Hey, Mr. DJ

January 9, 2012 By Lauren Tuck

James Perigny, also known as DJ Jimmy P, began his disc jockey career in the late ’80s, playing house music at some of New York City’s hippest dance clubs such as The Tunnel, The Eagle and The Break. At that same time, HIV was decimating the gay community. The music died down, the clubs emptied out, and Perigny headed to Southern Florida–where he shifted his focus to HIV/AIDS and LGBT fund-raising.

In the Sunshine State, Perigny became aware of the lack of HIV services for Latinos and other minorities. In 2004, he and his then-partner Fulgencio Aponte cofounded Red Hispana Florida (RHF), which offers HIV testing, counseling, education and support to the state’s most disenfranchised communities. At RHF, Perigny created and now runs WHIV radio, an Internet radio station that also educates about the virus. In between streaming his favorite modern hits, Perigny interviews doctors, social workers and HIV service providers. Listen up to what he has to say.

What three adjectives best describe you?
Passionate, goal-driven, respectful.

Being HIV negative yourself, what drives you to do what you do?
The passing of two long-term Latino partners and the insane amount of paperwork it takes to help someone with HIV.

What is your greatest regret?
Letting Fulgencio Aponte, my partner of nine years, visit Venezuela. He could not return home to Fort Lauderdale because of the U.S. HIV travel ban. [The ban was lifted in 2010.] He died from AIDS-related cancer due to lack of treatment and medicine in Venezuela.

If you could change one thing about helping others living with HIV, what would it be?
The availability of funding to eliminate ADAP [AIDS Drug Assistance Programs] wait lists.

What is the best advice you ever received?
Do not listen to naysayers, and do what is in your heart.

What person in the HIV/AIDS community do you most admire?
I admire Nelson Vergel [a health advocate and wellness author] because he is an amazing source of information and help.

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what would you grab on the way out?
My dog and my DJ equipment.

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