HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day 2026

#HLTSAD is observed each June 5. On that day in 1981, the CDC first reported on cases of a mysterious disease that became known as AIDS.

June 4, 2026 By Trent Straube

Friday, June 5, marks HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day (HLTSAD) 2026. The date coincides with a historical milestone in the history of the AIDS epidemic. On June 5, 1981—45 years ago—the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), a publication of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, first reported on cases of a mysterious illness affecting young gay men; the disease soon became known as AIDS, which is caused by untreated HIV.

Logo for #HLTSAD 2026Courtesy of HLTSAD.org

Search #HIVLongTermSurvivors and #HLTSAD on social media to find events and sharable graphics. Samples are included throughout this article.

HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day was established in 2014 by Let's Kick ASS —AIDS Survivor Syndrome. As the organizers write on HLTSAD.org:

> #HLTSAD honors and uplifts the resilience of those who have lived with HIV since before 1996—before effective treatments existed. It shines a light on their enduring strength, lived experience and vital role in shaping the ongoing fight for justice, care, and dignity.…
>
> It's a day to honor long-term survivors of HIV and raise awareness about their needs, issues,

and journeys....

We make up about 25% of all people living with HIV and AIDS. 1.2 million people are living with HIV in the U.S. That makes about 330,000 long-term survivors, defined as individuals who acquired HIV before 1996 and the introduction of [highly effective HIV treatment].

Often overlooked, HLTS includes people born with HIV or who acquired the virus as babies and are now in their 30s and 40s. HLTS are also those living with HIV and AIDS for over 25 years.

It's up to us to set our action plan addressing the present-day and future needs, issues, and challenges facing people living longest with HIV/AIDS.

HLTSAD is not a time to look back at our traumatic pasts. (That's for World AIDS Day.) Our goal over the coming months is for YOU to set our agenda and priorities for moving forward and take action to make changes.

People living with HIV/AIDS deserve to age with dignity.

In honour of #HLTSAD, I'll be launching my WITNESS Collection, hand-painted gouache parafictional narratives and portraits paired with tanka honouring the resilience and humanity of #HIV long-term survivors. Follow here, Twitter x.com/Artipodean or Instagram instagram.com/artipo8ean/ for updates

[image or embed]

— Artipodean (@artipodean.bsky.social) May 10, 2026 at 9:25 AM

In the past year, the National AIDS Memorial highlighted the experiences of long-term survivors as part of its ongoing Surviving Voices series. Watch the video at the top of this article or on the National AIDS Memorial's YouTube channel.

The series also includes mini documentaries with several long-term survivors, who share their insights into decades of navigating the physical, social and emotional challenges of living with HIV.

A few examples include Tez Anderson, who founded Let's Kick ASS:

Paula Ray-Hinton:

And Vince Crisostomo, the director of aging services at San Francisco AIDS Foundation:

In related news, to coincide with the June 5, 1981, report on AIDS, two long-term survivors—Cleve Jones and Sean Strub—have launched a nationwide call to action Seven Days in June: Health Is Primary.

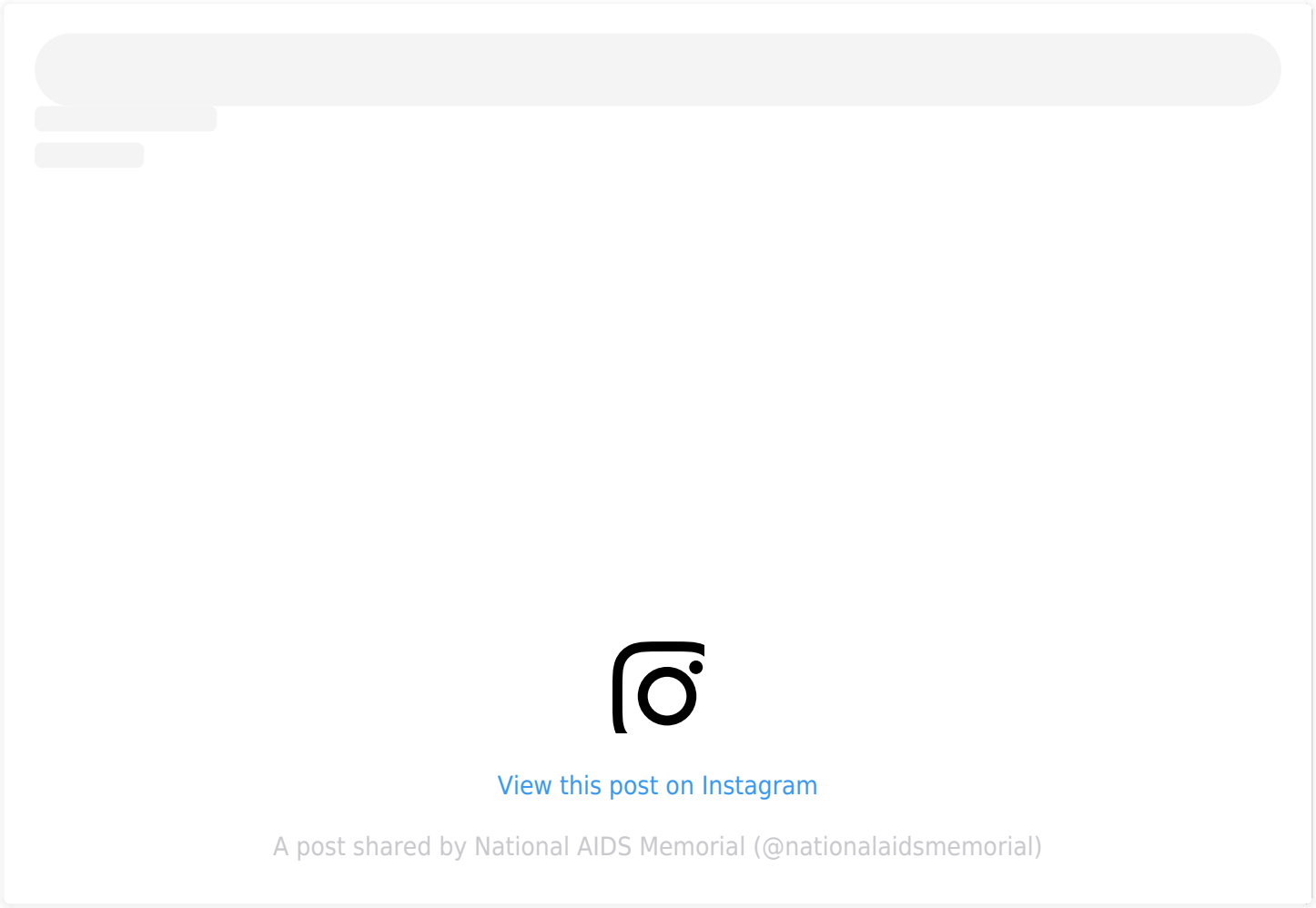


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Seven Days in June: Health Is Primary is a decentralized, grassroots campaign laser-focused on the issues of affordability and health care, dual issues that have galvanized special elections and

primaries during the last year and served as linchpins for successful campaigns across the political spectrum.



To learn more, see the POZ article, “Health Is Primary.”

Click here to learn more about 2026 HIV and AIDS awareness days and for a printable poster.



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