“AIDSfree” Fundraiser to Help Six Cities Worldwide, Including Atlanta

The U.K.-based Christmas Appeal is a joint effort of two newspapers and the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

December 7, 2018 By Trent Straube

Sir Elton John was in Atlanta to kick off the “AIDSfree” campaign, a holiday fundraiser based in the United Kingdom that will support HIV testing and treatment in six cities across the globe, including Atlanta, reports The Independent.

The other cities are Delhi, India; Kiev, Ukraine; London; Maputo, Mozambique; and Nairobi, Kenya.

Why is Atlanta part of this list? AIDS “started off as a disease of young gay men in the 1980s, affluent people in New York, L.A. and San Francisco,” John said. “Now it’s a disease of the poor all across America, but especially in the South. People are being forgotten. That is a disgrace.”

> This Christmas is a special one for us. We are partnering with the @EveningStandard and @Independent to launch our campaign, #AIDSfree.
>
> pic.twitter.com/9WpvKtMXCZ
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> — Elton John AIDS Fdn (@ejaf) December 3, 2018

The AIDSfree campaign is spearheaded by the newspapers The Independent and the Evening Standard, which have both U.S. and the U.K. editions. The owner of the papers, Evgeny Lebedev, joined John in Atlanta at the Grady Ponce De Leon Center to kick off the fundraiser.

As The Independent points out in its article: “In Atlanta, one of America’s richest cities and the home of such international corporate giants as Coca-Cola and CNN, if you are a gay black man in 2018 then, unbelievably, you still have a one in two chance of being diagnosed as HIV positive

during your lifetime.”

“I am so proud that this Christmas The Independent and the Evening Standard will raise money to combat this epidemic,” Lebedev said. “It is a time of year for helping others, and our appeal will do exactly that.

“Over the next few weeks, we will campaign to help those at risk of infection to access treatment. We will tell the stories of the people who have been forgotten. We will fight to make sure governments give the disease the attention it requires.”

Money raised from the campaign will support the Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF) projects in the six cities. Specifically, the goal is to get 300,000 people to test for HIV and to help those who are HIV positive access treatment. What’s more, the U.K. government will double public donations up to 2 million pounds (about $2.5 million).

While in Atlanta, John and Lebedev also took an oral swab HIV test to illustrate how fast and simple the home test can be. EJAF hopes to make the tests available for free at some supermarkets around the world as a way to reduce barriers to getting tested.

You can make a donation through JustGiving.com. You can learn more about AIDSfree campaign on EJAF.org.

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