

AFC in the News

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AIDS Walk raises more than \$400,000

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Several thousand walkers and runners, among them community leaders and elected officials, turned out Sept. 20 for the AIDS Foundation of Chicago's 2008 AIDS Run and Walk.

The race and walk stepped off on a sunny Saturday morning in Grant Park. More than 7,000 people participated in the event, which raised about \$400,000, though AFC spokesperson Maude Carroll said Sept. 22 that officials were still tabulating returns.

Among those walking was Cook County Board Pres. Todd Stroger, who was joined on the course by some younger family members.

Stroger said he hoped his being there reflected Cook County's commitment to its residents with HIV/AIDS.

"Health care is the County's mission," Stroger said, adding that numerous persons with HIV/AIDS depend on County health facilities for their care.

"The County will step up to make sure people stay healthy and protected," Stroger said.

AFC Executive Director Mark Ishuag said he was, as always, impressed by the turnout but distressed by the abundance of sobering news and statistics that have been coming from AIDS researchers lately.

"I was in Mexico City at the International Conference on AIDS and there was no good news coming out of that," Ishuag said.

"We have most of the tools we need, but we still have no cures, no vaccine (and) no microbicide," he added. "We have no political will to change. But people will keep coming out and walking and running until there is a cure."

In that spirit, walkers and runners were asked to fill out a "prescription" form for a national AIDS strategy that would be sent to politicians, essentially prescribing change for the country's response to the epidemic.

Despite the recent setbacks in news, many participants said the morning felt upbeat and positive.

"This is going to be the most magnificent walk," said U.S. Rep. Danny Davis, as he delivered keynote remarks prior to the start. "In every direction I look, people keep coming in."

Greg Van Hyfte, who walked with Project VIDA, said he's taken place in numerous AIDS walks.

"It's fun coming here and seeing familiar faces. Everyone seems positive and upbeat," he said.

Davis sounded the bullhorn commencing the run and walk shortly after 9:55 a.m., sending the runners and walkers off on the 3.1 mile course that stretched from Grant Park to the Museum Campus, north to Lake Shore and Madison and back into the Park.

Over the years, the AIDS Walk and Run has raised about \$2 million for services for person with HIV/AIDS, according to AFC officials.

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