35 Ones To Watch

December 1, 2006

In this post-protease climate of AIDS complacency, it sometimes seems that the ferocity exhibited by early activists and advocates has been forgotten. If this 25th anniversary year of the pandemic has shown us anything, it's the dire need for new heroes and heroines to ante up the fight. Fortunately for those of us fending for our lives and those whose lives can perhaps be saved through prevention tactics, POZ has discovered a renewed vigor in global anti-AIDS efforts. Of the 35 amazing people featured here, some are familiar faces with heightened determination, some are fresh faces with brave new approaches. Many are breaking boundaries; all are breaking their backs. Despite their differences, they share a daring aversion to AIDS apathy. And they want you to know that you are not alone in your own personal struggle, which is just as valiant as the ones they wage. We fully anticipate that our choices (and omissions) will spark a little controversy. That, in fact, was our mission—to start a vital conversation, a conversation that will include the most important people we watch: you, our readers. So weigh in with your thoughts and nominations at onestowatch@POZ.com. We'll be watching what you say. And who knows? Your nominees—or even you—may grace next year's list.

Kevin Fenton, MD

Kevin Fenton's refined British accent can't prettify the AIDS stats he cites—that, for example, one-third of all gay men over 30 are HIV positive or that the rate nears 50% among gay men of color. Amid the perennial charge that the national Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is out of touch with the daily American realities of living with HIV, a Brit may seem an unfortunate choice to lead its National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention. Until, that is, Fenton tells you that he is gay—and, that as a gay black man, he may have vital insights into that blighted demographic. In 2007, we'll begin to discover whether Fenton's years leading the U.K.'s department of HIV and sexually transmitted infections make him an ideally detached American observer, without the political debts that can block reform. Regardless, he arrives at a make-or-break moment in HIV prevention. Fenton, 39, was heavily involved in formulating the CDC's controversial new HIV testing guidelines, which recommend that testing become a routine part of medical care for every American between the ages of 13 and 64. To make the test seem less invasive, written consent requirements and counseling would be dropped, which has polarized AIDS activists and alarmed civil rights groups. The key, Fenton says, is to get more people into care—something, he says, we need to be more "clever" about. He also hopes to address the social and cultural issues—poverty, education—that can spur high-risk behaviors. Jolly good.

Allyson Leacock

Rum drinks on pristine beaches, reggae wafting through the breeze—that image fuels the

Caribbean's tourist-reliant economies. But don't listen to the music too closely; it may ruin your vacation. Several Caribbean musicians, such as the popular Beenie Man, describe attacking gay men, or "battymen," in the lyrics of their supposedly laid-back tunes. Laws criminalizing homosexuality are still on the books in most Caribbean nations (in Guyana "buggery" is punishable by life in prison), exacerbating the region's violent homophobia, rampant HIV stigma and growing HIV infection rate (at nearly 2%, it is second only to sub-Saharan Africa). Caribbean governments, however, have responded to the dire epidemic with notorious sluggishness.

As the director of culture in Barbados from 1999 to 2003, Allyson Leacock, PhD, worked to bolster and maintain the arts and culture behind that image of an alluring island life, a mission that her glamorous fashion flair and authoritative, composed charisma served well. When she accepted her current post as manager of Barbados' Caribbean Broadcast Corporation (CBC), Leacock, now 49, had no idea that AIDS would define her time as the nation's top media maven. But in January 2004, one year after Leacock started work, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan announced the Global Media AIDS Initiative, a visionary push to amp up HIV awareness across worldwide media. Staring down the reality of HIV in the Caribbean, Leacock quickly tuned into Annan's program and snapped up an opportunity to head the Caribbean-wide HIV/AIDS Broadcast and Media Partnership.

Last May, Leacock spearheaded the partnership's inaugural session, using her influence to lure 33 media executives from 22 English-speaking Caribbean nations to meet with representatives from the Kaiser Family Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Elton John AIDS Foundation and MTV and BET. They produced a declaration under which radio and TV stations each promised a multiyear commitment to broadcast a minimum of 12 minutes of AIDS programming daily during prime time (as opposed to the typical 2 a.m.) slots. This fall, the Clinton Global Initiative and HBO signed on to the stellar lineup.

