The POZ 100

September 1, 2019

Much has changed since our annual list honoring HIV/AIDS advocates debuted in 2010. There's still a lot of work to be done to end the epidemic, but the years since we published our first list have seen the creation of the first National HIV/AIDS Strategy and the lifting of the HIV travel ban, which led to the return of the International AIDS Conference to the United States. There have also been a number of significant scientific breakthroughs.

For example, we now have pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent HIV, and we know that treatment for the virus equals prevention when people living with HIV can maintain an undetectable viral load.

A decade ago, the Obama administration gave HIV advocates hope for a renewed effort against the virus at the federal level. It was in this context that the first POZ 100 list was born. We spotlighted 100 warriors in the fight against AIDS in order to support their work. We wanted to honor their service and inspire them to carry on. Today, that inspiration and support is needed more than ever.

The list has a different focus each year, such as youth, women or long-term survivors. It also varies from including only people living with HIV to sometimes including HIV-negative allies. Despite those differences, the goal remains the same—to honor those in the HIV/AIDS struggle for their work.

POZ has always been a mirror for the community, so we wanted to reflect all the efforts being made by so many. While some honorees have been well known, many of them were known only to their local communities before they were nationally recognized. No list is ever definitive, but we've done our best to make each POZ 100 list representative of the epidemic.

We celebrate the achievements of all our POZ 100 honorees!



THE POZ 100

Some of the bravest, most dogged and downright effective AIDS fighters we know

THIS PAST YEAR WAS A BANNER ONE for waging war on AIDS in America. President Obama staffed up the President's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA), reopened the Office of National AIDS Policy and invited several hundred people (many of them living with HIV) to the White House to celebrate the launch of a National HIV/AIDS Strategy. Needle exchange was approved—as was the Affordable Care Act (a.k.a. the health care reform bill that will insure many who have HIV, albeit not until 2014). And the travel ban for HIV-positive people entering the United States was lifted. It was announced that, for the first time since 1990, the International AIDS Conference will again be held in America, this time in Washington, DC, in 2012.

The money is starting to flow: The president pledged $30 million additional dollars for HIV prevention, infused the crumbling AIDS Drug Assistance Program with $25 million in emergency funding (though unfortunately the need still outpaces the support) and secured from Congress $50 million more for the Social Innovative Fund—some of which has already been awarded to organizations that fight AIDS in America (for example, the National AIDS Fund). The Global Health Initiative was established, securing the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief's $48 billion budget (for the moment).

Science also upped the ante. For the first time in years, HIV researchers will say a cure for AIDS is feasible. And results of recent studies show there is good hope for microbicide and vaccine development (though much work to do).

Anthony Fauci, MD, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), said NIH will concentrate more funding on AIDS cure research in the near term. And Thomas Frieden, MD, MPH, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), named HIV/AIDS one of six "winnable battles" the CDC will focus on fighting.

Never in the three decades we've battled this beast have we been better poised to administer a TKO to HIV.

But perhaps the most important development is that we're zeroing in on who is at risk for HIV in America today—and why. And we're developing successful ways to help. It's critical that we do: Of the 1.2 million Americans estimated to be living with the virus, 21 percent don't know their status. In addition, more than 450,000 of them are not connected to care.

Why is this true?

Many people living with HIV in America today face a unique set of structural and lifestyle challenges, including, but not limited to: poverty, hunger, under- or unemployment, illiteracy, racism, discrimination, immigration issues, homelessness,

Rolando Guerra faces HIV with style.

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