

# OPINIONS

## Quilt a reminder AIDS affects all



**STEVE WYMER**  
Columnist

Powerful.  
It's only word I can think of to describe the blanket of love that covered the floor of Beasley Coliseum last week.  
An hour spent taking in this awesome sight can be quite an experience. People cry, laugh and comfort each other as they remember people but also the horrors of a disease.

One doesn't expect to be very affected by a visit to the AIDS Quilt if one has never been directly affected by AIDS, but I was overwhelmed.

First of all, the many hours put into bringing The NAMES Foundation Memorial AIDS Quilt to Pullman are uncountable.  
The Palouse AIDS Quilt Committee, ASWSU Senators, GLBA volunteers and others all put out tremendous effort to share this with all of us.

We should be grateful for a chance to see how millions of people's lives have been affected by AIDS.

I also was amazed at the subtle ability of the quilt to really make a person see things they may never have realized before.

I learned so much about people and the way they felt, how AIDS affected them, and how much the people represented by the quilt were loved.

The quilt was not only a memorial, but an educating tool, and an awesome reminder that this disease cannot ever be taken lightly.

Men, women and children of all races, origins and backgrounds all have been affected by this, yet we still seem to brush it under the carpet and label it as we wish to.

Ten minutes in Beasley proved that this is so very wrong.

Married, single, gay or straight people have left behind children, friends, lovers and jobs.

Many of these people died long before their time and will never again experience the life we enjoy each day.

This alone should make us stop pointing fingers, and start working harder to solve the problem.

Sadly, I don't think it has yet, and I only hope the Quilt is one way of slowly accomplishing this.

Although the passing of a person is a sobering thought no matter the reason, the Quilt was a reminder I'll never forget.

The pictures and memories shared in each square are representative of a person's love for another.

It also was easy to see people's still-living memories of others who were important in their life.

This was an awesome feeling, especially touching if you have never been exposed to this before and you have never been directly affected by AIDS.

The truth is, we all are deeply affected by AIDS. Even if it's just a childhood role model, it affects us.

For example, Magic Johnson is one of my favorite athletes, and the sting of this disease has proven him to be mortal.

The symbol that the AIDS Quilt represents is a reminder that we are all affected by and responsible for the eventual end of this disease.

Superstar athletes who are victims are only a small portion of the people we look up to as heroes.

Regardless of the actions that result in the acquisition of this disease, no person should have to suffer this disease.

We as a society should strive to educate people about this and do our best to prevent the death of people from it.

Thank you so much to all the people responsible for the experience that I, and hopefully many other students, received by visiting the Quilt.

Life is a precious gift that many have been denied regardless of whose fault they believe it to be.

Be thankful for each morning, and pay tribute to the people less fortunate. It's well worth 15 minutes of your life.

*Steve Wymer will return your call if you leave a message at 335-1140.*



## Push for euthanasia in U.S. should be put to death



**MELISSA MEIER**  
Columnist

People in this country are holding their breath in anticipation as they slowly die. They are waiting for a decision from the Supreme Court regarding euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.

This decision will be a turning point for nation. Allowing euthanasia will invert the foundation of the medical profession — that doctors must not kill. It also will change our values as a society regarding terminal illness, death and suicide. The value of life is decided by individuals but the law is sure to influence that.

But who are we to decide, by looking at someone else through our human eyes, that their life is not worth living? Where did the concept of a life not worth living come from? Why do we place more value on some lives while devaluing others?

To clarify the terms, euthanasia — Greek for good death — is where the doctor terminates life at the patient's request. Physician-assisted suicide places the means of death, as given by a doctor, in the hands of the patient.

The United States is not the first country to consider physician-assisted suicide. Two other countries also have crossed this line. One of them broke ethical barriers more than 50 years ago and the world is still dealing with the consequences. The other is presently using its citizens as

the subjects for an euthanasia experiment.

Let's take a look at these two examples. Presently in the Netherlands, physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia still are officially against the law. But the government has a series of guidelines for physicians to follow, and if they abide by these when aiding a death, they can't be prosecuted.

There were 3,600 cases in 1995, more than were originally anticipated. In addition to that, 900 deaths were categorized as "termination of life without the request of the patient."

Deaths are most often by euthanasia and not physician-assisted suicide, although doctors do deny two-thirds of the requests.

Many of the patients who were euthanized without asking had at another time discussed the option. But the question remains whether they really wanted to die. Even one unrequested or questionable death should scare all of us into stricter regulations, if not a total ban.

Making euthanasia an option has negatively affected patient care in the Netherlands.

Pain was a factor in some of the unrequested deaths because patients were given substantial amounts of morphine in order to shorten their lives. This type of care is irresponsible. Even those patients who ask for euthanasia could be helped by better practices.

A Dutch psychiatrist said, "Patients are scared by pain and the loss of their dignity ... they are badly informed about alternatives."

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