## Varee Suthireung

By Timothy Cwiek PGN Contributing Writer

Varee Suthireung, one of the city's most visible women living with AIDS, died Dec. 12.

She was 27 and lived in Queen Village.

News of her death sent a shock wave through We The People's Dec. 13 board meeting. Suthireung was a key member of the board of directors for the last two years.

Friends said they did not realize the seriousness of her recent lung ailment.

"Varee was a doll, and everyone loved her," said a tearful member of We The People after the meeting. "I never once heard her complain about her [health] problems. But God, was she there for everyone else."

Friends remembered Suthireung as a person who was able to connect with a wide range of individuals.

"Varee was a peacemaker, a bridge between so many people," said her friend Pam Ladds. "She used to call herself a chameleon because she could fit in anywhere. But I saw Varee in four basic roles: visionary, healer, teacher and warrior. She was all of those things in a really positive way."

Born in Bangkok, Thailand, Suthireung moved to Texas when she was 7 years old. She never graduated from high



that was the message she gave to other women: Get whatever information you can and then make your own decisions. Don't be pushed around."

Suthireung held a variety of paid positions at We The People, including receptionist, testing counselor, and AIDS prevention specialist.

In 1992, she agreed to have her life story spotlighted on Page One of the Philadelphia Inquirer, knowing her message of hope could help others, Ladds said.

We The People director David Fair said Suthireung will be missed.

"It's hard to say enough about Varee," he said. "For three years, she dedicated her life to people living with AIDS Her heart was always open to people"

It was Suthireung's idea to hold a well-publicized hunger strike in May 1994 to dramatize the need for more state support of the Betak Nursing In Memoriam Of Our Founder, Cecil Ray deLoach (1952-1991)

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for a time, as a prostitute. school. Instead, she joined a motorcycle gang and worked, Suthireung moved to Texas when she was 7 years old. She Born in Bangkok, Thailand, Suthireung moved to Texas graduated from high

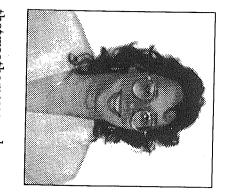
don, now 5. was diagnosed with HIV, while All that changed after she with her son Bran-

her life around. located to Philadelphia, where she had relatives, and turned Ladds said Suthireung re-

She was the the person who kept order at board meetings, not always an easy thing to and made it an OK place for women to be," Ladds said. do. She made sure that everyher ability to stay very calm. "One of Varee's strengths was 'She joined We The People

care choices, Ladds said ideas about freedom of healthbody got heard."
Suthireung had strong

tor insisted on doing a C-section, which she didn't feel was necessary,"Ladds said. "Varee followed her own instincts, and don in a taxi because her "She gave birth to Bran-



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by the state, didn't want to be abused again in her first marriage, and she "Varee said she was abused "Fair said

memories of Suthireung. services Cronauer said he had fond We The People educational director Joseph

tron of honor at my gay wedding in June 1994."
Suthireung is survived by tile and able to deal with many different people. S proved that by being the ma "Varee was incredibly versaconvinced me I could find a family here," Cronauer said. walked through the doors; she people "She was one of the first to talk to me when

her relatives, Ladds said Dominique, 8, and Brandon, Rodriguez, and two children, The children are living with second husband,

mation, call (215) 545-6868 scheduled for Dec. 29 at The People. For more in memorial service infor-

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