidemic as a family issue. Over the years, the themes have evolved, reflecting the changing landscape of HIV/AIDS awareness and treatment. This year's theme, "Let Communities Lead," emphasizes the importance of community-driven initiatives in combating the epidemic.

Globally, millions are living with HIV, with new infections reported each year. In Florida, the statistics are equally concerning, with a substantial number of individuals living with HIV. The state ranks among the highest in the nation for new HIV diagnoses, highlighting the urgent need for continued education and prevention efforts.

## **Impact on the LGBTQ+ Community**

The LGBTQ+ community has been disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic. In Florida, the rates of HIV among gay and bisexual men remain alarmingly high, with significant disparities in access to care and treatment. The stigma surrounding HIV persists, often leading to discrimination and barriers to testing and treatment. However, World AIDS Day provides a platform for advocacy, education, and solidarity.

Local organizations play a crucial role in raising awareness and providing resources. They host events that include the display of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, a

powerful symbol of the lives lost to the epidemic, and community vigils that honor those affected. These gatherings not only commemorate the past but also inspire action for a healthier future.

## **Wearing Red in December**

In December, we wear red to symbolize our commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS. This simple act serves as a powerful

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reminder of solidarity and support for those living with the virus. Wearing red not only honors those we have lost but also raises awareness and encourages conversations about prevention and treatment. It is a visual statement that we stand together in this fight.

## **A Personal Perspective**

As an advocate for HIV and LGBTQ+ healthcare, and as someone HIV lives with, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative changes that advancements in medication and empowerment have brought to our community. The strides we have made in treatment have been remarkable, allowing many to live healthy, fulfilling lives. However, we still have so much work to do. The fight against stigma, the push for equitable healthcare access, and the need for comprehensive education remain critical -->

challenges that we must address together.

**A Call to Action**

As we observe World AIDS Day, it is essential to reflect on the progress made and the work still needed. Here are ways you can contribute:

- **Get Tested:** Knowing your HIV status is crucial. Many people living with HIV are unaware of their condition, which can lead to further transmission.
- **Advocate for Change:** Support local organizations that provide education and resources for HIV prevention and treatment.
- **Educate Others:** Share information about HIV/AIDS to combat stigma and misinformation within your community.
- **Participate in Events:** Join local World AIDS Day events to show your support and solidarity with those affected.

Together, we can work towards a future where HIV is no longer a public health threat. Let us honor those we have lost by committing to action and advocacy. Join the conversation online using hashtags like #WorldAIDSDay, #RockTheRibbon, #EndAIDS, and

#WearRed.

Your voice matters in this fight. By coming together as a community, we can ensure that the legacy of World AIDS Day continues to inspire hope, resilience, and action for all those affected by HIV/AIDS. 🌈

*Von Biggs is a dedicated advocate for HIV awareness and health equity, serving as the Community Outreach Coordinator at Holy Cross Health and anchoring Queer News Tonight, where he highlights issues impacting marginalized communities, including the LGBTQ+ population. Through leadership roles like Vice Chair of the Ryan White Part A Planning Council, Biggs works to dismantle stigma around HIV and mental health, advancing inclusive, trauma-informed care.*



# ROOTS OF RESILIENCE

*A look at December LGBTQIA+ milestones and their impact.*

On **December 18, 2010**, the U.S. Senate voted 65-31 to repeal the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, allowing gay, lesbian, and bisexual soldiers to serve openly in the United States military. The policy was repealed in full nine months later.

As a result, those that were discharged due to their sexual orientation were offered the chance to re-enroll. Future military members were given the confirmation that they would not face discrimination when enlisting to serve our country.

**December Awareness Days**

- 12/1:** World AIDS Day
- 12/8:** Pansexual/Panromantic Pride Day
- 12/10:** Human Rights Day
- 12/14:** HIV Cure Research Day
- 12/17:** International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers





# COMMUNITY BEAT

## Holy Cross Health: A Broward County LGBTQ+ Trailblazer

Holy Cross Health was recently named the 2024 Equality Means Business Award Honoree by Equality Florida. Equality Florida is the largest civil rights organization dedicated to securing full equality for Florida’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community.

This prestigious award highlights our powerful commitment to serving the LGBTQ+ community and recognizes that we are one of the leading providers of LGBTQ+ healthcare in Broward County.



*Pictured (left to right): Von Biggs, Kim Saiswick, Rudy Molinet and husband Jeff, Mary Carter Waren and husband Craig, Natasha Domond, Dr. Jason Ceavers, Teresa Deasy, and Dr. Maya Lucas.*

## S.P.I.R.I.T. COMMITTEE AT HCH

The S.P.I.R.I.T. Committee is Holy Cross Health’s internal advisory committee focused on LGBTQ+ patient care issues. S.P.I.R.I.T. stands for **S**howing **P**ride, **I**nclusiveness, **R**espect & **I**ntegrity at **T**rinity Health.

Our mission is to promote visibility and awareness of the LGBTQ+ community within Trinity Health through building connections between LGBTQ+ and Allies, and by promoting acceptance and equity for all colleagues regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

The committee meets on the first Monday of every month from 12:30pm-1:00pm via Microsoft Teams.



### Want to get involved?

Reach out to [SPIRIT@Holy-Cross.com](mailto:SPIRIT@Holy-Cross.com) for more information or check us out on SharePoint.