

Responding to a New Crisis

Just as the LGBT community was gaining traditional political clout, local papers reported the first deaths of local gay men due to AIDS-related illnesses. When the first passed away in 1983, only his sister was taking care of him. Fear and uncertainty about how the disease spread meant that people wanted to help but didn't know how or were too afraid of becoming sick themselves.

Michael Weyand, who had been involved in Gay organizing in the city for over 10 years and reading national papers for even longer than that, kept a close eye on what was known about the new disease. He and a small group formed AIDS Volunteers of Cincinnati - AVOC.



“Michael knew from reading, yeah, it is contagious but it seems to be strictly through bodily fluids, so if we trained people how to do laundry, how to wash and clean a person with AIDS, we could get people to help these people because nobody else was gonna do it.”

“We immediately had need for them. [AVOC] At first they were just training people and within a year they were taking care of people. And I mean care from the onset to the death. Because hospitals didn't want them, nursing homes didn't want them, nobody wanted them. So, as they did in so many other cities around this country, the gay community took care of itself.”

- Peggy Weyand, Michael's sister.