Reaching the Summit

Michael Maus has been advocating for HIV services in Oklahoma for more than 25 years.

August 11, 2025 By Jay Lassiter

It’s no exaggeration: Michael Maus is one of the most consequential HIV activists in Oklahoma’s history.

J. David Odle, programs administrator for Oklahoma’s Department of Human Services, for one, agrees. Odle was on hand in 2024 to present Maus with the Summit Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Rainbow Youth Project USA Foundation, which is dedicated to protecting at-risk LGBTQ youth both nationally and in the Oklahoma City region.

“This award recognizes individuals who have dedicated much of their life’s work to serving and advocating for those affected by HIV,” Odle says. “Through his career, Michael has continuously been on the front line of HIV testing, education and outreach.”

The path to the Summit Award began humbly for Maus, a longtime Oklahoma City resident who was diagnosed with HIV in 1992.

“My activism journey began in July of 1998,” Maus tells POZ. “I approached the Oklahoma State Department of Health, and they helped me train to provide HIV testing. So that was the beginning of my journey to get out into the community, to encourage people to get tested and remind people about the importance of condom use, and, certainly, if a person tested HIV positive, to get them on treatment and in care to live a long, healthy life.”

Currently, Maus is the HIV prevention programs coordinator at Red Rock Behavioral Health Services. He also heads the Oklahoma HIV Prevention Co-op, which he describes as “a coalition of partners working together collectively to promote HIV prevention in Oklahoma City and the surrounding vicinity.”

And despite the hardships of being an HIV advocate in one of the most conservative states in the nation, Maus remains committed to his adopted home state.

“There’s nowhere I’d rather be than in the state of Oklahoma,” Maus says. “It’s a true challenge based on stigma and the environment that we have to navigate through. But my feeling is, if not me, who? And certainly over the past three decades, I’ve been able to really wrap my heart and arms around this community, knowing the work of combating stigma is so important, especially in a very red state like Oklahoma.”

In 2021, that persistence helped convince Oklahoma lawmakers to legalize and ultimately embrace harm reduction policies, such as needle exchange programs, to curb HIV transmission rates among people who use injection drugs.

At 63, Maus has no plans to slow down. And his legacy should be secure. The Mike Maus Youth HIV Outreach Program, an initiative of the Rainbow Youth Project USA, will be protecting at-risk youth against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections for years to come. And he’s grateful for the recognition.

“I was just so overwhelmed and full of joy being recognized in that way,” Maus says of his lifetime achievement award. “When I received this award, I was able to look back and accept such an honor from the community and from folks here in Oklahoma that it made me realize, ‘Hey, what I’ve done is important and valuable.’”

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/reaching-summit