Leacock and her steering committee have offered HIV training sessions for TV writers, producers, actors and journalists. Last summer, a few ads, featuring such celebs as poet Maya Angelou and Caribbean musician Rupee, aired; a pervasive HIV media blitz is in the works for 2007.

When describing her HIV efforts, which have come to feel like her primary job, Leacock can't restrain her excitement. But other Caribbean AIDS experts are skeptical. AIDS org workers in Barbados say they fear that the ads may not catch the eye of at-risk youth (AIDS is the leading cause of death among the region's 15- to 44-year-olds), though they remain hopeful. With hate crimes occurring across the Caribbean, like last year's murder of Jamaican AIDS activist Steve Harvey, some activists contend that ads can't curb HIV rates until the governments pass laws to protect positive people's civil rights and medical confidentiality—so that everyone, gay and straight, can feel safe getting tested, seeking treatment and talking openly about HIV. But now, at least, it's on the airwaves.

Rivington House

The wide-open terrace at Rivington House, on Manhattan's Lower East Side rivals those of the million-dollar condos next door. Rivington's stunning view makes for dream summer barbeques--

and that's exactly how residents of the 206-bed AIDS facility pass many a hot summer evening. Part of Village Care of New York, a comprehensive medical rehabilitation services organization, the refuge opened in 1995. It has offered HIV positive people who need assisted-living resources much more than a safe, clean bed--they get everything from acupuncture and physical therapy to job counseling and support groups. We hope to soon reach a year when treatment and housing advances leave its room empty. Until then, it's a stairway to haven.

Gregg Gonsalves

In what was widely considered the most electrifying speech at Toronto's International AIDS Conference, Gregg Gonsalves rallied the world community to "kick the shit out of this disease." Today, Gonsalves, 43, leads a kick line of AIDS organizations in Botswana and other countries in the Southern African Development Community. Quite a feat for someone who downplays his 15 years of prior U.S. AIDS work—by saying he'd led it from his "armchair in New York City." When Gonsalves switched to a plane seat last June, relocating to Cape Town, South Africa, and the AIDS and Rights Alliance of Southern Africa, he didn't know what to expect. But under his guidance, the regional treatment advocacy program is crafting literacy education programs for the leaders and residents of HIV-stricken communities. Gonsalves' years at ACT UP and Gay Men's Health Crisis—and his work as a founding member of HIV research and advocacy corps Treatment Action Group (TAG)—should help him in his quest to forge a civil movement among all HIV positive people in the region. His markers for success next year include hiking the number of treatment-educated people working in Southern African clinics and launching a movement for women's empowerment. And there'll be no sitting down on the job.

Charles King

The Rev. King's previous epic, the bumpy 2005 Campaign to End AIDS caravan, was one-part *Road Trip*, one-part *Titanic*. Now, the genius AIDS housing crusader—CEO of New York City's Housing Works—has another very big idea: AIDSvote.org, which it hopes to teach voters where candidates stand on HIV issues and hold pols accountable. We predict King by a landslide.

Miss Universe

Since 1998, the Miss Universe Organization has insisted that every winner focus on women's AIDS awareness. This year's champ, Puerto Rico's Zuleyka Rivera, fainted after her crowning. The 18-year-old hopes to boost lagging Latina care and prevention, mobilizing Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) and the Latino Commission on AIDS. With an agenda that daunting, you'd faint too.

Bishop Kevin Dowling

You don't often see the words bishop and condom in the same sentence. But in 2005, South African Roman Catholic bishop Kevin Dowling, 62, called the Vatican's condom ban a death sentence. For his AIDS work, he was named International Person of the Year by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the Foundation for Hospices in sub-Saharan Africa. Amen to that.

