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local news

By design

The Fabric of Life AIDS Benefit brings art lovers together to support men, women and children in need

by Inga Sorensen

The message was clear: There is no cure for AIDS.

"As much as we hear about protease inhibitors, the fact remains that not everyone has access to them and they aren't the cure," says Tracie Davis, chair of Fabric of Life Inc., which provides grants to Oregon HIV/AIDS organizations serving people living with the disease.

Fabric of Life is the largest fund raiser for HIV/AIDS charities in Oregon.

It sounds like a heady place to be, but Davis will tell you fund raising can be a frustrating task as we spin closer to the two-decade mark of dealing with this disease.

First, there's the apathy that almost naturally kicks in during any prolonged battle. Second, there is the hoopla over particular treatments, currently protease inhibitors, anti-retroviral drugs that attack protease, an enzyme believed to play an integral part in the reproduction of HIV.

Studies of protease inhibitors have shown that these drugs can lower viral load and increase T-cell counts. The greatest effect has been seen in people taking combination therapies.

The drugs, however, may cause side effects such as vomiting and nausea, and can cost as much as \$25,000 annually.

"I think we as a society need to re-educate ourselves because of all the media hype," says Davis, adding that inhibitors are just that: inhibitors, not cures.

Re-introducing the public to that reality was largely the thrust of a forum held June 3 entitled "Is There a Cure for AIDS?" featuring Davis and Dr. Jerry Bolduan of the National Institutes of Health.

It's critical, says Davis, that people remember what's really happening out there. Younger people continue to contract HIV at an alarming rate. Simultaneously, many HIV/AIDS charities in Oregon are struggling due to a slew of property-tax limitation measures approved by voters. Then there's the hype over protease inhibitors, which Davis believes leads many people to incorrectly think: "Why donate when there is a cure?"

As of late March, Davis says, 3,951 Oregonians had been diagnosed with AIDS. Of those cases, 2,412—or 61 percent—have resulted in death.

The forum, she says, was a wake-up call. "We've had wonderful organizations like the HIV Center, [Metropolitan Community Church's] Care Team and Esther's Pantry say to us, 'If you shut your doors, we'll have to shut ours,'" she says.

In an effort to ensure that that doesn't happen, Fabric of Life will hold its seventh Fabric of Life benefit, on July 10 at the Portland Art Museum.

The nonprofit hopes to raise \$150,000 in grantable funds in 1997.

The first Fabric of Life gathering in 1991 raised just \$28,000. That year Fabric of Life was only able to select one AIDS organization to support. Last year it bolstered 15 charities, including Esther's Panty, Cascade AIDS Project, HIV Center, Oregon Hospice Association, Our House and Women's Intercommunity AIDS Resource.

Fabric of Life has raised more than \$700,000 overall for organizations that provide care and support to men, women and children in crisis living with HIV/AIDS.

"And we want to be able to keep doing that," says Davis.

The July 10 event will feature entertainment on two stages from local performers including Pink Martini, Michael Allen Harrison & Friends and Swingline Cubs. There will be a silent auction as well as a special viewing of the museum's Lená Taku Wasté/Elizabeth Cole Butler Collection prior to its debut.

Lená Taku Wasté, which in Lakota means "These Good Things," is a Native American collection which contains more than 3,500 objects, including the Elizabeth Cole Butler Collection, which has pieces from indigenous tribes and cultures. It marks the first exhibition organized by Bill Mercer, the Portland Art Museum's first full-time curator of Native American Arts.

The public is also invited to tour Fabric of Life's 20-plus "Showcase Designer Windows" from June 20 through July 14 at supporting down-



"Eclectique" by Marcus Lintner and Jamie Buckiewicz

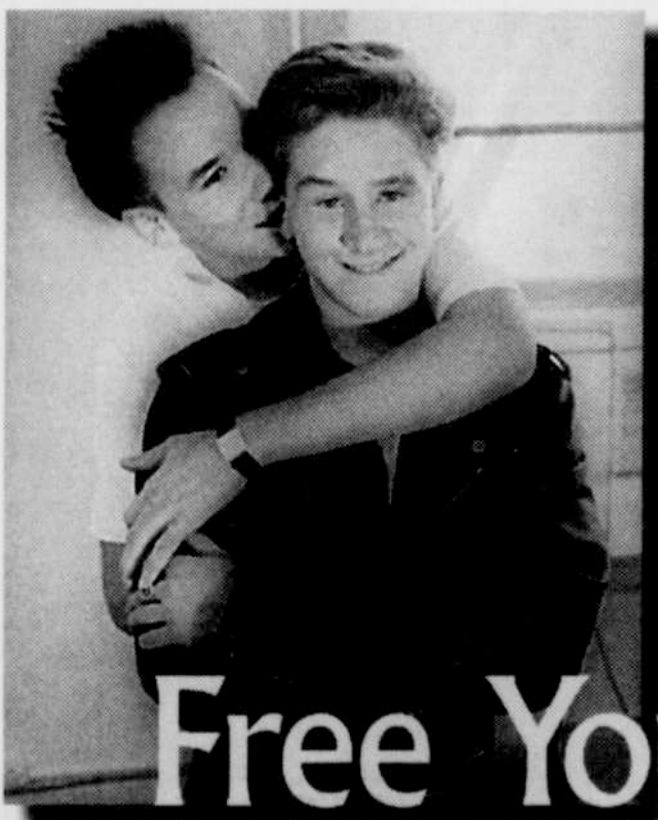
town Portland retailers. The windows feature myriad vignettes created by some of the area's top interior designers, architects and artists.

The Showcase Designer Window event was developed in 1993 by Saks Fifth Avenue and Gary Maffei to encourage top interior designers to become more involved in the fund-raising efforts. Each window is sponsored by a corporation or private party, bringing in thousands of additional dollars in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Participating merchants this year are Aveda Lifestyle Store & Spa, Carl Greve Jewelers, Columbia Sportswear Galleria, Made in Oregon/Galleria, Meier & Frank, Mercantile, NIKE Town, Nordstrom and Saks Fifth Avenue.

The Fabric of Life AIDS Benefit will be held Thursday, July 10, at the Portland Art Museum's North Wing and surrounding grounds. The event is dubbed an indoor/outdoor cocktail party extravaganza. Attire? It's an excuse to wear white. Patron tickets are \$125 per person; supporter's tickets are \$50.

The patron party is slated for 5:30-6:30 pm; the main event will be held from 6:30-11 pm. Tickets can be purchased via TicketMaster outlets at 224-4400 or on-line at www.ticketmaster.com. For more information, call Fabric of Life Inc. at 243-7129 or visit its Web site (www.aracnet.com/~fabric).



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