AIDS United Honors Nancy Pelosi, Judith Light and Nine Other Advocates

The virtual celebration took place on World AIDS Day and also marked AIDS United's 10th anniversary!

December 6, 2021 By AIDS United

AIDS United marked its 10th anniversary Wednesday, which was World AIDS Day, with a virtual awards celebration and wine and cheese tasting. Actor Daniel Franzese and singer-songwriter Kimberley Locke co-hosted the event.

While AIDS United celebrated its first decade, the organization's roots go back to the earliest days of the HIV epidemic. AIDS United was formed in 2011 as the merger of two older organizations, AIDS Action and The National AIDS Fund, which were both formed in the 1980s.

The event was held on World AIDS Day as a way to both commemorate the 40-year fight against HIV, and to celebrate AIDS United's achievements since its creation 10 years ago.

Awards were given out to 12 people at the event. Awardees included community advocates, federal employees, former AIDS United board members, and Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Jesse Milan Jr., president and CEO of AIDS United, presented Pelosi with the AIDS United Congressional Appreciation Award. He thanked Pelosi for her leadership on HIV and for consistently considering the needs of people living with and vulnerable to HIV.

Milan said, "There is no doubt that she had our people in mind when the Affordable Care Act was crafted. There is no doubt that she had our people in mind when the House passed the Equality Act. There is no doubt that she carries us with her in every legislative fight she has, including now for infrastructure support for the public health workforce."

Pelosi accepted the award by first praising AIDS United. She said, "AIDS United has been an essential voice and a valued partner in the fight to send HIV/AIDS to the dustbin of history, connecting communities with health resources and helping lawmakers enact lifesaving legislation."

Pelosi, who called for urgent action to address HIV in her first floor speech three decades ago, said

she was proud of the progress House Democrats and partners like AIDS United have made. “Together,” she said, “we have established and replenished PEPFAR and the Global Fund to fight the epidemic around the world, ensured low-income survivors can afford safe, quality housing, created the Ryan White Care initiative to insure that those living with HIV and AIDS have access to affordable, quality, community-based care, and expanded access to health coverage and ended discrimination against preexisting conditions within the historic Affordable Care Act.”

AIDS United also honored Judith Light with an AIDS United Community Advocate Appreciation Award. Light has received two Emmy Awards and three Tony Awards, including one for her decades of volunteer work for HIV.

Light portrayed Jeanne White, Ryan White’s mother, in the 1989 movie “The Ryan White Story.” Ryan was a child who received national attention after he contracted HIV and was expelled from school. The movie and Light’s performance are credited with helping to change hearts and minds across the country.

Presenting the award, Milan said that Light has “exemplified what support for our people should be. Her testimonies and advocacy have touched Congress members and corporate executives, not to mention scores of federal and state and local leaders. And she’s touched the hearts of millions of us along the way by using her star power to raise awareness for our rights and our needs.”

In addition to Pelosi and Light, AIDS United gave awards to nine others:

- Robert “Bobby” Hilliard Jr., M.D., Chair, AIDS United Board of Trustees; Chief Executive Officer, Legacy Community Health

- Katy Caldwell, Treasurer, AIDS United Board of Trustees; Executive Advisor, Legacy Community Health

- John Barnes, Executive Director, Funders Concerned About AIDS

- Douglas Brooks, Vice President Advancing Black Equity & Community Engagement at Gilead Sciences; Former White House Director of Office of National AIDS Policy (President Obama); Former Chair, AIDS United Board of Trustees

- Guillermo Chacon, President, Latino Commission on AIDS

- Janet Cleveland, Deputy Division Director – Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Venita Ray, Co-Executive Director, Positive Women’s Network – USA

- Tori Cooper, Director of Community Engagement for the Transgender Justice Initiative, Human Rights Campaign; First Black/Transgender Appointee, Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS

- Antigone Dempsey, M.Ed., Director, Division of Policy & Data, HIV/AIDS Bureau, HRSA

In addition to the award, AIDS United partnered with Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company and Wine Insiders who created wine and cheese pairings and led a tasting section of the event. Proceeds from the wine and cheese sales went to support the work of AIDS United.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/aids-united-honors-nancy-pelosi-judith-light-nine-advocates