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ACADEMY OF FRIENDS AND THE LGBT ASYLUM PROJECT JOIN FORCES IN A LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP

January 18, 2020 - Academy of Friends celebrates its 40th year with a long-term partnership with The LGBT Asylum Project, the nonprofit organization that provides accessible legal services for LGBT immigrants who are fleeing persecution due to their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or HIV status, and seeking asylum in the United States.

For 40 years the Academy of Friends has been on the forefront in the fight against HIV/AIDS. They have distributed over 8.9 million dollars to more than 74 HIV/AIDS service agencies in the San Francisco Bay Area. Most of that money was raised through their annual Oscar Night Gala. However, in recent years, attendance at the Gala has wavered as the public has lost focus on how critical the fight against HIV/AIDS still is.

“We’re fortunate because we live in a country that has readily available medication, and we live in a city where it’s no big deal to be gay,” says Okan Sengun, Co-Founder and Executive Director of The LGBT Asylum Project. “And that’s why so many immigrants living with HIV come to this country.”

Homosexuality is still illegal in 75 countries and it is punishable by death in 13 countries. HIV is a death sentence in those countries. “The clients of the LGBT Asylum Project are from those countries,” says Sengun. “They are desperate when they come to us and I’m very proud that The LGBT Asylum Project has a 100% success rate in getting asylum for people living with HIV.”

According to Academy of Friends Founder Kile Ozier, “The LGBT Asylum Project is not simply the beneficiary, Academy of Friends is arguably the actual beneficiary of this new relationship. It’s a brilliant way to take what remains of AOF, and the legacy of good on which the organization rests, restore its integrity, focus its efforts, and enjoin it on a path that’s eminently relevant and embraceable today.”

The 40th Annual Oscar Night Gala will be on Sunday, February 9 at the Commonwealth Club, 110 The Embarcadero, San Francisco. Doors: 4 pm (VIP) 5 pm (General) to 10 pm. Tickets

include complimentary food and cocktails: www.AcademyofFriends.org. This year a new low-cost ticket price of \$150 is offered for Young Professionals ages 21-29 (with photo ID).

“Thanks to our generous sponsors and some of the Bay Area’s best event producers donating their time, we expect all of the Gala’s expenses to be covered,” says Academy of Friends Board Chair Michael Myers. “That means at this point, every dollar of ticket and silent auction sales will go directly to The LGBT Asylum Project. And that money will save lives.”