

✓ Opinions

AIDS Day needs more than awareness



SARA LOVELL

Commentary

Friday was World AIDS Day and all across the world red ribbons were displayed and a variety of celebrations were held, along with a celebration here at WSU (although "celebration" doesn't seem appropriate for a disease that has killed 3 million people worldwide).

Various activities were held on campus: an AIDS booth, a brown bag discussion, 15 minutes of silence and two candlelight marches. All of this took place with the hope of making Pullman, and the rest of the world, more aware of the AIDS virus that infects women at a rate of two per minute and has infected 1.5 million children thus far.

But awareness isn't really the problem, is it?

Everyone knows of AIDS.

Our society is saturated with information about the virus. A person infected with either HIV or full-blown AIDS has been and continues to be the storyline of many television programs and movies.

There are commercials, billboards, posters — the works — all addressing awareness. That is, what AIDS is, and not the seriousness of the epidemic or the likelihood of becoming infected.

Many have an "it will never happen to me" attitude but the fact remains that for Americans age 25-44, AIDS is the leading cause of death, no matter what race, religion, and/or sexual preference. As for those under 25, like so many on this campus, one in two are infected with HIV or AIDS. These are just some of the facts rattled off by Bobbi Bonace, director of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Allies program at the brown bag on Friday.

With that in mind, it seems all of that time, money and energy spent on basic awareness programs could be better spent on more extensive education and research and making preventative measures more available.

It's sort of like being seated in the back at a festival seating concert. Imagine all of those crazed fans ahead of you on their feet, not giving a single thought to little old you, way in the back, who just wants to watch a good show.

In order to see over the people in the front, fans domino to their feet until the whole stadium is standing.

Clad in bright yellow T-shirts enter the Event Staff, those friendly folks on hand to make you take your seat.

Those folks always seem to start in the back and work their way forward, which doesn't make any sense because, if you were in the back, you wouldn't want to take your seat until the people in front of you do so.

The same can be said for combatting AIDS — start at the beginning. Hold programs for education about prevention of HIV and AIDS and teach the unknowing who have yet to figure out there are fatal consequences to unprotected sex and needle sharing.

If the proverbial Event Staff, the educators, would start at the front row, the unknowing, then perhaps they could place them in their figurative seats and prevent anymore from becoming infected.

Then educators and researchers could move on to rows further back, those already infected, and work all the way back, potentially finding a cure, and accomplish their goal of seating the stadium soon enough, or stopping the spread of the epidemic.

Sure, there will still be a few individuals at the concert who will continue to stand and obstruct your view. And despite all the AIDS education in the world, there will still be a few individuals who will put themselves, and others, at risk.

But if the Event Staff would start at the front row and work their way back, if we would realize people are aware of what AIDS is, and focus on the real problems — formulating strategies to stop AIDS — then maybe World AIDS Day could be a day worth celebrating.

Sara Lovell will return your call if you leave a message 335-2764.

Kudos to Friends of Higher Ed

As the access issue becomes more threatening for those seeking a spot on a college-educated roster, students and potential students can take solace in the support from the group tentatively calling themselves "Friends of Higher Education."

Growing numbers of students seeking a college education paralleled by a decrease in state money invested in higher education results in the crisis now facing state colleges, making it difficult to meet the demand for higher education.

If this continues, efforts of folks seeking a college education will be hindered by higher tuition costs as well as increased competition.

The Friends of Higher Education, however, plan on preventing that from occurring.

Their commitment is especially commendable being that the Friends of Higher Education have taken on this challenge despite the fact that staff and faculty in Washington state colleges are so underpaid.

Their vision: address access, affordability of higher education and the nearly ignored issue of quality.

Representatives from Friends of Higher Education say they hope to eventually draw interest from students and alumni here and at other state universities, in the interest of higher education across the state and not just at WSU.

We at The Daily Evergreen believe the development of Friends of Higher Education creates a positive ally for the students and commend their efforts.

Letters

Himmel's GLBA attack unfounded and without merit

Editor,

Peter Himmel's commentary in the Nov. 16 edition of The Daily Evergreen was nothing more than a malicious outburst aimed not at promoting good judgment as he would have us believe, but rather at perpetuating misleading stereotypes, misunderstanding and fear.

In his vicious attack against homosexuals, Himmel attempts to equate their behavior with necrophiles and pedophiles. He states there is no evidence that homosexuality is any different from pathological sexual fixations on corpses, small children, etc. These fetishes, he goes on, are illnesses or crimes, or both. We are then left to conclude that homosexuality must be an illness at best, a crime at worst. This is a simple error in logic

(at best) or a conscious, misleading effort driven by prejudice, hate and fear (at worst).

Assuming there is no evidence homosexuality is any different from these illnesses or crimes, this does not necessarily mean there is any evidence it is the same. Himmel's conclusion cannot be drawn from the premises stated and is therefore entirely without merit.

Still reeling from this, we are thrown headlong into another fallacy, only this time the technique is not pseudo-logic, but pseudo-science. Darwinian theory has been twisted by a number of self-proclaimed scientists seeking to perpetuate existing dogmatic social prejudices. It was used erroneously to declare the inferiority of non-whites and women. In

this case, social prejudice in science rears its ugly head to attack homosexuals as a "genetic dead-end — a parasitic anomaly that in any other species would lead to the evolutionary scrap heap," in Himmel's words.

This statement amounts to another inferred conclusion: homosexuality is unnatural. However, homosexual behavior itself is by no means rare in the animal kingdom, the most notable practitioners being chimpanzees (and the occasional dog at the park).

To top all of this, Himmel quotes the words of Abraham Lincoln, "Important principles may and must be inflexible." Principles like, say, freedom and equality? When attempting to repress a people, do not quote from the Great Emancipator.

Greg Sower

The question for next week:

"Should students who have withdrawn from impacted classes for reasons of poor academic performance be allowed to retake them?"

You can call in your response at 335-2764 or E-mail in your response to green95@aol.com with the correct spelling of your name and your phone number. The best responses will be published in the Wednesday edition of The Daily Evergreen along with the question for next week.

Opinions policy

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The views expressed in all other columns are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily those of The Daily Evergreen, its staff, management, advertisers, or the WSU Board of Regents.

Letters to the editor can be mailed to Murrow Communication Center Room 113, and should be typed and double spaced. All letters will be considered for publication but those that are 200 words or less are preferred.

A name, signature and phone number must accompany letters. The Daily Evergreen reserves the right to edit for space, libel, obscene material and clarity.

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BY GARRY TRUDEAU