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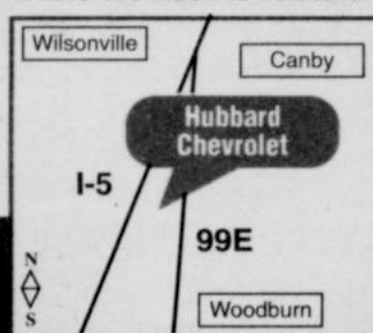
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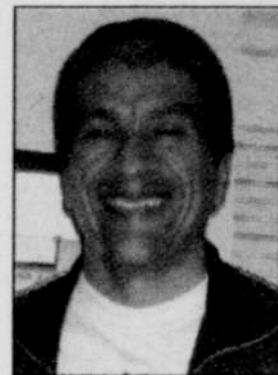
HIV-positive marathon runner inspires AIDS Walk 04 participants

by Jim Radosta

Ric Muñoz, a gay man who came out nine years ago as HIV-positive in a Nike television advertisement, will serve as the honorary chairman of AIDS Walk 04. Cascade AIDS Project anticipates 7,500 individuals, corporate teams and volunteers will put on their walking shoes Sept. 26 to raise \$300,000 for HIV prevention, services and advocacy programs in Oregon and southwest Washington.

The 1995 ad flashed images of Muñoz running in the woods interspersed with biographical information about him: "Los Angeles...80 miles every week...10 marathons every year...HIV positive." Produced by Portland agency Wieden + Kennedy, the spot earned acclaim for spreading the message that an HIV diagnosis is not a death sentence.

Muñoz, who has run 136 marathons altogether, is taking it easy right now because of a new job, a new house and a new love: He recently celebrated his third anniversary with partner Seth Eskigian. He spoke with *Just Out* about why he still strives to put a "regular" face on HIV.



Ric Muñoz

So I'd like to think that once it came time for someone like [cancer survivor and champion cyclist] Lance Armstrong to be as open as he was...there was a little bit of a precedent. Hey, the human body is an amazing thing once you give it a chance.

I definitely knew of [HIV-positive] people who just checked out. I personally knew a guy who, as soon as he found out, just went right out and killed himself. He swallowed a bottle of Drano.

It's basically where you mind happens to be. I guess it takes a lot of patience and knowing that it's possible to ride it out. I think people just have to give themselves a chance.

JR: Where did you get that positive spirit?

RM: I had to grow up really, really quickly as a child. I was on my own as a kid, basically. I had a single parent who pretty much ignored me, and so it was that whole sense of survival when you're that young and there's no support system in place. I kinda had to figure it out all on my own. So when something like this came along, it was just another in an existing line of challenges.

It's not in my vocabulary to say, "Why did this happen to me?" I don't want to sound cavalier about it—it's a very big deal—but I also didn't get consumed with the enormity of it.

JR: What are you hoping to accomplish through your participation in this year's walk?

RM: I'm here to say that the need for this type of an organization will always be there. There are going to be people who don't have

resources, who don't have families, who don't have money to help them. And to have something like this in place is always going to be valuable, obviously. Until the cure is found, we all have to help each other. 



1995's "HIV Runner" ad earned acclaim for spreading the message that an HIV diagnosis is not a death sentence

The five-kilometer AIDS WALK 04 begins 8:30 a.m. Sept. 26 at Pioneer Courthouse Square. The event will feature live music and disc jockeys from KVMX-FM; refreshments from Whole Foods, Krispy Kreme and Starbucks; Nike apparel and travel prizes for top fund-raisers; a section of the original AIDS Memorial Quilt on display; the Take-Action Room to create banners and placards, contact state and local politicians, view HIV/AIDS media and make a personal quilt piece in memory of a loved one; and the Kids' Corner with face painting and arts and crafts. The festivities will culminate with a music and dance party from noon to 1 p.m. To register call 503-223-WALK or visit www.cascadeaids.org.

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