

SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS TIMES

OUTSTANDING VOICES

**Sara
Lentz**

DIRECTOR OF NURSING OPERATIONS
AND GENDER INSTITUTE LEAD, UCSF HEALTH
SAINT FRANCIS AND ST. MARY'S HOSPITALS



BUSINESS OF PRIDE

STORY BY ANGELA SWARTZ | PHOTO BY ADAM PARDEE

ABOUT LENTZ

Age:
41

Residence:
Bay Area

Education:
Bachelor's, University of Nevada, Reno; master's, Ph.D., University of San Francisco

Resume:
Before joining UCSF in 2024, Lentz worked for Dignity Health, starting as a staff nurse and eventually becoming the director of nursing operations.

Family:
Wife Nicole Duminie

Fun fact:
They have performed as a drag king under the name Todd Hotty since 2006, well before "RuPaul's Drag Race" helped drag become more mainstream in 2009.

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ARA LENTZ LIKES A CHALLENGE.

In college they majored in nursing, despite science being their self-proclaimed worst subject growing up. By graduation it had become their best subject and made them a more well-rounded person, they said. ¶ They also learned from their grandfather, who immigrated to the United States at 18, to give back to their community. Inspired by his example, Lentz learned to put "humans above the dollar" and, after finding their calling in health care, would establish the Sara K. Lentz Nursing Endowment at their alma mater, the University of Nevada, Reno, for aspiring nursing students. ¶ After completing their doctorate in nursing, Lentz started work as a nurse at Dignity Health in San Francisco, later assuming leadership roles within the organization, including heading patient safety at Saint Francis Memorial Hospital. ¶ They became involved with Saint Francis Hospital's Gender Institute, which aims to deliver "compassionate, high-quality, and affordable health services to transgender patients and their families," in 2019. Five years later, they came to head the institute, which now employs six Surgical Review Corporation-accredited physicians. The SRC has also accredited Saint Francis Hospital, now part of UCSF Health, as a "center of excellence" in gender-affirming surgery. ¶ During a difficult time for the transgender community, with the Trump administration's proposed cuts to Medicaid funding for gender-affirming care casting an ominous shadow, Lentz remains motivated to continue to offer patient-centered care.

How would you describe your work and responsibilities at Saint Francis? As a doctor of nursing, I take evidence-based research and I apply it to a clinical setting. I do this at the forefront of innovation and making sure we're delivering the best care to patients or the individuals that we serve.

I'm very proud to represent the Gender Institute. I've been able to grow the program, and we are leading the pack across the nation with our innovative care as we deliver it to transgender and gender-diverse individuals across our communities.

Recent months have raised serious questions about continued access to gender-affirming care. How is this impacting your work?

Part of my internal mission is to really focus and be a part of our community. When you look at communities across this planet, we are all connected more than we know. I think it's very important not to turn your back on the human. When we approach care, regardless of if it's for a gender-diverse community, or any other community that is experiencing disparity or a clinical ailment, we're talking about everyone.

More generally how are you feeling about advancements in care and service provision for the transgender community? When you look at the research and you follow the science, the research suggests a lot of advancements in the care of transgender and gender-diverse individuals. If you

couple that with the progress we've made because of the bravery of those who came before us, paving the way of coming out and progressing societal stances and things along, and the research has really advanced us into the state of where we are more open.

You really have to have individuals who have these prominent visions that are innovative, that are focusing on the advancement of care provision and human rights and social advocacy for each other. There's a lot of attention on this care provision right now, but I do think that we're in times where there's a lot of hope to be had as well because of all the work that is being done.

What have these challenges been like to deal with on an emotional level? When you're digesting what you're doing, you have to really focus on the intricacies that are feeding that complexity. You have leadership elements, political elements, clinical care elements, competency elements.

When you're processing all of that, you have to reflect back on your internal mission and say, "How am I going to achieve that purpose while maintaining my safety and providing safety for others?" That's where you have to create a unique plan of how you are going to approach these situations or programs.

Otherwise, you're really just throwing a fishing line in the middle of the ocean and just hoping something bites.

Is there a coming-out story you could share? Coming out is a lifelong journey. We come out every day in different formats. Whether we're in social circles, family circles, work circles.... For me personally, I came out to my family, and my parents told me, "I don't view you as homosexual or heterosexual. I view you as my daughter." Now that I've come out to them as nonbinary, they say, "I view you as my child." It's very interesting when you have the acceptance of your parents how much easier that route becomes.

I've had to come out on my sexuality, come out on my gender, and come out with my drag persona as well.

What can you tell us about your drag career and persona? I am known as Todd Hotty. Todd Hotty is a half-human, half-hottie, and he just loves to give back. Most of my drag I utilize for philanthropic efforts. I don't make money off my drag. It is all fueled back into our community through fundraising events, charity events that really focus on the most vulnerable populations throughout the city of San Francisco.

I'd be happy to give back to any communities that invite Todd to come perform. But I typically don't expect payment when I perform and if I do receive payment, I donate that to a cause. All my tips are donated.

How did you meet your wife? Meeting my wife was kismet. First of all, I've been happily married

for six years. I've been together with my wife for 11 years. I met her out in the Castro on a Tuesday night at a girl party. No one would go out with me that night. I had the day off (the next day), and many of my friends did not.

She walked in, and we locked eyes from across the bar. And that was it. It was interesting because she grew up in Reno, Nev., and I grew up in Reno. I did not know her growing up, and I met her in San Francisco, and so getting together was fabulous because it made traveling for the holidays easy to just go back to Reno. The amount of people we had in common was shocking.

What does San Francisco mean to you? I always say (San Francisco is) one of the most magical cities on this planet, and the reason why is because you have the whole world here, and we've learned how to coexist, and we have social responsibility to each other. If the federal government doesn't help, we'll take care of each other.

When you're looking at San Francisco for inspiration, there's a lot to learn from us because of that alone, regardless if it's advancing rights for humans or focusing on a pandemic such as Covid or HIV, looking at our impact on the climate, looking at how we manage just day-to-day lifestyles, and creating equity and equitable opportunities for others.

Angela Swartz is a freelance writer based in Burlingame.