Post-World AIDS Day, Happy Holidays

December 9, 2010 By Shawn Decker

I'm back home safely after a weeks' worth of travels for World AIDS Week. A big thank you to the following universities and colleges for inviting me and Gwenn (and HIV prevention!) to campus: Illinois State University, Kent State-Stark, University of Mount Union, Baldwin-Wallace College and Arcadia University.

This year marked a decade of traveling the United States during this time of year to educate about HIV/AIDS. I love doing this with Gwenn, and answering questions about how she remains HIV negative in our relationship (thanks, proper condom usage!) and also how that information can be utilized in others lives to keep them HIV free. I probably take the most pride in presenting a healthy relationship to the public that involves me and my pet virus. Aside from HIV/STD prevention, a main goal of mine is to show that you can- despite living with an incurable STD, have a loving, sexual relationship.

During one of our talks, I was asked what we hoped people gained from our message. It’s pretty simple- just view HIV as something that is what it is- part of your community. This virus has a

funny way of hiding in our bodies, and in our neighborhoods. It thrives on silence, and the most vulnerable parts of our human pysche- doubt, the fear of rejection, the fear of even a test result... all of these things combined keep this problem in motion.

HIV isn't just a medical condition; it attaches to our weaknesses the way a snowflake can stick to our windshield in the winter. If we don't switch on the wipers and shake things clear, then our visibility and our ability to navigate our lives becomes impossible.

Okay, I'm satisfied with that analogy. It's the perfect transition from World AIDS Week to the holiday season, just like replacing the red ribbon with a holiday sweater vest. For those of you like me, who continue to carry the reality of HIV infection with you past the allotted and accepted time set aside to speak about all of these issues, I wish you a very healthy and happy end of the year. Actually, that wish doesn't just go out to my fellow positoids- I extend my best to everyone who is kind of enough to check in on me via this blog.

I hope this moment finds you feeling loved and comfortable in your own skin.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

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