

R.I.P. Ronnie Grace, an LGBTQ and HIV Advocate in Milwaukee

A beloved champion of Milwaukee's Black and brown communities, "Uncle Ronnie" was an HIV peer navigator at Diverse & Resilient.

November 14, 2023 By [Trent Straube](#)

Ronnie Grace, an [HIV](#) advocate affectionately known as Uncle Ronnie to many in Milwaukee's Black and brown [LGBTQ](#) communities, died November 9, 2023, after a battle with liver cancer, [reports the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#).

Memorial services will be held Saturday, November 25, at Zao Church in Milwaukee, according to this social media announcement:

I love you to death Ronnie forever will always be in my
heart ♥

Posted by [Love Kentrell](#) on [Monday, November 13, 2023](#)

Grace was "a cherished member" and "an integral part" of Diverse & Resilient, a community health organization that serves LGBTQ folks in Wisconsin. A memorial to Grace [posted on DiverseandResilient.org](#) reads in part:

"Ronnie's journey with Diverse & Resilient began in 2006 as a program participant, and his dedication and passion led him to become a crucial member of our team. Ronnie joined Diverse & Resilient in 2012 as a coordinator for the HIV testing program. His exceptional contributions quickly elevated him to lead coordinator for both the HIV and STI testing programs. In addition, Ronnie facilitated the agency's support group for women of trans experience, Sisters Helping Each Other Battle Adversity (SHEBA).

"In 2020, Ronnie took on the role of lead Peer Navigator for the agency's HIV Peer Navigator Program, further showcasing his commitment to serving the LGBTQ and HIV communities.

Throughout his tenure, Ronnie garnered numerous awards for his tireless work, participating in HIV and LGBTQ anti-stigma campaigns and serving on various boards, including the Wisconsin HIV and HCV Statewide Action Planning Group (SAPG) and the City of Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence Sexual and Assault (DVSA).

“Ronnie’s impact extended beyond professional achievements. He founded and facilitated GROWN UPS, an empowerment and support group for men living with HIV, demonstrating his dedication to creating safe spaces for the underserved and underprivileged LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities of color.”

For a Pride Month feature earlier this year, [the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel profiled Grace](#). You can watch that video below:

Grace was known for encouraging folks to learn their HIV status. “I think Ronnie’s legacy is a service. He has been on the front line of treatment and support of people with AIDS since I got here in 2006,” Everett Marshburn, the board chairman for Diverse & Resilient, told the Sentinel.

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Ronnie Grace, a cherished member of the Diverse & Resilient...

Posted by [Diverse & Resilient](#) on [Friday, November 10, 2023](#)

According to the newspaper, Grace was born in Mississippi and grew up in Milwaukee, where his family moved during the Great Migration. He was also a ballroom dancer who worked in Hollywood, New York City and Atlanta. When HIV hampered his health, Grace returned to Milwaukee and became active in the LGBTQ and HIV communities. Recently, he sought treatment for Stage IV liver and bile cancer at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, where he died.