The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt

The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt is an enormous quilt made as a memorial to celebrate the lives of people who have died of AIDS-related causes. Weighing an estimated 54 tons, it is the largest piece of community folk art in the world.

The Quilt is a memorial to and celebration of the lives of people lost to the AIDS pandemic. Each panel is 3’ by 6’, approximately the size of the average grave; this connects the ideas of AIDS and death more closely, even though only about 20% of the people lost to AIDS related causes are represented.

The Quilt was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, and in that same year, the documentary film “Common Threads: Stories From The Quilt” won the Academy Award as the best feature-length documentary film.

The idea for the NAMES Project Memorial Quilt was conceived in 1985 by AIDS activist Cleve Jones, and in June of 1987, Jones teamed up with Mike Smith and several others to formally organize the NAMES Project Foundation. Public response to the Quilt was immediate. People in the U.S. cities most affected by AIDS — Atlanta, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco — sent panels to the San Francisco workshop. Generous donors rapidly supplied sewing machines, equipment and other materials, and many volunteered tirelessly.

During early years of the epidemic many people who died of AIDS-related causes did not receive funerals, due to both the social stigma of AIDS felt by surviving family members and the outright refusal by many funeral homes and cemeteries to handle the deceased’s remains. Lacking a memorial service or grave site, The Quilt was often the only opportunity survivors had to remember and celebrate their loved ones’ lives.

Today there are NAMES Project chapters across the United States and independent Quilt affiliates around the world. Since 1987, over 14 million people have visited the Quilt at thousands of displays worldwide. Through such displays, the NAMES Project Foundation has raised over $3 million for AIDS service organizations throughout North America.

The Washington, D.C. displays of October 1987, 1988, 1989, 1992 and 1996 are the only ones to have featured the Quilt in its entirety.

The NAMES Project Foundation is now headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, and has 21 chapters in the United States and more than 40 affiliate organizations world-wide. The AIDS Memorial Quilt itself is also warehoused in Atlanta when not being displayed, and continues to grow, currently consisting of more than 48,000 individual memorial panels (over 94,000 people) and weighing an estimated 54 tons.

Explore the quilt: www.aidsquilt.org
Make a Panel: www.aidsquilt.org/make-a-panel
Listen to and read stories: http://quiltstories.org
HIV/AIDS: THE DISEASE THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

The year 2011 marked 30 years (1981) since the infection now known as the HIV virus appeared in a CDC monthly publication. As more and more cases appeared, soon the reality of this deadly new disease would change the world.

Thirty-four years later, exciting new therapies and medications are on the horizon, and coming in the next decade. Now because of advancements in treatment and testing, it is rare that a case of HIV infection progresses to AIDS at all, and people living with HIV who take their medication and consistently monitor their health can enjoy a healthy life.

This year WHCHC is hosting three AIDS Memorial Quilt panels which will be on display at three of our apartment communities in West Hollywood for residents, family and friends to view on World AIDS Day, December 1, to honor and commemorate the lives of those who have died from this virus, those who have loved ones who have passed away, and those who are living with HIV/AIDS today. WHCHC has two apartment communities dedicated to people living with HIV/AIDS, and house more than 100 HIV/AIDS residents throughout our portfolio.