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## **The Well Project Looks Forward to 20 More Years and Beyond!**

Submitted on Nov 15, 2023

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## Overview

The Well Project has had an amazing year commemorating our 20th anniversary! We have celebrated the creative ways we have addressed educational gaps; fostered community connection; expanded leadership capacity; decreased stigma; and advanced research and policy over the past two decades —

all while centering and lifting up the experiences of women living with HIV.

This past year, it has been our pleasure to shine a spotlight on some of the remarkable individuals who have helped make The Well Project what it is over the past 20 years through our storytelling series, [\*Hearts and Minds of The Well Project\*](#). Their stories are an inspiration as we continue to advance a healthier and more equitable future for women living with HIV over the next 20 years.

"I am extremely honored to have led The Well Project over the past 10 years and look forward to the progress of the organization over the next 20 years," said Krista Martel, executive director of The Well Project. "The Well Project's accomplishments over the past 20 years are extraordinary; and I am personally appreciative of the diverse community we have fostered over the last decade.

"The voices, experiences, and expertise of our staff, community advisory board, board of directors, and other stakeholders are the backbone of our work to support a community of women across the globe. It has been amazing to feature but a few of these strong, world-changing individuals during our year-long celebration."

## **Annual Fundraising Drive**

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[Donate Today!](#)

We are thrilled to launch our 2023 annual fundraising drive as we close out our 20th anniversary celebration. Our goal is to raise \$40,000 through this fundraiser by the end of 2023. With your support, we will even further deepen our commitment to women living with HIV as we look forward to the next 20 years of The Well Project. Please consider [making a recurring or one-time tax-deductible donation](#) – and remember that no gift is too small.

## **Hearts and Minds of The Well Project**

*Hearts and Minds of The Well Project* is a storytelling project featuring the voices of more than a dozen extraordinary individuals who have been instrumental over the past 20 years in making The Well Project the organization it is today. Through candid interviews complemented with stunning portraiture, the series chronicles key moments in the development of The Well Project and the women's HIV movement – providing a unique background into the lives and motivation of some key stakeholders in our organization's community. These stories, released monthly from November 2022 through November 2023, highlight the diversity of connections to The Well Project's work.

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"The Well Project is part of my soul and my heart. The Well Project helps me to live and to be independent. They've given me opportunities. They have helped me to be that vehicle and that vessel to help humanity – not only with HIV, but all the issues that we as women go through." – Maria Mejia

[Read all the stories in the \*Hearts and Minds of the Well Project\* series](#)

## Brief History of The Well Project

The Well Project was founded by Dawn Averitt and her brother, Richard Averitt, in 2002. Dawn was diagnosed with HIV in 1988 at age 19 and has since become one of the nation's most prominent HIV treatment advocates. The Well Project was conceived to address the staggering gap in information designed for women living with and vulnerable to HIV. Our work has evolved to focus on increasing HIV awareness, advancing research for women and HIV, promoting better standards of care, educating women on how to manage their HIV, improving inclusion of women in clinical trials of new HIV treatments, building community, and expanding leadership capacity among women living with HIV.

We are humbled by the work we have engaged in and the connections we've made over the past 20 years and we're excited to share just a few key milestones:

- **2002:** Dawn and Richard Averitt [co-founded The Well Project](#)
- **2003:** Launched The Well Project web portal, providing [more than 100 fact sheets](#) on topics related to HIV and women
- **2003:** [Established](#) the Women's Research Initiative on HIV/AIDS (WRI), a [multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral](#) think-tank, dedicated to identifying gaps for women in HIV prevention, treatment, and cure research and policy
- **2006:** Launched The Well Project web portal in Spanish
- **2009:** Created *A Girl Like Me* ([blog for women](#) living with HIV)
- **2012:** Supported *A Girl Like Me* bloggers from the US, Nigeria, Uganda, and South Africa to [attend the International AIDS Conference](#) (AIDS 2012) for the first time, representing The Well Project and promoting information at our booth in the Global Village
- **2014:** Formed The Well Project's first [community advisory board](#) to provide guidance on the organization's strategic vision and programming
- **2014:** Updated and relaunched The Well Project [web portal](#) based on a community-input process
- **2015:** Developed and offered initial treatment advocacy trainings and [leadership development](#) programming
- **2019-2022:** Transitioned from a contractor model to a dedicated staff model by hiring five [full-time staff members](#), three of whom are women living with HIV

More recent highlights include:

- Building capacity among providers and increasing health literacy among women living with HIV by providing trusted, judgement-free, medically accurate [information](#) about HIV and women to millions of people through fact sheets, slide sets, pamphlets, webinars, and conference presentations

- Creating a strong global [community](#) of women living with HIV through our blogs, *A Girl Like Me* and *Una Chica Como Yo*, our highly engaged community advisory board, and our social media platforms
- Becoming the leading US [advocacy](#) voice on [breast/chestfeeding](#), bringing together the top experts in the subject, advocating for changes in CDC guidelines, supporting and uplifting a cohort of breast/chestfeeding parents, and hosting multi-disciplinary conversations to advance efforts
- Creating strong [partnerships](#) with more than 40 mission-aligned groups and organizations across intersecting issues, including networks of people living with HIV, reproductive justice, and medical provider associations, among others
- Influencing HIV [research](#) and policy agendas through collaborations and other engagements with members of the WRI, federal leaders, and other decision-makers

We are so pleased with all we've been able to accomplish over the past two decades; but most of all, we are honored to have been able to create a community of women living with HIV around the world. We look forward to continuing this work in the decades to come and ensuring that no woman ever lacks the support and tools she needs to thrive with HIV. We will continue to advance our mission to end the HIV pandemic ... one woman at a time.



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