Taking it personally: Memorial quilt display sensitizes campus and community to the tragedy of AIDS

For three days in April, the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt display, with its hundreds of vividly colored panels lining walls and floor, transformed A. Kirby Field House. More than 3000 members of the Lafayette and Easton communities solemnly studied the 662 six-by-seven foot panels, each one created by a friend, relative, or lover, to preserve the memory of one life lost to AIDS. Many visitors to the quilt took from the Field House a new sense of the enormous human toll being exacted by the AIDS epidemic. Sometimes taking back tears, visitors confronted the dead and caught glimpses of their secrets; this one loved person, that one always bowed gutter-ball, that one was a young mother, this one, whose tiny undershirt was stitched onto a panel, never reached her first birthday. Although only a fraction of the full quilt's 18,000 panels were displayed at Lafayette, the exhibit's power was unquestionable. Kim Gronan, a Lafayette employee and NAMES Project volunteer who had made a panel in memory of her younger brother, Matt, said the quilt taught visitors that "AIDS can happen to anybody. It has no prejudices, no age limits. To ignore this is to help spread the disease, which is devastating."

Riley Temple '71, a Washington, DC attorney and chairman of the board of the Willman-Walker Clinic, spoke at opening ceremonies of the quarterly display on April 26, along with President Roth, Easton Mayor Tom Goldsmith '63, and Easton Hospital administrator Philip Detich. Temple's remarks are reprinted on page 5.

Several thousand visitors viewed the 662 panels of the AIDS Memorial Quilt displayed on campus at the culmination of AIDS Awareness Week. The full quilt includes 15,000 panels, each crafted in memory of an AIDS victim.

Lafayette's Career Center offers new services for alumni

With over seven percent of the American workforce unemployed it was only a matter of time before economic hardship touched the ranks of Lafayette alumni. Lafayette College has traditionally driven to prepare undergraduates for fulfilling careers through superior education and resources. Unfortunately, some graduates later find themselves facing tough career choices alone. Lafayette is now prepared to help alumni job seekers can now take advantage of Lafayette's Office of Career Planning and Placement (CPP) and several new programs.

CPP has historically been enthusiastic about aiding Lafayette alumni with difficult career questions. The Lafayette Alumni Career Development Program offers a broad range of opportunities including career counseling, job change assistance, updating and developing resumes, and electronic job vacancy listing. Unfortunately, these have all been "office-based" services. Due to limited staffing and centrally located resources it was extremely difficult for CPP to offer extensive career services to a diverse community of alumni located nationwide. Graduates on the West Coast found it impractical, if not impossible, to utilize the full range of services available at the College. Lafayette's drive to maximize use of computer systems now allows CPP to expand the scope of career services.

Since coming to Lafayette in 1979, Marvin J. Roth, Director of Career Planning and Placement, has made significant advances in the area of alumni support by maximizing the availability of career assistance. In earlier years, CPP received sixty to seventy alumni inquiries concerning job openings. This number grew rapidly as the economy soured. In response both, with the help of Lee Lloyd, Director of Academic and Administrative Computing, set out to construct a computer resource which would counter CPP's small size and put technology to work for alumni. Profile +", a new computer database which markets qualified alumni to potential employers nationwide, is the product of these efforts.

Electronic resume bank

Stylish after the Profile system, an electronic resume bank for Lafayette undergraduates, Profile +" markets prospective employees through two national computer systems. The first, KINexus, is a national database of resumes, offering sweeping exposure for alumni seeking employment. A group of students and staff members initiated the effort to bring the AIDS Memorial Quilt to Lafayette, hoping to educate the campus community about the medical, social, and personal aspects of AIDS. According to Gregg Bethell '92, volunteer coordinator, "The idea was to bring that whole concept of the Quilt to Lafayette, over 400 students, about 50 faculty and staff, and some 100 local community residents quickly stepped forward to help with the quilt display and related events. During AIDS Awareness Week (which stretched to almost two weeks and culminated in the display of the quilt), a series of presentations and discussions was offered.