Bono/Product RED

Bono, 46, is an activist brand all his own. Now he's led other brands—such as Gap and Apple—to

design jeans and iPods for his Product RED campaign, the profits of which boost the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis. RED launched in the U.K., earning $10 million before it hit the U.S. In 2007, will Americans finally get the RED Amex card? Regardless, we're indebted.

Paul Bellman, MD
Dr. Bellman, a Manhattan-based private practitioner with global influence, will do whatever it takes to raise hell for his patients. Having treated positive people for 20 years, he demands that HIV care consider the overall health of positive individuals. Bellman, 49, holds contrarian theories about the immune system, which have been known to raise eyebrows—and open some eyes too.

Blaine Trump
When Blaine Trump invites the rich and famous to the fundraisers she hosts for God's Love We Deliver (GLWD), thousands of hungry clients benefit. A friend to GLWD for 20 years, board member Trump volunteers in the kitchen and delivers food and has raised the annual budget from thousands of dollars to nearly $10 million. For the funds she so gracefully procures, she deserves a million thanks.

Stephen Lewis
As the words AIDS and Africa collide into a gloss of celebrity photo ops, Africa's actual treatment needs can seem like one big buzzkill. Or like "over there" crises, far removed from how the rest of us live now. What the world needs now is Stephen Lewis, the United Nations' special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa. Appointed in 2001 by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the Canadian dynamo is a one-man humanitarian army. Annan boiled down the job description to just a few bullet-point tasks: "preventing the epidemic's further spread, reducing mother-to-child HIV transmission, providing care and treatment to all, delivering scientific breakthroughs and protecting the vulnerable, especially orphans." Lewis somehow found a little extra time to add another task, and it may prove his crowning legacy for 2007 and beyond. Lewis, 69, was one of the first to demand UN action in protecting African women. A legendary orator, he has given speech after speech and launched his own foundation to showcase how gender inequality leaves women helpless in the face of male aggression in African societies, making safe-sex negotiation impossible. Young women and adolescent girls there face an infection rate six times that of boys. African women are also especially vulnerable to HIV from sexual violence, even as they care for the dying men who infected them while raising infected children. Lewis has won millions of dollars for women's treatment and protection. He wishes he could focus on the issues and the people, not on fundraising. "Truth-fully," he says, "when I see what we can accomplish with money on the ground, it's the only time in my life I have wished I was Bill Gates." We're glad he's Stephen Lewis.

Anne-Christine D'Adesky
Journalist, novelist, filmmaker—Anne Christine D'Adesky, 48, can fight AIDS in any medium. She penned global HIV articles throughout the '80s, launched the American AIDS magazine *HIV Plus* in the mid-'90s and headed to Rwanda to cofound WE-ACTx (Women's Equity in Access to Care and Treatment) in 2003. WE-ACTx gets care and counseling to the country's positive women and kids, often survivors of rape and genocide. With 5,000 regular clients and a new clinic in the works, the group's dollars are forever dwindling. Unfazed, they're sharing their blueprint with other African

nations, partnering with 24 groups to improve health care across Rwanda. They also combat sexual violence, focusing on such war-ravaged regions as Sudan's Darfur. In 2007, We-ACTx hopes to publish a legal handbook to teach Rwandans their rights, but we don't need a handbook to know she's right.

Kevin Frost

Take amfAR even further. That was the challenge American Foundation for AIDS Research honchos gave Kevin Frost in 1997. Founded in 1983 by the legendary AIDS researcher Mathilde Krim and financed by the stardusted pleas of Elizabeth Taylor and Sharon Stone, amfAR decided it wanted a global outreach too. So Frost, 44, vice president of global initiatives, launched TREAT Asia, amfAR's largest international effort. Operating in 15 Asian nations, from China to Myanmar, it focuses on the continent where the epidemic seems poised to explode next, rivaling sub-Saharan Africa's infection rates. Besides educating communities and health care workers, it will monitor the experience and progress of thousands of positive patients. TREAT Asia will debut the Purple Sky Network in 2007, tackling the specific treatment and prevention needs of men who have sex with men (MSMs). What's more, amfAR is one of the few organizations helping to fund the search for an AIDS cure. In June, the org announced 12 such grants, totaling $1.5 million. Here's to perma-Frost.

