

From Oct. 11 to 13, hundreds of thousands of people are expected to converge on the nation's capital to participate in the largest AIDS awareness event in history.

An estimated 45,000 AIDS Memorial Quilt panels—15 city blocks of fabric—will be unfolded and displayed in the National Mall. More than 70,000 names of the dead—more names than appear on the nearby Vietnam War Memorial—will be read aloud.

An anticipated 10,000 volunteers will participate in the three-day affair, which is sponsored by The NAMES Project, which sponsors and displays the Quilt to help bring an end to the AIDS pandemic.

An estimated 750,000 visitors are expected—50,000 of whom will be school-aged youth.

The massive event has taken years, and plenty of sweat, to orchestrate. No one knows this more than Portland resident James Bryson, 34, western regional display coordinator for the upcoming showing of the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

The October show marks the first time in four years that the entire quilt has been displayed.

"We're 60 days from the event and there remain boxes of panels to be sewn," says Bryson, who, given the circumstance, sounds remarkably mellow.

Bryson is one of seven regional display coordinators responsible for recruiting and training volunteers, planning logistics and ceremonies, publicizing the event, conducting community outreach, and coordinating HIV prevention education efforts in preparation for the D.C. show.

A lifelong Pacific Northwest resident who has lost an older brother, a partner and numerous friends and associates to AIDS complications, Bryson has dedicated nearly a decade to the Quilt.

He is a founder and former chairperson for the Portland chapter of The NAMES Project. He volunteered at the 1988, 1989 and 1992 displays of the Quilt in Washington, D.C., and served as the regional representative for Northwest chapters of The NAMES Project.

Bryson also served as a crew member for the 1989 National Tour of the Quilt.

"For six weeks I drove a truck containing the Quilt from city to city where we would display it," he says. "It seems like a long time ago."

The AIDS Memorial Quilt is the brainchild of Cleve Jones, a gay rights activist from the Bay area.

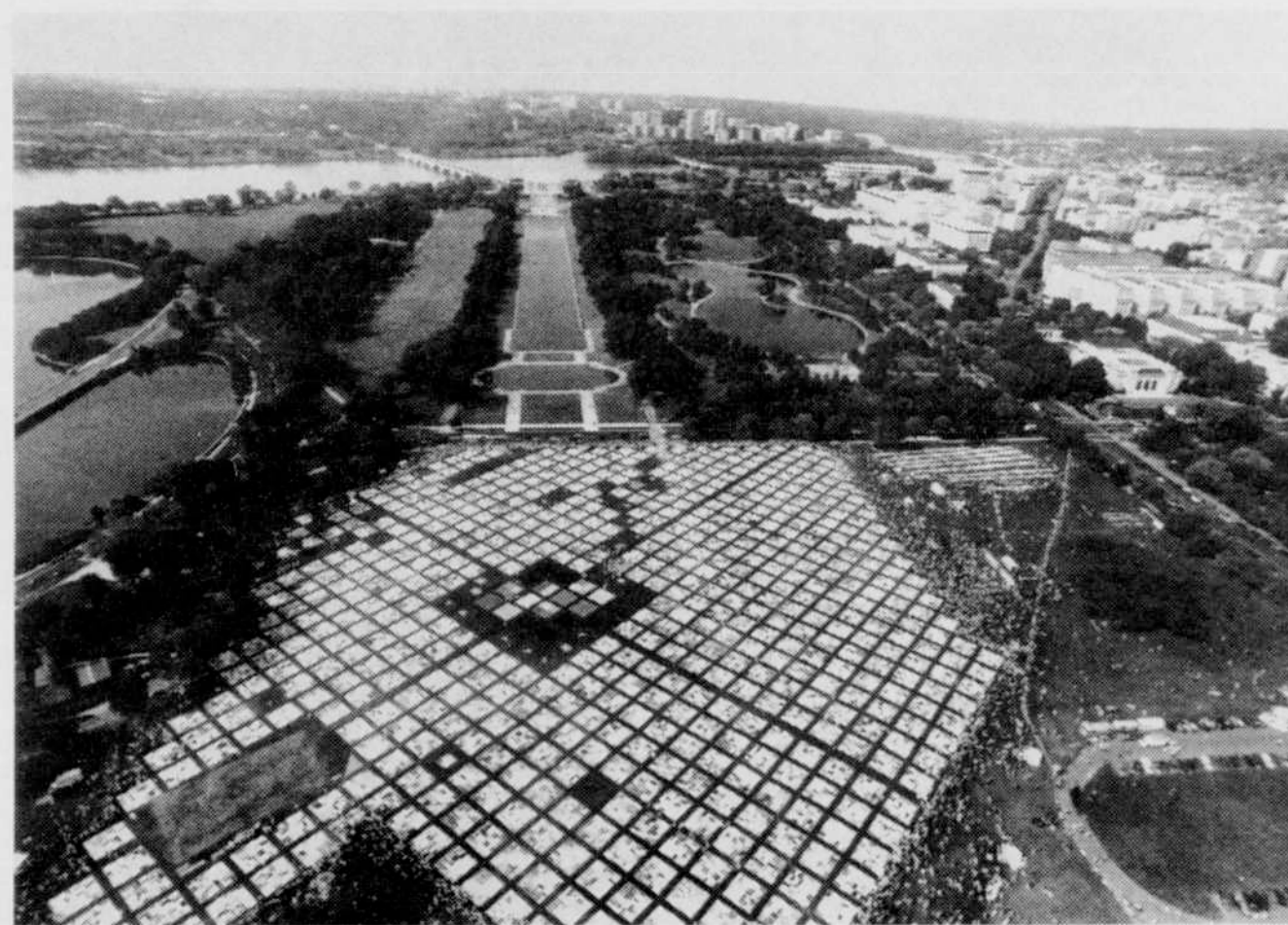
Jones reportedly came up with the Quilt idea following a 1985 march where he had asked participants to write down the names of loved ones who had died of AIDS complications. Cards containing those names were taped to the walls of the San Francisco Federal Building, which reminded Jones of a patchwork quilt.