Filmmaker Peter Adair showed excerpts from his documentary Absolutely Positive, about the lives of men and women who have tested HIV positive. Joel Olson of the Cultural Bridges Foundation spoke about homophobia and "The Interconnectedness of Lias." Easton Hospital's chaplain led a discussion entitled "Theological Reflections on AIDS." Alan Johnson, M.D., director of Lafayette's Bailey Health Center, and psychology professor Alan Childs presented "Medicine, Ethics, and AIDS." One discussion, entitled "Should We Bring the AIDS Quilt to Lafayette?" took place in complete darkness in the Black Box Theatre of the Williams Center for the Arts, offering anonymity for those who wished to speak without embarrassment. Local high school students participating were two-hour educational program on campus before they visited the quilt display.

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Taking it personally: Temple speaks about AIDS quilt

Riley Temple, chairman of the board of the Whitman-Walker Clinic in Washington, D.C., will speak about the AIDS Quilt opening ceremony.

I am here as a Lafayette alumnus, who for the past nine years has served as a volunteer, a member, and as chairman of the board of directors of Washington, D.C.'s Whitman-Walker Clinic. As a Lafayette alumnus, I can tell you how the AIDS Quilt came into being.

It is a tremendously proud moment for the Lafayette family today. And I am grateful to all of you who have worked so diligently to bring to this community the issue of AIDS in such a wonderful and powerful way. 

I want you to know that I have been on the front lines of caring and working with the AIDS patients and the new sons with AIDS almost since the first manifestations of the virus among us. Therefore, I know all too well that the AIDS Quilt is perhaps the most compelling and moving symbol of the plight of those who have chosen to live and to struggle in the world's most graphic expression of grief, joy, shared love.

I have been on the front lines. The majority of my work has been with the gay community here in the area. We were very threatened when this disease first appeared. We were angry because it had taken so many of us. And for a while, we wanted to run away at times, too, and wanted, to run, but we did not and we do not. In stead we respond with compassion and strength. History must record that few people in our society even wanted to talk about what was then referred to as the "Gay Plague." And when our government did virtually nothing, the gay community responded in a way that seems remarkable.

And ten years into this epidemic I have long ago lost the count of the number of people I know who are dead. I have lost a count of the number of people I know who are infected. And absent some miracle, will suffer horribly and tragically, and suffer prematurely death. I join today, in the way bay of those who continue to fight that miracle.

"This morning, we will see the panels and read the names of those whose loving survivors have created their own testimonial with their own hands to express their love for their loved ones. The quilt is a folk art of the highest quality. And the final document, the exhibition itself, is mostly it is an expression of love and loss.

Why an AIDS quilt? You ask? Why not a quilt for heart disease or cancer? Because the AIDS Quilt was born out of the grief of those that believed the world cared little for those who died of AIDS and in some way lost. The quilt was a way of elevating the importance of our losses, to draw the world's attention to our struggle and our suffering of help to rid our world of the stigma which victimize. May those of you who may have lived by the Quilt and the AIDS fund comfort in what you see today.

I am here because my family turned its back on her and her sick child at the discretion of their AIDS diagnosis. There is no quilt panel for Cornelia. I remember 18-year-old Kevin who lived in our building with us because upon his return home from treatment he was forced to live in isolation on his family's back porch, and was fed with disposable containers. There is no panel for James, who wanted to talk about Cornelia, Kevin and James—who of many, too many, who are remembered in this quilt, because in the end they had no one—and they had no one because of the stigma of this disease. They then moved away. They were abandoned in ignorance, and in dishonest and unkind...

May there be no more Cornelia's and Kevin's and Jameses. May there be more ceremonies like today which help to rid our world of the stigma which took an enormous body of a part of the Lafayette family today. And I am grateful to all of you who have worked so diligently to bring to this community the issue of AIDS in such a wonderful way. 

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At any given time he might be at doctor's offices, attending board meetings, in a court room, in a police station, in some altered condition, on Ellis Island to help rehabilitate returning interneers at a six-year public presentation on a health crisis, and a model toward which community clinics aspire.

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