MTV Rocker Honors AIDS Activist During Trek to India

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During a three-country tour, Gym Class Heroes front man and MTV Staying Alive Foundation ambassador Travis McCoy presented Indian AIDS activist Mandakini Behara with a 2009 Staying Alive Foundation Award for her work in running the Utkal Network of People Living with HIV (UNP+) in Cuttack, Orissa, *The Times of India* reports.

The grant money will be used to train HIV-positive youth to speak in public; it will also fund myriad educational, outreach and support programs at schools and hospitals.

Founded in 2006 by five HIV-positive people, UNP+ aims to reduce stigma and discrimination in India while advocating for the rights of people living with HIV. Staying Alive previously awarded UNP+ with its first grant in 2008. UNP+ now has 370 members.

“I strongly feel the best cure [for HIV] we have at this point is increasing education and building awareness,” said McCoy, whose Gym Class Heroes hits include “The Queen and I” and “Cupid’s Chokehold.” “It’s how we use this information in the choices we make that will determine whether or not our generation will help make a change or ultimately make things worse.”

According to the article, McCoy was appointed Staying Alive ambassador in January and is visiting grassroots HIV/AIDS programs supported by the foundation in South Africa, India and the Philippines. McCoy plans to write and record a track inspired by his travels to be released on World AIDS Day, December 1, with all sales benefiting Staying Alive.

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