

PAT FOX TO RECEIVE LEADERSHIP AWARD FOR HIV SUPPORT EFFORTS



We are pleased to announce that Pat Fox is the recipient of the 2023 Leadership Award for longtime advocacy and support for people living with HIV. The award will be presented on Sunday, April 2 at The RED Concert: An AIDS Benefit for the Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network (TIHAN) and the Center for Health and Hope. The award will be presented during the benefit concert featuring the band Good Trouble, taking place between 5-8pm on the outside stage at Three

Canyon venue on Tucson's east side.

The Leadership Award recognizes people in Southern Arizona who have shown exceptional commitment to supporting and advocating for persons infected and affected by HIV and AIDS, locally and globally. It is jointly presented by The Center for Health and Hope, of Denver Colorado, and the Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network (TIHAN).

Scott Blades, Executive Director of TIHAN, commented: "Pat has given unselfishly and generously with her time and resources to our Tucson neighbors affected by HIV/AIDS. She is always there to help someone in need. She goes the extra mile every time. She has inspired so many people to do likewise." Dr. Donald Messer, Executive Director of the Center for Health and Hope, stated: "Pat epitomizes being a servant leader; people follow her because of her infectious and winsome personality along with her low-key and humble generosity. Being around Pat is to experience a genuine humanitarian."

Pat Fox' transformation into an advocate and helper for people with HIV began with an introduction when the pastor at her church asked her to help get the congregation involved in a benefit. "I didn't know

much about HIV at all,” Pat recalls. She had retired from running a grocery store/local post office in rural Safford, then moved to Tucson and started selling real estate. HIV was not really on her radar.

Pastor Charlie Arehart, then the pastor at Water of Life Metropolitan Community Church, asked Pat if she could help with a new HIV benefit being initiated. Pat had been part of the congregation for 12 years, and had helped several times when the church helped sponsor Poz Café, a monthly lunch program for people living with HIV/AIDS organized by TIHAN. “After hearing horror stories about how many gay men in the 1980s died while their families and our government stayed silent, and knowing from TIHAN that even though HIV medications were helping a lot, people were still judged for having this virus, that was just not acceptable to me. Plus, I had had so much respect for Pastor Charlie and there was no way I could say no to him,” she recalled. The HIV benefit started out as a golf tournament called “Swinging at AIDS” along with a silent auction. A former golfer, Pat joined event co-chairs Roy DeBise and Claudia Svarstad to make the first year a big hit. “It was such a success, and I got to meet so many people. It’s a serious subject, but we had a great time raising funds to make a difference.” Pat was hooked.

The following year, the trio of volunteer leaders decided to add another component to the event: a concert for people who wanted to support the cause but weren’t golfers. Another success, and the event continued, morphing each year as Pat continued to step up and co-chair the benefit to raise funds for the HIV support and prevention programs of TIHAN and the Center for Health and Hope. The golf tournament has since ended, but the concert (renamed The RED Concert since red is the color of HIV/AIDS awareness) has continued. The concert is now in its sixth year.

In 2019, Pat moved to a new church, St. Francis in the Foothills United Methodist Church. Like Water of Life, St. Francis appealed to Pat because of its history of being welcoming and active in outreach to members of the LGBTQ+ community. Pat, a mother of two, grandmother to 10, and great-grandmother to four (and two more on the way), came out later in life, in her 50s, as a lesbian. “A welcoming environment, where everyone is accepted and their faith is nurtured, has become even more important to me as I learned more about myself,” she said. “And I really like the outreach to the wider community. There are so many friendly, loving, caring people, active in so many different ways to help in the community. If you can’t find some way to help and be involved supporting people in need, then you’re not really living. That’s what life is about—helping others. It’s important to me that my church does that, too.”

To no one’s surprise, Pat jumped in and got involved with her new congregation.

She took on chairing the Care Team program at St. Francis, and also helped with Inn2America, providing meals every week to asylum seekers. Then Pat heard that St. Francis was needing a liaison between the church and TIHAN, and once again, she said yes. “I found out about the history of HIV, and how much suffering people had to endure due to stigma, with so many people having a hard time getting help. And then to find out that HIV stigma today still causes people to be alone and isolated? That’s something that I can’t let go by,” she commented. As the church’s liaison with TIHAN, Pat now organizes their annual participation with the Poz Café lunch and social program for people living with HIV.

“It’s wonderful to see people step up and want to help,” Pat said. “It feels good to help organize people to make a difference. The clients with HIV really appreciate our efforts, the food, the CarePackages.

That's the best part, seeing the joy in people's eyes as we interact and connect with them. It really is my honor to represent TIHAN and St. Francis and help us serve our community."

Pat was shocked to learn that she was selected to receive the 2023 Leadership Award. "I think of myself as more of a worker than a leader. I just love to stay busy and interact with people. I enjoy volunteering with TIHAN, the Center, and the RED Concert fundraiser. Being part of all this is really the honor."

"I'm just so impressed at how hard TIHAN and the Center for Health and Hope work to educate and create awareness. We all just have to keep learning and then learning more. When I started, I wasn't very informed about HIV, and I didn't know how it was transmitted, but I've learned so much—about stigma and love and how there are new prevention tools and effective new medications to keep people healthy. I've learned so much. And I get to meet so many great people and we have fun while making a difference."

For her years of causing "good trouble" and working to end HIV stigma and build support systems for people with HIV, TIHAN and the Center for Health and Hope are proud to present the 2023 Leadership Award to Pat Fox. Please join us at the benefit RED Concert as we present the official award. Concert admission is \$25, with the band Good Trouble performing outdoors under the Tucson sky at Three Canyon (4999 N Sabino Canyon Road). Doors open at 4pm, and the concert starts at 5pm. Food and drink will be available, as well as dancing, a 50/50 raffle, and lots of good people. Tickets are available at <https://www.centerforhealthandhope.org/the-red-concert>

For more information about the RED Concert, contact event chair Jess Losoya at 520-447-6852 or jesslosoya48@gmail.com

For information about the Center for Health and Hope –
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