On the March!

POZ’s C2EA countdown

July 1, 2005 By Nick Burns

Five years ago, HIVer Joe Rattner, now 38, ditched New York City for Hawaii—hoping the beaches and laid-back lifestyle would be healing. Instead, he found rampant drug use and poor HIV care. Rattner fought back, founding the West Oahu Hope for a Cure Foundation. A state caravan organizer for October’s Campaign to End AIDS (C2EA; visit www.c2ea.org), Rattner is helping HIV positive islanders get to LA and caravan to Washington, DC. Be there.Aloha.

Why are you marching?
Hawaii HIV care is nowhere near New York City’s. If you’re on ADAP but don’t qualify for Medicaid and need testosterone or pain killers to manage side effects, you’re screwed.

So it’s not exactly paradise?
It’s Mormon country here—students are using drugs even though they believe in [substance] abstinence. These are small islands with lots of HIV stigma—word gets around quickly.

How will the Hawaiian delegation get to the mainland?
We’re holding a PBS inter-island fundraising telethon October 1 for people who can’t afford airfare to LA or DC. We’ll have ancient and modern hula dancers performing on-air.

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