Meet River the Cat

August 2, 2008 By Shawn Decker

Tomorrow marks the beginning of the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City. Every two years this happens, and what will come out of the week-long meetings and exchanging of information?

In the last few days, news about HIV/AIDS has been a mixed catnip bag. The brakes were put on a clinical trial for an AIDS vaccine- bad news. Also, a new report is suggesting that the epidemic's impact on the African American community here in the U.S. rivals the impact in other parts of the world. While on the other end of the spectrum, a couple of doctors in Texas think they've found the Achille's heel in HIV, and are talking tough about knocking its proverbial balls off.... *bad ass!*

I'm pulling for those guys, and I hope there is some talk of this at the conference this week.

Me? I've never been to an International AIDS Conference. My dearly departed Dr. Lyman Fisher used to go, and invited me along. But it wasn't until two years ago that I actually tried to get in. Gwenn and I applied to do our "Boy, Girl, Virus" program for positoids/doctors/folks and got rejected.

Hemophobia? Probably not. But I'm absolutely sure that something was slated that sucked worse than us. Either way, this year's conference brought up that painful memory of rejection, which left me licking my wounds... until relief came from an unlikely source.

Yesterday I got an add request and a touching message on MySpace from a cat named River. River is living with FIV- Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, which I guess makes her a "pawsitoid" to my "positoid". Anyway, we've become fast friends, because there's no faster way to my heart than posting a nice review of my book. ("A purrrrrfectly great book!", River wrote, giving it a rare and much-deserved four paws up.)

Right now, River is doing everything she can to raise awareness in her own community about FIV... get that cat a ticket to Mexico City, pronto!

Positively Yours,

Shawn

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