NMAC’s 2021 In Review

I’m not sure what 2022 will bring, but I know that NMAC will be there with you. On behalf of our board of directors, community advisory panels, and staff, thank you.

December 14, 2021 By Paul Kawata

2021 was very difficult for me. I lost too many close friends and had real challenges figuring out how to manage the insanity of COVID with their deaths. I just found out that Christmas is next week!! How can that be possible? I am not ready.

Topping my to-do list are thank yous to everyone who helped NMAC get through another crazy year. The relentless onslaught of COVID alongside too many important social challenges made 2021 another for the record books. The roller coaster of variants along with the isolation to protect my health left me befuddled and discombobulated. It also made me very grateful for the help and support received during these unprecedented times.

No matter how strong or independent I thought I was, COVID said “hah.” Yet even with the insanity of one virus, we were able to make progress fighting another. The event at the White House on World AIDS Day got the most powerful leader in the free world to commit his administration to ending the HIV epidemic by 2030 and to end it in a syndemic fashion while understanding that racism is a public health challenge. The event, speech, proclamation, and plan were the culmination of decades of struggle by many who could not be in the room. On these days I am reminded of leaders who were taken too soon. What would Richard Dunne, my mentor, the second executive director of GMHC who passed too soon, think about our plans to end the epidemic. Knowing Richard, he would probably say, “Good work, but there is lots more to do. Now is not the time to relax!”

I never take these moments for granted because I’ve lived through too many administrations who denied my humanity and too many lectures from leaders who think they know the answers, but really only have their privilege. It’s taken a long time to learn that my voice is just as, if not more, important. My lived experience as a gay man of color makes me core to the solution for ending the HIV epidemic.

NMAC is beyond grateful to our donors for their support and understanding. It takes money to end an epidemic, especially when you are also working to change the world. NMAC will fight for racial justice and health equity as our steppingstones to end the HIV epidemic in America. Your support allows NMAC to be the leader our movement needs during these times. To be a voice for communities that are too often ignored or minimized because they are different. At NMAC we celebrate those differences thanks to the support of our donors.

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I’m not sure what 2022 will bring, but I know that NMAC will be there with you. On behalf of our board of directors, community advisory panels, and staff, thank you. To all our constituents, especially people living with HIV, we are in this together.

Yours in the Struggle,
Paul Kawata
NMAC

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