POZ Awards 2022 / Best Celebrity Advocate

Read about the nominees, then scroll down to vote for your favorite!

October 1, 2022

VOTING IS CLOSED

Welcome to the 7th Annual POZ Awards, spotlighting the best representatives of HIV in media and culture.

The POZ editorial staff selects the nominees, but POZ readers choose the winners.

Eligible nominees were active or were presented, published or produced between October 1, 2021, and September 30, 2022.

BEST CELEBRITY ADVOCATE

Demetre Daskalakis, MD

If you do a Google image search for “Dr. Demetre Daskalakis,” the first pic that appears is a sexy shot of the Columbia- and Harvard-educated doc in a suit with an unbuttoned shirt that exposes his muscled chest and a kinky leather harness. One could be forgiven for thinking the image is from a hookup app profile rather than a portrait of one of the most important physicians in the country: the director of the Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The sex-positive, openly gay, tattooed doctor has been working on behalf of the health of the LGBTQ community for years, starting with his work in New York City, which included attending sex parties and events to test for HIV and promote awareness. Last year, when monkeypox began its ugly spread in our communities, Daskalakis was called on to put his expertise as a medical professional and leader in the LGBTQ community to work as a member of the White House Monkeypox National Response Team. We couldn’t think of a better man to help us manage this newest outbreak than this super smart, compassionate, sexy, fabulous doctor.

Pam Grier

Trailblazing actress and filmmaker Pam Grier’s first movie role was in the gay cult classic Beyond the Valley of the Dolls, but it was her starring roles in such 1970s films as Coffy and Foxy Brown

that made her a blaxploitation sex symbol. She went on to more film and television roles, earning an NAACP Image Award and a Golden Globe Award as the lead in Quentin Tarantino's film Jackie Brown. Then, in the early 2000s, she won the hearts of the LGBTQ community playing Kit Porter in the original Showtime production of The L Word, which proved to be a catalyst for her LGBTQ activism. In 2011, Grier was awarded the Entertainment AIDS Alliance Visionary Award and became involved with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. But the reason she landed on our list this year is her ongoing shining commitment as a spokesperson for Dining Out For Life, the annual dining fundraiser that raises money for community-based organizations serving people living with or impacted by HIV. For over 10 years, Grier has been lending her voice and glamour to the event, helping raise awareness and funds for HIV service organizations across the country. Always kicking ass, Pam, and we love it!

Javier Muñoz

Known for his roles in the Broadway musicals In the Heights and Hamilton, we're delighted to have suave actor, singer and POZ cover boy Javier Muñoz as a 2022 nominee. He tested HIV positive in 2002 but didn't disclose his status publicly until 2016. Ever since, Muñoz hasn't stopped being active and vocal about living with HIV. In the last year, he appeared in the HIV coming-of-age film Three Months (alongside Hollywood luminaries Ellen Burstyn and Louis Gossett Jr.), and onstage as Nigel in the new musical version of the film The Devil Wears Prada. But it's his dedication to authenticity that has him in our sights this year. For instance, he is unafraid to use social media to share hard truths, like his cancer diagnosis in 2015 or his lonely bout with COVID-19 last Christmas. Perhaps most valiant is his striking down of haters and bullies who try to shame him for living openly and unapologetically as a gay man living with HIV. His strength, vulnerability and heart help make him a fantastic performer as well as a powerful voice in our community.

Sheryl Lee Ralph

Whether you know her as the Emmy-winning star of Abbot Elementary, Brandy's stepmother on the 1990s sitcom Moesha or as the original Deena (her breakout role) in the smash 1981 Broadway musical Dreamgirls, there's no denying that Sheryl Lee Ralph is a superstar. And her long and illustrious career isn't her only achievement. In September, she was honored for her 30 years of HIV activism at the Elizabeth Taylor Ball to End AIDS. Ralph's fight against HIV started at the beginning of the epidemic, when she saw friends and colleagues dying of the illness. In 1990, as a memorial to the people in her life she lost to AIDS, she founded The D.I.V.A. (Divinely Inspired Victoriously Aware) Foundation. D.I.V.A. has the remarkable honor of producing the longest-running HIV and AIDS and health awareness concerts in the United States. Ralph acknowledges that HIV isn't the same as it was when she launched the foundation, but she knows the pandemic isn't over. As she said at the ball, "Quiet as it's kept, people still die of AIDS in America." Sheryl Lee Ralph: dream girl, diva and HIV hero.

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