Pop Projects

Pepsi offers a refreshing way to combat HIV.

November 12, 2010 By Willette Francis

AIDS advocates all over are taking the Pepsi challenge. Throughout 2010, the beverage giant has been awarding 32 grants each month as part of its community-improving Pepsi Refresh Project. Individuals, businesses and nonprofits submit proposals online, where peers are able to determine the winning grants by voting for their favorite ideas.

So far, more than two dozen submissions revolved around HIV/AIDS, including one from *POZ* contributor/blogger Shawn Decker and his wife, Gwenn Barringer, who propose providing sexual health education to 50,000 teenagers in 50 states.

In June, AIDS Research Alliance of America proposed purchasing state-of-the-art laboratory equipment for its quest to find a cure. The idea finished in that month's top two—and garnered a $250,000 prize. (Other grant increments include $5,000, $25,000 and $50,000, and they're divided among six categories—health, arts and culture, food and shelter, the planet, neighborhoods and education.)

By year's end, Pepsi will have awarded up to $1.3 million in Refresh grants. And there's talk that the cola company might extend the program into 2011. Let's hope so, because like an unopened bottle of pop, HIV/AIDS advocacy and its ability to improve a community never go flat.

For more information about the Pepsi Refresh Project, go to refresheverything.com*.*

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Pepsi-Refresh-HIV-19367-9177