Carmen Zorrilla

For HIV positive moms, Carmen Zorrilla, MD, is the mother of all obstetricians. In 1986, Zorilla founded one of the world's first prenatal HIV clinics, Puerto Rico's Centro de Estudios Materno Infantiles (CEMI). At the time, many Puerto Rican medical providers wouldn't let positive people through the door. Zorrilla, then an expectant mother herself, took their care deeply to heart. Now 53, she has treated Puerto Rico's positive women since the most stigmatized days of the early '80s, when HIV was considered a gay-male disease. Since HAART's 1996 debut, only one baby born at CEMI has tested positive (the island's perinatal transmission rate is 2%). And now Zorrilla has gone holistic, offering the clinic's still predominantly positive female clientele everything from aromatherapy to empowerment workshops, while hosting microbicide and vaccine trials. She's also studying how stigma undermines care. As long as it sticks around, she will too.

Dignitas International

This caregiver support team has mastered a highly alternative treatment: harnessing the loving energy of the families and friends who support HIV positive people into one potent medicine. As AIDS destroys traditional family structures in developing countries, Dignitas builds and runs training programs for relatives and pals. The group, based in the Southern African nation of Malawi, was founded in 2003 by former Médicins Sans Frontiéres president James Orbinski, MD, along with a group of global health and research experts. With a staff of 40 and a new $500,000 grant from the M.A.C AIDS Fund, it will hop to India and other sites in 2007, spreading the message that AIDS needn't take away dignity.

Elena Franchuk

As AIDS crosses new social and global frontiers, so, thank goodness, does AIDS activism. Nothing about the charmed life of Elena Franchuk, for instance, would have predicted her current role: the

most powerful AIDS leader in Ukraine and its former Soviet neighbors. The daughter of past Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma and wife of zillionaire industrialist Victor Pinchuk, she was the model of power and privilege in a country with an AIDS infection rate of 1.4%. Yet she'd never met an openly HIV positive person. That changed 15 years ago. Newly pregnant, she was imagining her child's future and realized she had to do something. So as the epidemic tore through her newly independent nation—especially among its 400,000 drug users, 40% of whom are positive—she joined the defense. Her ANTIAIDS Foundation recently partnered with Bill Clinton. Franchuk has leveraged and risked her political clout to reach Ukraine's demonized gay population, plus its sex workers and AIDS orphans. In 2005, she launched the country's only national safe-sex campaign, showing humanoids in hard-core poses. Franchuk splattered them in the nightclubs she had frequented, in the name of her son, who's now 15 and will one day hit them too. She's getting the party started—safely.

Ashley Judd
When the role is AIDS activism, Ashley Judd, 38, isn't acting. The Global Ambassador for Youth AIDS has charmed audiences from sex workers to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. When pushing her films, she'll add an AIDS plug—then charm the press into printing it. In 2007, look for Youth AIDS and Judd to play up HIV among women. And our Oscar goes to...

Bruce Walker, MD
When this cellular immunology whiz, from Massachusetts General Hospital, lacked participants for his much-ballyhooed study of longtime HIV survivors, he changed his whole recruitment approach. Atypically courting ASOs, activists and grassroots organizations, Walker, 54, boosted enrollment. The data will arrive in two years—and might just help to usher in a much-needed vaccine.

Rod McCullom
Where in cyberland can you dish *Noah's Arc* casting rumors and the CDC's new HIV testing recommendations with one mouse click? At Rod 2:0 Beta (rodonline.typepad.com), a delirious blog run by Rod McCullom, 35. Averaging 11,000 hits a day, McCullom's site keeps gay black men plugged into cutting-edge HIV/AIDS stories from around the globe. Is he the next Keith Boykin?

