HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day 2019

This year's theme is "Empowered to Thrive."

June 5, 2019 By Caroline Tien

Wednesday, June 5, marks HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day (HLTSAD) 2019. Created in 2013 by Tez Anderson and the Let's Kick ASS—AIDS Survivor Syndrome—advocacy group, the day recognizes and celebrates the bravery and fortitude of the estimated 300,000 Americans who have been living with the virus for 25 years or more (in other words, about 25% of the 1.2 million Americans living with HIV). It's also a chance to highlight the unique challenges facing this population.

"We aim to catalyze a national conversation on optimizing the quality of life for women and men HIV long-term survivors," writes Anderson in an HLTSAD announcement. "It is time to prioritize and address HIV care focused on well-being and healthy aging with HIV. We do that by spotlighting unique needs and issues confronting survivors today."

For example, he points out, long-term survivors take an average of nine different meds each day. Many take 15 or more, which is a challenge to manage. What's more, nearly half of long-term survivors are living with a disability.

Why mark HLTSAD on June 5? It's the publication date of the first report documenting what became known as HIV/AIDS—a 1981 article in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

Much has changed in the nearly four decades since then. But despite the advances made in treatment and prevention, the epidemic is not over, and people continue to age with the virus. That's why Anderson chose "Empowered to Thrive" as this year's theme. (Anderson and other long-term survivors were profiled on NBC's Today; you can watch that video at the top of this article.)

HLTSAD networking and wellness events (including raffles, art exhibitions, movie screenings and meditation sessions) are scheduled in Miami, New York and other cities. For more, search #hltsad and #empowered2thrive on social media and visit the HLTSAD Facebook page here.

In related news, see "Coming Soon: A Mural That Honors HIV Long-Term Survivors."

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