

NORTHWEST NEWS

Blackout Leather Productions, Bad Girls, Cascade AIDS Project, Pride NW and the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court. Brown also spent time on the Oregon Bears Board of Directors from 2005-'08 and was named Mr. Oregon State Leather 2007.

Today, Brown is chairman of Oregon Leather Pride 2010, and a barista at the Pioneer Courthouse Square Starbucks. If juggling these duties seems a daunting task, it doesn't faze Brown; his passion transcends the tireless regimen he's made for himself.

"The work really drives me," explained Brown. "It gives me a really great sense of purpose, and it gives me an outlet for the skills that I have."

"I'm grateful to do the work that I do and have that opportunity."

Perhaps the main outlet this year for all those skills has been Brown's organizational contributions to World AIDS Day 2009 events. He, along with Ms. Oregon Leather 2007 Coral Mallow, will host the "Living Vigil" at 7 p.m. December 1 at the Metropolitan Community Church (2400 NE Broadway St.).

"Coral and I purposely called it the 'living vigil,' because I didn't want to mourn the dead anymore," said Brown. "That was the whole point, that we have real issues right now that we need to deal with."

Brown's perspective lends an added urgency to awareness, especially for a populace who may have forgotten about the threat that HIV transference still presents. Assisted by Multnomah County Health Program Manager Kim Toevs, Brown said the number of new HIV infections has begun to climb once again.

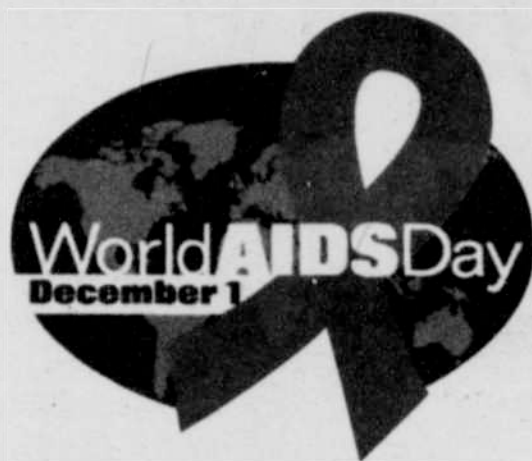
"We went from 40,000 to 56,000 in new infections in a year—that's a 40 percent increase," reported Brown.

The absence of a clear preventative message in the men's community has also prompted a "harm reduction campaign," to be launched next year through Brown's work with the Sexual Health 4 Men Coalition.

"It's about identifying where high-risk activity happens, and presenting people with a choice," explained Brown. "And that's it. No judgment, no shame. We're just letting people know that they're about to engage in risky behavior, and that there are resources to help them get facts and get tested."

This spirit of leadership has thrust Brown into a more mainstream role in the Portland activism community. He's finding himself mentoring younger activists, and with his current focus on World AIDS Day 2009, Brown will likely remain a prominent fixture in the collective HIV/AIDS awareness conscious for years to come.

"It's a very interesting transition," said Brown after a long sigh. "I'm comfortable with it. I wasn't comfortable with it five years ago, but now I'm happy for it because I remember those people who were influential and guiding to me." 



Highlights for World AIDS Day Portland 2009

While the World AIDS Day Portland Web site (www.worldaidsdayportland.org, or call 503-278-3817) is the definitive source for goings on, we've recommended a few events, all taking place on Tuesday, December 1.

Nine-and-a-Half Minutes Campaign Events

Many HIV/AIDS service organizations have collaborated in an effort to mobilize schools, faith-based groups, businesses and community resources to raise awareness during this year's World AIDS Day.

- The Association of African Students and Black Cultural Affairs Board of Portland State University host a fundraiser featuring a series of skits, speakers and fashion show with condom artwork at PSU's Smith Union building, rooms 327 and 328. All money raised will benefit the White Rose Educational Fund. Tickets are \$3 for students, \$5 for the general public. The first 50 people receive a free T-shirt. This event runs 5-8 p.m.

- The Immune Deficiency Clinic, located at the Kaiser Permanente East Interstate Medical Office (3550 N. Interstate Ave.) hosts a special display in conjunction with the Nine-and-a-Half Minutes Campaign. The clinic will have brochures, posters and informative talks by staffers. This event is 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

Portland Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence Walking Vigil

The Portland Sisters will embark on a walking vigil, visiting downtown clubs, handing out condoms, and inviting people to write on the "Veil of Shame," and the "Veil of Remembrance." At the event's conclusion, the "Veil of Shame," with its words of hate and anger, will be destroyed. The "Veil of Remembrance," displaying messages to loved ones lost to AIDS, will be kept as a sacred relic of the Portland Sisters. Walk all or part of the evening, from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Columbia-Willamette Women of Vision's AIDS Walk for Orphans

Take 6,000 steps to raise awareness and funds for the 6,000 children orphaned each day by AIDS. The walk will begin at 9:30 a.m. at Pioneer Square and continue toward the Pearl District, loop back to PSU, and end at Pioneer Square by 11:30 a.m. Participants will receive an orange World Vision T-shirt, and materials will be available to carry and distribute along the way.

- Ryan J. Prado

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