

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Parsons Center opens in Phoenix, offering help to HIV/AIDS victims

By Anne M. Shearer

November 14, 2013



At a Nov. 1 ceremony marking the opening of the Parsons Center for Health and Wellness, Daniel Leon explains the help he got from the Southwest Center for HIV/AIDS, one of the organizations housed at the facility.

Daniel Leon said he didn't know where to find help after testing positive for HIV, but an Internet search brought him to the Southwest Center for HIV/AIDS.

He said he found help with not only the physical aspects of his illness, but also the emotional and spiritual ones.

"At the center, I was able to get one-on-one counseling, group counseling, and above all, be a person again, not just a diagnosis," Leon said.

Now the non-profit center and two other organizations offering help to those with HIV and AIDS are under one roof near downtown Phoenix, thanks to a \$3.6 million bond Phoenix voters approved in 2006 and millions more in private donations.

The Parsons Center for Health and Wellness, funded in part by the Bob and Renee Parsons Foundation, held its grand opening Nov. 1. It also houses the McDowell Healthcare Center operated by the Maricopa Integrated Health System and a branch of Avella Specialty Pharmacy.

Located along Metro light rail, the Parsons Center brings together Maricopa County's largest provider of HIV-related medical care and the region's only organization offering prevention programs, health services and research and clinical trials. Avella Specialty Pharmacy is part of the state's AIDS Drug Assistance Program.

"First and foremost, it is about keeping people healthy, outreach to the community, education, testing — not only for HIV but for other STDs — and educating the entire community about safe sex and about the transmission of the disease itself," City Councilman Tom Simplot said at the dedication.

"(HIV/AIDS) may have moved on from a death sentence to a chronic disease, but at the end of the day, we have the power to eradicate it, we just need to work together to do that," he added.