The Sunshine Boys

Kevin and Kip: TV AIDS crusaders

April 1, 1994 By Jeffrey L. Newman

I first came to know Kevin Krauss and Kip Whitlocke like tens of thousands of other South Floridians: in my living room. It was on a weeknight, about 18 months ago, sometime after *Oprah* but before *Roseanne*, and I was watching the local evening news. With my dog and two cats beside me and my dinner on my lap, I listened as Kevin, an assignment editor with Miami's CBS affiliate, publicly disclosed that he was living with AIDS.

Nearly 24-hours later, while sitting in the same spot glued to my television, I listened as Kip, a special project's producer for the local NBC affiliate, disclosed to his viewers that he too was living with AIDS.

In an unprecedented move, both stations publicly committed to air reports about Kevin's and Kip's continuing battle with AIDS.

This was no small feat for conservative Miami. In a city that is not known for its liberal politics, having two primary television stations take proactive stands in educating viewers about life with AIDS was brave, daring and downright cutting edge.

"I think Kevin is just incredible," Whitlocke says of his friend. "I don't know of anyone out there, with the exception of Larry Kramer, who is so vocal about this disease. He is fighting, fighting, fighting every day to stay alive. That, to me, is just amazing. I wonder if I will hae that energy and determination when I am that far along with AIDS."

The reports themselves seldom focus on the transmission of AIDS but rather Kevin and Kip's personal experiences, from experimental AIDS treatments to the effects on their personal lives.

Kevin, 34, and Kip, 33, are at opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to their health. Kip's T-cell count has never fallen below the 400 level and, in the 10 years that he has been living with HIV he has never developed any AIDS-related illnesses. Kevin, though, has seen few days in the last two years where his T-cell count has risen above the 30 mark.

Stan Stachowiak, Kevin's companion of four years sees clear differences in the friends' approach to life. "Kip would settle in a beach chair on the beach and happily take in the sun, read a book

and relax. Kevin would sit in the chair, fuss with the umbrella a few times and try to figure out why he is there and what he should be doing. He'd feel guilty about being there and wonder what he could be doing with that time."

"Kevin has taught me a lot," Whitlocke says. "I've never sat and cried about being HIV positive. I never sat and thought, 'Why me, why me.' I just thought that this has happened, and now I have to live with it, so what can I do to make it better? I credit Kevin with increasing my whole awareness of the disease. Kevin is determined to let the world know about this disease, and he's determined to beat this disease. I don't look at him as someone who is going to die soon or who is suffering or who is going to be beaten soon. I look at him as someone who is helping to change the world."

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