The following year, he made the first panel for The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt in

A stitch in time

Volunteers rush to complete panels before the entire AIDS Memorial Quilt is unveiled this fall in Washington, D.C.

by Inga Sorensen



memory of his friend Marvin Feldman. In October 1987 the first 1,920 Quilt panels were displayed in Washington, D.C.

Since its last showing in Washington, in 1992, the AIDS Memorial Quilt has doubled in size to include nearly 45,000 individual panels.

The NAMES Project Foundation now has a network of 41 national chapters and 34 international affiliates.

The Quilt is seen by more than 1 million people annually at nearly 2,000 displays. To date, nearly 7 million people have visited the Quilt.

"The quilt is stitched together with the love and hope and grief of millions of people," says Jones, "and while it is a powerful symbol of love and remembrance, I think of it primarily as the evidence of our failure to halt the epidemic."

What you can do to help

A garage sale benefiting The NAMES Project will be held Aug. 17 at Starky's, 2913 SE Stark St. in Portland. The public is encouraged to attend as well as donate items.

On Aug. 18, the Cutting Crew, a hair salon at 3621 SE Hawthorne Blvd., will hold a "cutathon" to benefit the upcoming display. For more information, call 232-2404.

Volunteers are also being sought for "Summer Sewing" sessions, which are held at Port-

land Community College, 2850 SE 82nd Ave., Room 141, on Mondays from 1 to 4 pm, Wednesdays from 6 to 9 pm, and Saturdays from 10 am to 4 pm. For further information, call the Portland chapter of The NAMES Project at 650-7032.

Those wishing to volunteer in Washington, D.C., should call The NAMES Project at 1-888-202-6222, or visit the group's World Wide Web site at <http://www.aidsquilt.org>.

I think the best speech on AIDS that I have heard came from Cleve Jones in 1988. Essentially he said that we know how to end this epidemic, but the Congress and White House choose not to," says Bryson, who was diagnosed HIV positive in the mid-1980s. "If we had the funding we could beat this."

Bryson says he's delighted at the recent news that President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton have agreed to serve as co-chairs of the honorary host committee for the upcoming Quilt display—the first time a U.S. president has served in such a capacity.

"I know a lot of people are angry at Clinton for a variety of reasons, but this is a very significant moment," says Bryson. "We've been to D.C. five times and the Quilt has never been, I guess you could say, officially sanctioned or acknowledged by a president. The Clintons' involvement will focus the entire country's attention on this. That's remarkable."

The Quilt display occurs a few weeks before the presidential and congressional elections, and The NAMES Project has planned a full weekend of activities designed to ensure that AIDS is made a top priority on the national agenda.

"We're at a critical time in this epidemic and we have to keep the pressure up," says Bryson, adding that The NAMES Project has recently aligned itself with the advocacy-oriented AIDS Action Council to influence public policy.

"When it comes time to vote, we encourage people to remember the loved ones they have lost to this disease," he says. "Every vote counts."

The upcoming display is backed by bigtime corporate sponsors such as American Express, Stadlanders Pharmacy, United Airlines, Banana Republic, POZ, *The Advocate* and *Out* magazine.

Despite that, Bryson says the essence of the Quilt is grass roots. From rural communities to small towns to major urban centers, people are gathering to sew Quilt panels.

Portland is no different. Each week for the past several months, volunteers have joined together three times week for "Summer Sewing." Their ultimate goal is to get the patchwork together by show time.

"The other night, 12 volunteers came and sewed from 6 to 9. There's a sense of solidarity, even though I think a few folks threatened to bring their own sewing machines next time," he kids.

According to Bryson, money raised during local showings of the Quilt go to community organizations that provide direct services to people living with HIV and AIDS.

He estimates that up to \$50,000 has been generated over the years for groups such as Our House of Portland.

"It's been incredible, but we can always use more volunteers," he says.

A BIG CONTRIBUTION THAT WON'T COST YOU A CENT... WILL YOU GIVE?

Are you a person living with HIV or AIDS? Do you have opinions on what positive people need? If your answers are *yes*, we're asking you to contribute your thoughts.

This year the Ryan White CARE Act brought over \$2,500,000 in federal funds to this area for emergency care for positive people. We hope for the same amount next year.

The HIV Services Planning Council, an appointed community group, is responsible for deciding how the money gets spent. We want to base our decisions on what *you* say *you* need, so we're interviewing people, holding small discussion groups, hosting a caregiver forum, and conducting a survey.

If you're invited to any of these activities,

please say *yes*! If you get a survey in the mail, or if you see a survey at a community location, *please* fill it in and send it back! If you haven't gotten one within the next few weeks, call our 24-hour request line and we'll mail one to you. We need *your* views!



(503) 306-5729

**PORTLAND AREA
HIV SERVICES PLANNING COUNCIL**