Accepting the Courage Award and Dedication to Ethan

October 6, 2009 By Shawn Decker

I was somewhat concerned going into the district with the highest infection rate in the United States dressed as a lemon. But when I took the stage after Don from Whitman-Walker introduced me as someone living with AIDS, I posed for a moment to give everyone a chance to read my chest, "Life Gave Me AIDS" and then my back "I MADE LEMONAIDS!"... and about 1,000 or so people laughed and clapped.

Then Don read what amounts to my life story- by the time I took the podium people were on my side. Even though I looked like a doofus. Either way, I thanked God for having the DC Cowboys as an opening act to loosen people up. So here's as serious of a speech as you'll ever hear from someone dressed as a giant lemon.

Thanks to Aram from BladeTV for the video! You can see a highlight reel of all the morning's speakers and entertainment *on YouTube*.

In case you're too lazy to watch my speech or are at work and don't want to get fired, basically I thanked the Whitman-Walker Clinic for helping positoids turn AIDS into lemonAIDS, using more tactful language since I'd already nailed that sentiment visually. I also thanked my teammates in Team Supersnack, but- during my big moment, I totally Hillary Swanked the love of my life, Gwenn... She didn't care and on the car ride home when I asked she said, "Yeah, you said something, I think?"

It's all good, Gwenn isn't the type that is needy for public displays of recognition, and the award really wasn't about just me. It was for all people living with HIV, especially those who don't yet have the courage- or lack of intelligence?- to wear a giant lemonAIDS costume onstage. Of course, now I fear that's my image. That the rest of my educational days in sexual health will be a concerted distancing from "that lemon thing", as it will come to be known...

But really, the AIDS Walk in DC was by far my most favorite AIDS Walk ever. Supersnack really kicked it up a notch, and walking around DC with a teammate dressed as George Washington is an experience I'll never forget.

Though I kind of winged the speech, the one thing I knew is that I would be dedicating the Courage Award to Ethan Zohn, who is trying his damnedest to kick cancer in the balls this year after being diagnosed earlier this year. Ethan stood up for people with HIV in 2002 when he took his Survivor Africa

winnings and used the money to start an HIV prevention/awareness organization in Grassroot Soccer. Aside from the obvious evidence, he's a great guy who is currently obsessed with two things: beating cancer and winning the GQ's Better Man contest!

Also, the infamous BlameDrewsCancer campaign, which encouraged people to blame cancer for the most mundane things- like losing your keys or forgetting to pick up the dry cleaning, has lended their support to Ethan. So look for lots of BlameEthansCancer updates on Twitter and Facebook, and join in.

What do I blame Ethan's cancer for? For wearing that LemonAIDS outfit!

Positively Yours,
Shawn

Shawn on: *ShawnandGwenn.com Shawn's Poz columns Shawn's book Decker's Daily Coffee*

Share the Blog. Not the Virus.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.