

Congratulations

15

Years!

Sponsor Highlight:



Gilead is one of RAIN's most steadfast sponsors, standing by our side since 2001 when they first sponsored AIDS WALK Charlotte. Over the years, this relationship has continued to grow and flourish. In 2017, we were delighted to have Gilead as our first pharmaceutical Presenting Sponsor, further strengthening our partnership. Through their generous support, Gilead has contributed to RAIN in various ways. Their experts have provided educational staff training which has fostered professional growth. Gilead actively engages with the community by collaborating with RAIN to support local KiKi Balls, positively impacting LGBTQ+ individuals' lives.

Gilead's unwavering dedication to developing innovative medicines for life-threatening illnesses is commendable. They also recognize that addressing challenges individuals and communities face requires more than just medicine. That's why they work alongside organizations like RAIN to improve access to care by eliminating barriers and promoting education.

RAIN is immensely grateful for Gilead's continued partnership and support. Their financial and informational contributions have increased the agency's ability to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those affected by HIV in the Charlotte area.

Darlana Blackwell

Congratulations to Darlana Blackwell for 15 Years of Service to RAIN

RAIN is proud to celebrate Darlana Blackwell's 15 years of service in 2023.

Darlana joined the agency as a social worker when there was still a great deal of fear of HIV. Then, people living with HIV isolated themselves because of community backlash and stigma. So, the organization provided social support and case management, which linked clients to medical care and community resources. Darlana has risen in leadership and was promoted to Director of Client Services in 2021. She supervises the social work and mental health teams at RAIN.

Darlana has a master's degrees in Human Service Counseling and in Education. She listens compassionately to her clients to help them advocate for themselves and resolve personal conflicts. Her goal is to see clients become confident in their skills so they no longer need her. Darlana is passionate about helping the greater community see that the fight against HIV needs more resources aimed at addressing the issues that contribute to the HIV epidemic in the South like affordable housing.

Darlana is beloved by the RAIN staff. Words used to describe her were empathetic, knowledgeable, loving, dedicated, and fashionable! She excels in client interaction and conflict de-escalation. Her calm demeanor brings a sense of peacefulness to the office. **Thank you, Darlana, for your expertise and devotion to RAIN and our clients!**



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Our Mission

RAIN empowers persons living with HIV and those at risk to be healthy and stigma free.



INSIDE
RAIN'S MILESTONE YEAR
CELEBRATING PRIDE
THE DROP





Pride Season

PRIDE season is upon us, and we were thrilled to participate in multiple celebrations. On July 15, RAIN partnered with the Mecklenburg County Health Department and five local party promoters to host the inaugural PRIDE in the Park. With unity, diversity, and equality in mind, this safe space brought people together from all walks of life. A big thank you goes out to Brickz Entertainment, CTRL Lifestyle Group, DRellYo Entertainment, Meltdown Productions, Men of Destini, and all the local performers and vendors who participated.

Charlotte Black PRIDE began on July 16 and hosted a week of awesome events and parties. RAIN and The DROP supported many of those events, providing HIV/STI testing at Thursday night's Centerstage event, the mini-ball on Saturday, and several parties throughout the weekend. The events provided a safe space to express authenticity, love, cultural and artistic expression, and support. Thanks to Charlotte Black PRIDE for putting on a fantastic week. We were honored to be a participant.

RAIN and The DROP had a great time celebrating Charlotte PRIDE in August. The festival was exciting, busy with the community of LGBTQ and allies promoting love for all through attendance, visually representing a safe space all over downtown Charlotte. We participated in the parade with our staff and volunteers marching with our mobile testing unit. The streets were lined with support, echoing the unity brought by PRIDE. **Thank you, Charlotte PRIDE, for creating such a fantastic event.**

RAIN values PRIDE and the powerful way it promotes equality, respect, and love, particularly as the political climate creates fear and limits the rights of the LGBTQ community. By celebrating PRIDE, we honor the bravery and resilience of those who fought for rights and paved the way for progress while empowering the next generation to continue the fight.

Chelsea Gulden, MSW
President & CEO, RAIN



"At RAIN, we believe every person deserves access to the resources needed to thrive."



RAIN's Milestone Year

Advancing HIV/STI Testing and Community Outreach in 2023

The year 2023 has been momentous for RAIN, particularly regarding HIV/STI testing. Since January, our dedicated outreach team has gone above and beyond, conducting tests for over 600 individuals—an impressive leap from the 368 people we tested in 2022. With this incredible momentum, we are well on our way to more than doubling our testing efforts this year. You might be wondering, "What brought about this remarkable increase?" The answer lies in the expansion of RAIN's services, thanks to the establishment of The Drop and the introduction of our mobile testing unit. These invaluable resources have allowed us to immerse in the local community by creating a safe space and meeting individuals where they are. This service has made getting tested for HIV, syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and hepatitis C more accessible. Additionally, outreach activities provide an excellent opportunity to educate individuals on safe sex practices and promote normalizing regular HIV/STI testing.

Our heightened testing efforts have allowed us to identify 17 individuals living with HIV in the Charlotte area who were unaware of their status. Knowing one's status is immensely important because awareness is the first step towards empowering individuals to proactively manage their health and live fully.

At RAIN, we believe every person deserves access to the resources needed to thrive. That's why we offer tailored support services, ranging from medical case management and mental health therapy to support groups. By connecting individuals with compassionate medical providers, we can ensure they receive the proper medications and guidance to manage their condition effectively. One of the most critical factors in HIV treatment and prevention is medication adherence. We educate our clients on the importance of sticking to their prescribed medication regimens, leading to undetectable levels of HIV in the body. Achieving undetectable status prevents the progression of HIV disease and its transmission, significantly impacting both individual health and community well-being.

RAIN is grateful for the opportunity to serve the community and make a difference in the lives of those affected by HIV. We are committed to continuing our outreach, education, and support initiatives to foster a healthier, more informed, and empowered community for all.



The Drop

Empowering Futures at The Drop

The Drop recently introduced the LEVEL UP Career Search workshop as one of the education and workplace advancement series. LEVEL UP is a four-part seminar structured to help jump-start the job search, boost career planning, and provide tools and opportunities for individuals to prepare for future careers. The series starts with "Show Them What You've Got." During this session, participants built resumes, create LinkedIn Profiles, and wrote cover letters. The second session, "Hunting Versus Planning," assists participants in mapping pathways to their desired career, learning how to navigate job boards and postings, brainstorming on what it means to network outside the box, and providing feedback on the resumes and profiles created in session one. The third session focuses on the interview process. "Interview Like a Pro & Dress to Impress" focuses on interview preparation, making the best impression, and practicing interviewing with volunteer professionals. In the final session, attendees tested their skills at a Career Fair with business representatives and recruiters to talk about job openings and conduct interviews.

The LEVEL UP series was the first of many new programs hosted at The Drop focusing on career development, financial literacy, sexual education, mental health, and more! We aim to help participants move forward in their lives in a positive direction. **To stay up to date with programs and services offered at The Drop, make sure you're following their Instagram @thedropclt.**

The Drop is a community-based drop-in center serving young men of color who have sex with men and transgender youth. The Drop, a RAIN program, offers a welcoming place for young adults to receive case management and support services from staff members who understand them. **For more information about The Drop, please visit carolinarain.org/TheDrop.**



Upcoming Events

Sept 24th
BVD Car Wash
benefitting Gay Bingo

Nov 4th
Gay Bingo
Scan code for tickets!



Dec 1
World AIDS Day Luncheon

May 18
AIDS Walk 2024

Scan to learn more about The Drop

