MTV’s Staying Alive Foundation

March 15, 2010 By Shawn Decker

No, it’s about that **Staying Alive... MTV’s Staying Alive Foundation is dedicated to HIV prevention and youth-driven messages, giving out grants to young educators determined to prevent the continued- and needless- infection of their peers.**

Before becoming a grant-giving foundation, Staying Alive was a series of yearly HIV/AIDS programs that aired around the world on World AIDS Day, starting in 1999. In 2000, Gwenn and I had the daunting honor of representing the HIV epidemic in North America- no pressure- for Staying Alive 2. It was an interesting time for us: we’d been living together for a year, I’d “upgraded” to an AIDS diagnosis and started on HIV meds, which helped me get better but were wearing me down with side effects.

When the filmmakers from Staying Alive showed up, I had just stopped my first combination of medications, and was about to begin my second regimen, the hope being that the side effects would be more tolerable. (They were.) It’s a strange thing having that moment documented, and how the passing of a positoid pal who’d long before encouraged me to start meds, Stephen Gendin, inspired me to buck up.

I forget how harrowing those days were. I just put the blinders on, did what I had to do and thanked my lucky stars I had a good doctor, a great partner and an excellent chance to get through a rough patch in my health. Some of the other people living with HIV around the world, also featured in the Staying Alive 2 program, weren’t as fortunate.

Here’s our clip from the show: try to ignore my bleach blond do which, unfortunately, I can’t blame on the side effects of HIV drugs...

Staying Alive 2 from mtv staying alive on Vimeo.

Last Monday, which was International Women’s Day, was an absolute thrill, because I finally got to meet Georgia Arnold, the producer of the program we appeared in, who is now the Senior Vice President of the Staying Alive Foundation. She found me on Twitter last year, and wrote something to the effect of, “Hey!!! Remember me?!” It was great to get back in touch on Twitter, which has been awesome for me in regard to corresponding with champions from across the pond as of late.

Georgia was in DC for the International Center for Research on Women's celebration of Women's Day, where Bill Roedy, the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of MTV International, was honored for his commitment to Staying Alive. He is such a great guy, and it was nice to chat with the only other guy in the room besides me wearing ultra-casual sneakers. (It said dress "festive" for the event, we both agreed that being comfortable was key, especially after seeing Georgia carrying her heels in hand at the end of the evening.)

During Bill's speech, he said something to the effect of: ""I believe in the media's power to be a force for good." I believe it, too. And am happy that Bill uses his position to back up that belief by supporting Staying Alive's mission to raise awareness about the HIV epidemic.

Now, if Bill could just call the US offices in NYC and do something about that Snooki...

Positively Yours and Happy to be Staying Alive,
Shawn

Don't forget to vote in my Labtest Contest! Voting ends Monday, March 15 at midnight EST, winner announced on blog tomorrow. Good luck!

Shawn on: **Shawn's Sick Days in 2010: 6** Shawn's book Decker's Daily Coffee

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