R.I.P. Ed Shaw; the Longtime Advocate for Those Aging With HIV Died of COVID-19

"Improving the lives of those with HIV and AIDS has been my mission and life's work for over two decades."

May 1, 2020 By Trent Straube

Ed Shaw, a tireless HIV advocate based in New York City who was a member of numerous organizations and advocacy groups and worked for POZ in the mid-'90s, died in April 2020 of complications from COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus.

HIV positive for slightly over 30 years, Shaw remained active in HIV work until his late 70s. In 2018, for example, he appeared in a video for the public awareness series Never Alone, which highlighted the challenges long-term survivors face, such as isolation and loneliness. You can read more about that campaign in "A Message to Anyone With HIV: 'You Are Never Alone.'"

In a recent Facebook post, POZ founder Sean Strub remembered his friendship with the fellow advocate: "He was a caring and upbeat activist, one of the very first to bring attention to the unique issues involved with HIV and aging," wrote Strub, who's the executive director of the Sero Project, which fights HIV stigma and criminalization. "Ed and I became friends and allies in the mid-'90s, when he went to work for POZ, officially helping organize our POZ Life Expos but also serving as a liaison to the most disenfranchised communities in New York's mosaic of people living with HIV. He raised the consciousness of those around him, including mine. He was a quiet leader who leaves a powerful legacy of love."

The Legal Action Committee (LAC), which fights for justice for HIV-positive people, among other marginalized groups, issued a statement about Shaw's passing. It reads in part:

> "Ed was a devoted member of the LAC family, having served on our Board since 2003.… When Ed learned he was HIV positive during the height of the AIDS epidemic, he decided that no one should struggle with a diagnosis alone. He worked tirelessly to combat the pervasive stigma and discrimination people with HIV and AIDS faced, sharing openly about his diagnosis and experience, and providing support to those who were struggling. Ed was a beacon of hope and light for many people in their darkest moments. He was adamant with his care, never

demanding but consistently assuring that ‘HIV is something you shouldn’t have to go through alone. There’s always someone, somewhere that you can talk to. And it’s really important that you understand that. You’re never alone.’

“In addition to the individual lives he touched with his compassion, Ed educated countless health professionals and advocates across the country. He participated in hundreds of symposia, conferences and workshops at both community and governmental levels. A natural leader, he served as chair/co-chair of many groups, including: chair of the New York Association on HIV Over 50; community cochair of the NYC HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council; community cochair of New York State’s Prevention Planning Group; chair emeritus of the Consumer Advisory Board at GMHC; and chair of the Community Advisory Board of NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan, where he was also an activist volunteer for over 25 years. Ed also shared his expertise as a member of the New York City Commission on HIV/AIDS, the National HIV/AIDS & Aging Awareness Day Steering Committee and the Aging/HIV/AIDS and GRAY Panthers Committees at the United Nations.

“In 2018, when Ed accepted [LAC’s own Edward J. Davis Community Service Award], he shared that, ‘Improving the lives of those with HIV and AIDS has been my mission and life’s work for over two decades, and this quote by Gandhi has been my guide: “We must be the change that we wish to see in the world.”’ Ed certainly embodied this—his exceptional kindness, fierce advocacy and eloquent expression made him an unmatched inspiration and hero for so many.”

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