HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day 2017

The theme of #HLTSAD2017 is “HIV-Resilient.”

June 5, 2017

Monday, June 5, marks HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day (HLTSAD), which was launched three years ago by Tez Anderson and Let’s Kick ASS—AIDS Survivor Syndrome. This year’s theme is “HIV-Resilient.”

The event coincides with the beginning of what we now call the AIDS epidemic. On June 5, 1981, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) wrote in its Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report about a rare and mysterious illness that was striking young gay men.

Visit HLTSAD.org to learn more about Let’s Kick ASS and to read the “HIV Long-Term Survivor’s Declaration: A Vision for Our Future.” The website also offers insight about long-term survivors, such as:

> We celebrate those who have defied the odds by living with HIV for decades. June 5 is about coming together and realizing that we are not alone. It is a national day of storytelling. We want to collect the stories of our lives, resilience, and our survival.
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> We want to change the narrative from surviving to thriving and Healthy Aging with HIV. Long-term survival, once an almost unimaginable concept is now the norm—something that was unimaginable before 1996.
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> Today 59% of all people living with HIV in the US are over 50. By 2020 that will increase to 70 percent. The new face of HIV is aging. Our focus is on ensuring that HIV Long-Term Survivors are front and center in the current HIV dialogue.

In the inaugural year of HLTSAD, Anderson penned an article for POZ laying out the needs and goals for the awareness day. It reads in part:

> Our goals for that day are embodied in our mission statement: “Let’s Kick ASS is a grassroots movement of long-term survivors, positive and negative, honoring the unique and profound

experience of living through the AIDS epidemic. We're dedicated to reclaiming our lives, ending isolation, and envisioning a future we never dreamed of." We'll do so while paving the way for a bright and purposeful future for those of us who endured such a painful past.

[snip]

I hope on June 5, and the rest of the year, you'll find ways to seek out survivors and listen to them. Do not just accept "I'm fine" when you ask, "How are you?" Listen to them. Acknowledge that they've come through the fire, but they can still dream and be happy. Better yet, form a group to address the issues of long-term survivors in your community. Sure, there is still plenty to complain about and much work to be done, but we can do it. Let's all start on June 5 by coming together and saying "congratulations on surviving" to a heroic generation.

We've earned it.

You can read more about this subject on POZ by clicking #Long-Term Survivors.

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