Laurie Garrett
The only writer ever to win a Peabody Award, a Polk Award *and* a Pulitzer Prize, former *Newsday* science and medical reporter Laurie Garrett, 55, is the defining AIDS journalist of our time. The author of *The Coming Plague* (1994), a seminal AIDS warning, she promises a new book for 2007. The familiar topic: the worldwide impact of infectious disease. We're due for a happy ending.

Joyce Turner-Keller
This Southern spitfire never thought HIV could happen to her—until, six years after being raped, she was diagnosed with AIDS. The 57-year-old former flight attendant created Aspirations, a nonprofit that offers a full range of services for gulf coast PWAs. Wowing Capitol Hill in September, she demanded more money for her Katrina-ravaged Louisiana. She can advocate for us any day.

Dennis deLeon

Since the Latino Commission on AIDS elected deLeon, now 58, president in 1994, it has become the leader in addressing the growing needs of the elusive Latino AIDS community—immigration, poverty, cultural stigma, language issues and poor health care access. What's next? Planning the first-ever agenda for a new Spanish inquisition: a national Latino AIDS conference.

Julie Davids

Growing up outside Philadelphia, Julie Davids dreamed of becoming a pro ice hockey player. That didn't work out. But in her genius career as an AIDS revolutionary, she has won thousands of fans—who think she walks on (unfrozen) water. In 2003, Davids, now 38, began to rehab the very nature of AIDS activism, when she founded Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP). The idea: return the HIV/AIDS movement to its community roots—when it united yuppies, artists, sex workers, radical organizers and others. Davids saw all of this firsthand, when she joined ACT UP Philadelphia, in 1990. But over the years, she despaired as what she likes to call these "first responders" either died or became, understandably, consumed with fundraising to fight government cutbacks. Advocacy morphed from on-the-ground social reform to merely feeding the service machine. Based in Providence, CHAMP returns power to the "low-income, marginalized and/or people of color most likely to be living with HIV today." It funds and runs hundreds of workshops every year across America and the world, training folks who have the greatest local access to the issues in which they specialize.

Anyone who has worked with Davids talks first of her youthful energy. CHAMP (www.champnetwork.org), after all, is the group that stormed the Toronto International AIDS Conference with a banner demanding that George Bush acknowledge how HIV is spread: u.s. government: put the sex and drugs back into HIV prevention champ. In 2006, it hatched another of its trademark "Policy Focuses": condom acccess in prisons across America. And in true CHAMP form, it set about attacking the nation's prison infection rate, more than twice that of the general population, state by state. The group helped ACT UP Austin and ACT UP Philadelphia demand condom access in Texas and Pennsylvania jails. The Austin demonstration harassed and mobilized the state legislature; Philly jails now offer condoms at their commissaries. Julie Davids' secret? Location, location, location.

Julian Atim, MD

Uganda's Julian Atim, 26, says it's not enough for activists to prescribe greater access to drugs if countries lack the docs to administer them. Estimates say sub-Saharan Africa lacks 1 million essential docs. After losing both parents to AIDS and—though negative, witnessing stigma and poor care firsthand—Atim put herself through medical school. Then, as her classmates fled to high-paid jobs abroad, she founded Students for Equity in Health Care to keep med students on native soil and train them in AIDS treatment. That's graduating with honors.

Illinois

The Land of Lincoln has felt the happy side effects of three thoroughly modern, HIV-savvy politicians. Avante-garde AIDS action first blew into the windy city when Chicago's Constance Howard, a state legislator, sponsored the African-American HIV/AIDS Response Act in 2003, the nation's first such bill. When it took effect, in January 2006, it created a statewide HIV office. Last

summer, U.S. Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) took a public HIV test and assailed med-averse South African Health Minister Tshabala-Msimang. In January 2007, Illinois PWA Greg Harris will join Howard in the legislature. Now if they could just fix those Cubs.....

