



**DR. RAYMOND FRYE**  
**DR. KATIE BALL**

**503.227.2444**

WWW.BLINGDENTAL.COM • info@blingdental.com  
926 NW 13TH, SUITE 150 • PORTLAND, OR 97209

## Youth Uprising

Alazar Manning wants you to give big for CAP's AIDS Walk 2011

BY RYAN J. PRADO

With AIDS Walk Portland just around the corner, the race is on to continue awareness and education of HIV/AIDS-related stigma, and to generate money for Cascade AIDS Project. But there's another arm of the lead-up to CAP's annual walk worth noting: fundraising bragging rights.

A glimpse at the top five earners for 2011 reveals a familiar name in the CAP hierarchy. Michael Kaplan, CAP's executive director, holds his traditional lead in fundraising efforts, with some \$5,600 as of press time. Nipping at his heels, though, is 11-year-old Alazar Manning, a Portland boy who's made it his mission not only to unseat Kaplan from his spot atop the standings, but more importantly, to ensure that the community gets his threefold message: Be smart, get tested, and practice safe behaviors.

Alazar was the top AIDS Walk youth fundraiser in 2010, tallying \$2,100 individually and \$3,100 overall via his group, "The A-Team." Born in Ethiopia, Alazar came to live with his father, Robert Manning, five years ago. Alazar learned an extended family member had HIV and decided he wanted to do something to help. After Robert showed Alazar the music video for the 1985 charity single "We Are the World," the boy decided he wanted to do something big.

"[Alazar] came to me a couple days later and said, 'I'm a kid, but if we get a whole bunch of people, to have one voice, it could slow [the spread of HIV] down,'" Robert recalls. In 2009, the "kid" raised \$800 for AIDS Walk Portland. He aims to raise \$9,000 this year.

With a more streamlined approach for 2011, Alazar started a blog to keep potential donors updated about his fundraising efforts, and to educate readers with statistics on the spread of HIV in the black community. He

also mounted a highly ambitious campaign of contacting black celebrities to solicit their support by either donating money or joining his team on October 2.

"Michael Jackson brought together a bunch of famous singers and made a lot of money for Africa, especially Ethiopia," Alazar explains. "So I said, 'I can do that!'"

The letter-writing campaign began with a 13-page missive to Oprah Winfrey in hopes that she'd lend high-profile awareness to Alazar's cause. He has not heard back from her.

Actress Angela Bassett was the first star to respond, contributing \$100 and posting the A-Team blog link on her Facebook page. Bill Cosby replied by telling Alazar that he would grow up to "be a fine young man!" but that he could not commit to walking due to a prior engagement. Cosby did not donate any money.



"People don't want to talk about [HIV] with each other, and they especially don't want to talk about it with kids because there's so much bad stigma with it."

-ALAZAR MANNING

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