



Jeffrey Newman, HIV and Homeless Advocate, Dies Days After Husband Jayson Conner

“Positively Jeffrey” Newman and Jayson Conner handed out over 180,000 backpacks filled with supplies to New Yorkers living on the streets.

July 14, 2026 By [Trent Straube](#)

Jeffrey Newman, 58, a journalist who spoke openly about [living with HIV](#), died four days after his husband, Jayson Conner, 48, died of a heart attack in his Manhattan home. The couple were well known for handing out backpacks filled with supplies to unhoused people in New York City. Their nonprofit, Together Helping Others, and its [Backpacks for the Street](#) program delivered over 180,000 backpacks to people living on the streets since 2018, [reports The New York Times](#).

“Beyond his work with the homeless, Jeffrey was an early and [courageous advocate](#) in the fight against HIV/AIDS at a time when fear and stigma were widespread,” [his brother, Glenn Newman, told W42ST.com](#). “After publicly sharing his own HIV-positive diagnosis in 2001, he became a powerful voice for awareness, compassion and hope. He was also proudly sober beginning in 2008 and spoke openly about recovery, [LGBT equality](#) and suicide prevention, particularly among LGBT youth. His willingness to share his own experiences gave countless others the courage to seek help and live authentically.”

Jeffrey and Jayson were about to celebrate 22 years together when Jayson died unexpectedly. In an anniversary post from July 10, 2024, Jeffrey wrote:

Two decades ago I went on a date with a quirky, goofy, unbelievably adorable guy, who I’d casually known for a few months.

He was homeless and trying to find himself. I was going through some life turbulence.

On paper we were probably the last two people who seemed destined for a full-fledged romance. Many predicted we’d never last. Little did we know it was kismet.

Born in Ardsley, New York, Jeffrey moved to New York City to work as a senior editor for ABCNews.com and TheStreet.com. He was also the founding president and CEO of OUT.com, a publication covering LGBTQ topics.

His HIV advocacy earned him a spot on the [2013 POZ 100](#), which honored unsung heroes in the fight against AIDS. [The write-up read:](#)

Jeffrey Newman created the Facebook group “HIV and AIDS—Curb the Ignorance—Get The Facts Out—Proving It Gets Better” to educate people about the virus and to break the stereotypes and myths through facts, information and personal stories. Jeffrey has been working with HIV/AIDS groups for nearly 20 years, starting with his work with AIDS Walk Miami. He is an award-winning journalist who has written for The Advocate, POZ, the Windy City Times and other publications. Jeffrey is part of RiseUpToHIV’s “No Shame About Being HIV Positive” campaign and other anti-stigma efforts. His goal with his Facebook group and the newly launched PositivelyJeffrey.com is to help people realize that they are not alone; he hopes to inspire people newly diagnosed with HIV and to let them know that it does get better.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Jeffrey Newman (@positivelyjeffrey)

In more recent years, he continued to raise awareness by sharing his HIV story on social media. On May 20, 2024, he posted:

HAPPY 23rd HIV-versary to ME! Twenty three years ago I was diagnosed with HIV, and I’m

still here!

Today I'm thriving , healthier than ever, undetectable, and THRIVING with over 1,00 tcell.

As tradition goes, I honor the day with a banana, since it was 8,402 days ago that I was going about my business, buying bananas at the grocery store when the doctor called to say I had tested positive.

A friend asked me recently when it was that I accepted my diagnosis. Truth is, I don't think it ever occurred to me not to accept.

I remember sitting on my building stoop for about 20 minutes looking up at this piercingly gorgeous blue sky or what was a beautiful spring day and thought I had two choices. I could curl up in a corner and wallow in self-pity, or I could get up, dust myself off and accept that this was my new normal. The latter is what I chose to do. ...

On June 28, 2026, Jeffrey posted on Facebook the news that his husband, Jayson Conner, had died of a heart attack as the two were about to celebrate their 22nd anniversary.

Jeffrey died days later, on July 2. News outlets and family did not confirm a cause of death.

Both men and their advocacy for the unhoused have been covered by numerous news outlets. According to the New York Times, Conner understood the needs of this population, as he once struggled with addiction and homelessness. Conner is survived by a daughter and son from a previous marriage.

Newman and Conner viewed the backpack program as delivering a message of hope, [Newman's family told W42ST.com](#). It was "about showing people who feel invisible and forgotten that they matter and that someone cares."

"Jayson was the love of Jeffrey's life and his true partner in every sense of the word," Glenn Newman added. "They built their lives together, shared a common purpose and dedicated themselves to serving others. Whether they were running their nonprofit, supporting people on the streets of New York or simply enjoying everyday life, they were rarely apart. Their relationship was built on deep love, unwavering commitment and a shared belief that every person deserves dignity, compassion, and hope."