An Evening Without Politics

October 1, 2009 By Shawn Decker

I've been a little political as of late; if you call thinking that health care reform and health care in general shouldn't be motivated solely by profit. So what did this ace reporter find? And what was the point of the event? Well, I found a roomful of about 800-1000 who cared about the issue of HIV, who were there to raise money and awareness about how it is disproportionately affecting African Americans in the United States. There was also a call to create initiates at HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges & Universities) to encourage peer-to-peer HIV education.

Because not just HIV spreads- but HIV prevention spreads too. The word just has to get out there.

Roving about as I were, I spoke with a member of Congress from CT, Jim Himes, who said that federal money is much better spent on prevention then dealing with the consequences of what happens when someone tests positive. Here here. I tweeted the words of Rep. Maxine Waters, who implored the audience that "we can conquer HIV/AIDS- it can be done!"

I love Maxine, and wanted to rush the stage to give her a big hug. But, at this point, I didn't want to test the elasticity of that Media badge, fearing it didn't allow for as much give as my friend the condom. (YouTube link from another roving reporter type guy.)

At the event I was reminded that Sunday, September 27, was to be the second ever National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, and I thought about how HIV is once again spreading rampantly in the gay community... should there be a separate day? I think so. Hell, there can never be too many AIDS Days in my opinion! But in regard to AIDS and the gay community, who were hit hard and led the way for safe sex education, today a renewed focus on awareness is especially important. A new generation of gay men are coming of age in a world where 1) HIV is treatable and 2) they haven't seen a good portion of their friends die from it.

For many people its not until they are infected that the realities of life with HIV- medically and socially- set in.

Newly published positoid author and Poz-itoid Regan Hofmann was in DC at the Evening Without Politics, too. She blogged about the Gay Men's AIDS Day on Sunday (more timely than I!), and also introduced me to the AIDS Czar, Jeff Crowley. Now, czars in general have getting a bad rep lately, but my only previous exposure to a czar was in 1997- the last time I was invited to a political function by then-AIDS Czar Sandra Thurman. Funny, Bush's abstinence-only AIDS Czar

never called on me to serve the country... though he did end up in the DC Madam's black book of clients.

But this is a blog entry without politics. And it looks like there is hope that the Ryan White Care Act will be renewed, with bi-partisan support. Times are changing, and I feel they are changing for the better. And after an Evening Without Politics, I am inspired to do what I can to be a part of the process.

Will be blogging more about DC, where I am headed once again tomorrow. I am honored to be on hand to help celebrate the 20th year anniversary of the formation of the Committee of Ten Thousand, the hemophilia activist group formed to deal with the HIV crisis that affected the community. And then on Saturday, Team Supersnack kicks AIDS in the balls at the AIDS Walk DC!

Now, it's off to make sure my lemon-AIDS outfit fits right.

Positively Yours,
Shawn



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