Loon Gangte
Nearly 6 million HIV positive people live in India, more than in any other nation. And Loon Gangte, 40, president of the Delhi Network of Positive People, keeps pharma companies from makin' rupee off their suffering. His activists pushed GlaxoSmithKlineto withdraw its patent application for the AIDS med Combivir, keeping the price lower—for now. Next, Gangte says, he'll attack 13 other pending patents and hype treatment access and literacy among the streets. *Salaam.*

Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières
This rapid reaction force, founded in 1971, delivers aid to people affected by armed conflict, epidemics and natural or manmade disasters. AIDS figures amid each of those miseries; that's why the org launched the Campaign for Access for Essential Medicines, in 2005. It got anti-retroviral drugs to 57,000 people (including 3,500 children) in 29 countries, with more nations pegged for 2007. The group has also blasted pharma companies' bid to patent AIDS meds in developing countries (see Loon Gangte, above). They are the world.

Microbicides
A little dab would do ya: Women who apply a microbicide gel before sex could finally ensure their own safety, no longer relying on men to use a condom. For too long, it's been only a fantasy; activists blame the male scientific elite. But thanks to some $124 million since 2000 from Bill and Melinda Gates, media hype at this summer's International AIDS Conference in Toronto and a California State Senate funding resolution, ladies worldwide may soon be living the dream. Five of 60 different versions are in late-stage clinical trials; if approved, they may be available by 2010. Who said feminism was dead?

Frika Chia Iskandar
This 25-year-old woman from the island nation of Indonesia has become a prized speaker on the global AIDS lecture circuit for her tale of surviving stigma in the developing world. Iskandar, who learned that she was positive at 18, advises the Asia Pacific Network of People Living With HIV/AIDS, which works to improve the lives of positive people in the region. In Indonesia, the world's fourth most populated country, the high HIV rate springs partly from sex work and injection drug use. Iskandar calls for a focus on women's rights, youth advocacy and resilience from the world's AIDS leaders. No woman is an island.

Karen Pearl
Karen Pearl, 53, is adding new spice to the 3,000 customized meals God's Love We Deliver (GLWD) serves each day to New Yorkers living with HIV and other serious illnesses. Since she took over as president and CEO of the volunteer organization last September, she's also been doling out a hefty side order: her 30 years of nonprofit activist experience, which proves essential in the AIDS service sector. Indeed, her background, which most recently includes a stint in leading the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, has taught her that AIDS service should strengthen, not

replace, AIDS activism. She's ready to take this activism back to the same streets her delivery trucks fill at mealtime. Pearl promises that in 2007, we'll see her organization ramp up employees, volunteers and even customers. The first step: decorating GLWD's plain white vans. The group had feared that a logo identifying the trucks as HIV-related would stigmatize customers. Pearl will work to brand both the vans and the organization as vehicles for promoting the overall health and well-being of its clients, helping to reduce the stigma that surrounds HIV. Bon appétit.

Zachie Achmat

It's no stretch at all to call Zackie Achmat the Gandhi of AIDS activism. Just as young Gandhi fought for justice in South Africa (before heading to India), Achmat has led the rowdy fight to force his country's murderously negligent government to treat the world's second largest HIV positive population. Now 44, he founded South Africa's radical Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in 1998. Globally, he's renowned for wearing T-shirts that proclaim hiv positive, and he's donned multiple hats in his quest to roll out affordable meds and fight stigma. Achmat refused to start HAART until all South Africans could, even politely rejecting a personal plea from former President Nelson Mandela to take his meds in 2003. In August 2006, Achmat (who eventually started meds), alongside 44 other TAC members, occupied a government building to demand treatment for positive prisoners and ended up in the slammer himself. Biopic, anyone?

Phill Wilson

When Phill Wilson first proposed that black America hold itself accountable for its exploding AIDS rate, his critics called him crazy. But if Wilson's crazy, he's crazy like a fox. If he seems fidgety, fiddling with a shoulder-length dreadlock, staring intently into the near distance, it's because he's lost in thought, formulating his latest scheme.

One scheme, the NIA Plan, took shape in 1999, the same year Wilson founded the Black AIDS Institute (BAI), perhaps the most galvanizing force in African-American AIDS today. NIA ("nia" is Swahili for "purpose") called for a mass mobilization against AIDS from every segment of the African-American community—civil rights groups, politicians, clergy and churches, fraternities and sororities, celebrities, media. And it helped revolutionize how most AIDS organizations were doing business.

