



# WNCAP

Western North Carolina AIDS Project

ALL SERVICES  
ARE CONFIDENTIAL  
1-828-252-7489  
or 1-800-346-3731  
[www.wncap.org](http://www.wncap.org)

## Meet Randy Rodriguez, WNCAP Special Events Coordinator

What brought you to WNCAP? What makes you passionate about helping people with HIV/AIDS?



I have very good friends who are HIV positive, and I have seen their struggle throughout the years. When I saw that there was a job opening for WNCAP, I thought to myself, what is the best thing that could happen in my life? That my professional passion, which is being a special events coordinator, and my passion to work with the community, be combined.

We recently celebrated National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day on October 15th. Latinos make up 18% of the US population but account for 24% of all HIV diagnoses in the country. How do we address this disproportionate rate of infection in a culturally competent way?

The problem within the Latino community is that education in a lot of Latin American countries concerning contraception and sexual health is practically nonexistent. So when people come to this country, they lack that education about HIV and STDs. And, in a lot of these countries, using condoms is considered a sin. It's very sad. So I think the first problem is education. The second problem is access. We need to provide free condoms and cheap PrEP so that people have the tools they need to protect themselves. And that's what WNCAP does.

**What challenges do you believe are unique to the Latino community?**

There is a lot of discrimination for Latinos, in general. Some of us are more lucky than others. In many Latin American countries, particularly in the rural areas, it can be hard to go to school, let alone learn English. So when they come here to try and find the American Dream it is so hard for them. Even people who are professionals in their home country - if they don't know English, they have to start from zero. And being a member of the LGBTQ community in Latin America is hard because, again, there's discrimination. "Machismo" is really big in most of these countries. On the other hand, Mexico was one of the first countries to legalize gay marriage.

**If you could send a message to the Latinx community in Western North Carolina concerning HIV/AIDS, what would it be?**

You need to learn about HIV/AIDS. If you don't learn, you can't protect yourself or your children. If you don't learn, we will continue being disproportionately affected as a community. We want every person in the 18 counties we serve to know that WNCAP is here to help everybody, and take away the stigma that's killing people.



## WNCAP and the Renaissance Hotel Present: An Exhibit of the AIDS Memorial Quilt Loss, Life & Love

Monday, November 20th through Saturday, November 25th  
Asheville Renaissance Hotel  
Open daily 10am-7pm throughout the week  
(Closed Thanksgiving Day)

Please contact the WNCAP office to request a special tour or educational session: 828.252.7489 ext. 313

**AIDS Activism in Popular Culture:**  
In an interview with the Black AIDS Institute, singer Solange Knowles said, "You have to be more afraid of the disease than afraid to talk about it."



<https://www.blackaids.org/news-2017/3184-solange-knowles-a-personal-crusade-fueled-by-art>

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