

## Why AIDS Day Matters

The specter of AIDS has moved far away from the headlines since arriving in the US in the early 1980's. At that time David was living in New York attending post-grad training in Theatre. He began to see the effects this horrendous disease was having on the theatre community, the greater arts community and of course the gay community of the city.

Janet's brother Loring was an AIDS activist from very early on in the struggle to get the public to step up, get informed, and pressure the government to provide services for AIDS victims and fund research into possible cures. The devastation of AIDS was just beginning, and it got horrifically worse over the next decades.

Since those early years many achievements were eventually made in the US towards treatment for AIDS and lowering rates of infection through education about safe sex practices. However, at this current time in our world, and especially on the African continent, the specter of AIDS still looms large. In some countries, rates of infection of HIV are increasing, especially among young women.

When Peter approached us with an initial idea to hold a World AIDS Day series of events on Vashon, we enthusiastically responded with "Yes! What can Open Space do to support your efforts?" We know that Art is a powerful tool of human connection and transformation on many levels, and the question became one of "how can art respond to the past and present reality of AIDS?"

In the course of our discussions, what emerged as ideal was for Open Space to utilize the resources we have towards two events. This Saturday at 7PM in the Grand Hall we are presenting "A Crazy Little Thing Called Love", a benefit concert featuring islanders performing the music of Freddie Mercury. And on Sunday at 2PM in The Bruce Black Box we are hosting a staged reading by Drama Dock of Larry Kramer's landmark play "The Normal Heart".

It strikes us that we who live in the relative seclusion of our idyllic island must not only stay informed about the suffering of our brothers and sisters in the world, but also find appropriate and effective action to take to become allies in relieving suffering where we can.

We encourage everyone to take part in as many of the World AIDS Day offerings as possible being held at various venues on the island. Our hope is that you will come away informed, inspired and motivated to find your role in the ongoing efforts to make AIDS a disease relegated to history.

In solidarity,  
David & Janet