As a result, seven years later, the black community has experienced a profound shift in the way it deals with AIDS. Propelled by Wilson's vision, those who once ignored the epidemic have joined the battle against it. When Wilson tells you, in his trademark nasal rasp, "There is finally a desire to deal with AIDS in black America," you can dare to believe it.

The desire came into focus at this year's 16th International AIDS Conference, as Wilson marched through Toronto with an entourage of black America's luminaries. The Rev. Jesse Jackson called AIDS a "serial killer that had been allowed to stalk and kill black America." NAACP chairman Julian Bond demanded that black leaders actually lead.

Of course, Wilson doesn't get all of the credit for the newfound commitment, nor does he take it. The latest statistics shocked many into heeding his call: Blacks constitute 13% of the U.S.

population, yet they represent 50% of all AIDS cases. But if the facts inspired many to step up to the plate, it is Wilson's cheerleading that has kept them in the game.

Now that 70% of newly diagnosed women are African-American, "Phill and BAI were a motivating factor in our decision to heighten our HIV education," says Cheryl Cooper, executive director of the National Council of Negro Women.

This fall, for instance, Wilson hosted a milestone AIDS symposium in the very crucible of black health misconceptions: Tuskegee, Alabama, home of the syphilis study that infected black men over four decades. He marked a personal milestone this year too: his 50th birthday and 25th year living with HIV. Next year's schemes include moving BAI from Los Angeles to New York City. Crazy? Nah. But, Phill, we sure are crazy for you.

CNN
Until we get an all-AIDS broadcasting service, we'll stay tuned to CNN. The breadth of its coverage is astonishing, whether it's a breaking news story such as the FDA's approval of Atripla, the first once-a-day, one-pill HIV combo, or a majestic special report, like "Where Have All the Parents Gone?," Christiane Amanpour's AIDS-orphan odyssey. Just as HIV leaders were beginning to ask the Big Three networks' gawking heads, "Where have all the AIDS stories gone?" CNN redoubled its efforts this year, the epi-demic's 25th anniversary. People living with HIVdeserve more of the same balanced tone in 2007—and more of that hottie Dr. Gupta too.

Freedom Train Productions
Launched in September by playwright and activist Andre Lancaster, this New York–based social justice theater company seeks to cultivate black playwrights who want to empower the black LGBT community. The company's landmark first season will feature four edgy productions to be handpicked by Lancaster. His criterion: dynamic plays that use theater elements—from mystery to comedy—to bring awareness to the fight against HIV and provoke the audience into action. We can't wait for the lights to dim.

Anjali Gopalan
Seventy percent of rural Indian women surveyed said they've never heard of HIV, yet 39% of India's 5.7 million positive people are female, and 85% of women with HIV report having only one sexual partner (often their husband). Nor does it help that talk of women's sexuality is taboo in the country and that homosexuality is illegal. But Anjali Gopalan, founder of India's Naz Foundation, won't dummy up.

Gopalan first made her mark among India's largely underground gay population. Having done HIV outreach in New York in the '80s, she returned home to find that HIV awareness was nearly nonexistent. In 1994, she founded Naz to get gay men info, care and a supportive community, setting up a clinic, a hot line, support groups and an outreach program. Naz now works with about 12,000 gay men a year.

In 2001, Gopalan expanded, launching a sexual health program for ladies and a home for positive

women and children, who are often kicked out onto the streets or left homeless when their positive husband or parents die. Naz offers residents health care, yoga, education and job training. Gopalan distributes brochures to women at fairs and other community events and is often their sole source of HIV info. Keep talking.

Profiles by Linda Villarosa, Bob Ickes, Lucile Scott, Nicole Joseph, and Kellee Terrell. Additional reporting by James Wortman.

Who are you watching? Tell us who you think is doing great HIV work. Email us at onestowatch@poz.com.

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