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[Love Heals - The Alison Gertz Foundation for AIDS Education]

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Dini von Mueffling, *Executive Director*

THE ALISON GERTZ FOUNDATION FOR AIDS EDUCATION
345 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10022 • (212) 371-1335



THE ALISON GERTZ FOUNDATION
345 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10022
(212) 371-1335

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT HIV/AIDS

- * Women are the fastest growing group of people becoming infected with HIV/AIDS in this country.
- * Teenagers are the second fastest.
- * Today, 70% of the new infections in this country are through heterosexual sex.
- * Only 10% of HIV-infected teenagers in this country know they are infected.
- * AIDS (and related illnesses) is the leading cause of death for women ages 25-40 in urban areas. Many of those who die in their twenties were infected as teenagers.
- * By the year 2000, the World Health Organization estimates, the worldwide infection rate will be 40 million.
- * 2,825,830 teenagers will become sexually active in the USA this year.

Educate your mind. Protect your body.



KEN SUNSHINE CONSULTANTS, INC.

434 E. 52ND ST. ■ SUITE # 1E ■ NEW YORK, NY 10022 ■ TEL.: 212-754-2388 ■ FAX: 212-754-1691

For Immediate Release
November 30, 1993

Contact: Ken Sunshine
Peter LoFrumento
212/754-2388

**WORLD AIDS DAY MARKED BY ANNOUNCEMENT OF LANDMARK
LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS;**

**Prominent AIDS activists, politicians, actors, community
leaders join to lobby for mandatory sex education classes
in all states & to lift ban on condom ads.**

New York - On Wednesday, December 1, 1993 (World AIDS Day), Love Heals - The Alison Gertz Foundation For AIDS Education will announce landmark legislative resolutions for the improvement of HIV/AIDS education and awareness during a press conference at the Tudor Hotel (304 East 42nd Street, Knightsbridge Room) at 11:00 a.m. These resolutions are being sponsored by Congressman Jerry Nadler (D-NY) and were introduced on the floor of Congress on November 19.

Specifically, the resolutions call for:

1) all states to mandate that quality HIV/AIDS education be taught in school sex education programs - education which involves all aspects of HIV/AIDS prevention including safer sex (and condom use);

2) the Secretary of Health & Human Services and the Surgeon General to develop guidelines for the prevention of AIDS/HIV infections and should distribute such guidelines to parents throughout the U.S.;

3) the television and motion picture industries to begin acting responsibly by encouraging the use of condoms in movies, television shows and public service announcements;

4) advertisements for condoms be encouraged in all forms of media, and that the self-imposed media ban on condom advertising be lifted;

5) the National Commission on AIDS to be reinstated (it was disbanded in September, 1993, after making valuable recommendations about HIV/AIDS in this country).

Among those who support these measures and will attend the announcement are:

- **Jeanne Ashe**, Arthur's wife and founder of the Arthur Ashe Foundation for the Defeat of AIDS;
- **Mark Jacobs**, actor, star of Goodfellas and Gregory Hynes' upcoming directorial debut, White Man's Burden.
- **Penelope Ann Miller**, actress, star of *Carlito's Way*;
- **Carol and Jerry Gertz**, Alison's parents and founders of Concerned Parents For AIDS Research (CPFA), have raised over \$1.25 million for AIDS research projects;
- **Joey DiPaulo**, a young hemophiliac with AIDS who has suffered discrimination at school because of his illness;
- **Congressman Jerry Nadler** (D-NY);
- **Councilman Tom Duane** (D-NY);
- **Martin Piccoli**, Director of Corps Member Affairs from Teach For America;
- **Jim Dolas**, Program Specialist, AIDS and Adolescents Network of New York;
- **Nancy Hirsch**, President of the Michael Hirsch Foundation, which is named after her brother who help found People With AIDS Coalition (PWAC);
- **Dr. Ernst Wynder**, President of the American Health Foundation, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the health of all Americans;
- **Andrea Schlesinger**, the only student advisory member of the New York City Board of Education.
- **Mary Fisher**, spoke at the 1992 Republican National Convention and former member, National Commission on AIDS; (unable to attend, but will send letter of support)
- **Kristine Gebbie**, the Federal AIDS Czar; (unable to attend, but will send letter of support)
- **Elizabeth Glaser**, founder of the Pediatric AIDS Foundation; (unable to attend, but will send letter of support)
- and **Jeanne White**, Ryan's mom, founder of The Ryan White Foundation and main proponent of the Ryan White Care Act. (unable to attend, but will send a letter of support)

CONGRESSMAN JERROLD NADLER
THE INTRODUCTION OF A SENSE OF THE CONGRESS
RESOLUTION ON AIDS EDUCATION
11/22/93

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a Sense of the Congress Resolution which expresses the need for quality HIV/AIDS education to help prevent the spread of AIDS.

This resolution calls for a real AIDS education initiative. With 315,390 AIDS deaths and more than 194,300 AIDS-related deaths since the discovery of the disease twelve years ago, the AIDS epidemic rages unabated. The need to marshall the powers of the Federal Government and communities across the nation behind an all-out AIDS education effort to prevent the spread of this dreadful disease has never been greater. Clearly, we cannot battle AIDS without first insuring that every American is educated about the disease and is continuously reminded of ways to prevent it.

That is why I am introducing a Resolution which calls for greater AIDS education and prevention initiatives. This Resolution calls for states to provide quality sex education programs in school for young adults who are least educated about the disease are at great risk for contracting it. It also calls for the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Surgeon General to develop guidelines for the prevention of AIDS and HIV infection and to distribute those guidelines to parents and their children.

It also expresses the Sense of the Congress that condom use for television, advertisements, and public service announcements should be encouraged rather than discouraged. Finally, it calls for the reinstatement of the National Commission on AIDS which has provided useful information about the disease.

Mr. Speaker, this country has been negligent in making AIDS education a public health priority. While we wait for a cure to put an end to this deadly disease, we must in the meantime take the necessary and appropriate prevention measures to help stop the spread of this disease which is devastating to so many Americans. I urge my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring this important measure.

Nebraska Case

A Bizarre Tale Of
Deception, Murder

Page 6

Hands-On Mayor

Giuliani Freezes
Tongues, Hiring

Page 7

Shaq Whacked

This Time, Knicks
Have the Magic

Sports

QUEENS

New York Newsday

EDITION

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 5, 1994 • QUEENS • 40 CENTS

Clinton OKs Campaign

Condoms Go Prime Time

Woman: Did you bring it?

Man: Uh-oh . . . I forgot it!

Woman: Then . . . forget it.

Gov't-Sponsored TV Ad Series Targets 18- to 25-Year-Olds

Page 3

0 0072059 20010 0
Dialogues from "Turned Down" TV commercial

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FAMILY AIDS NETWORK, INC.

Ambassadors of Compassion

Mary D. Fisher, Founder

November 30, 1993

Ms. Dini von Mueffling
Executive Director
The Alison Gertz Foundation
345 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Dini:

I regret that I'm unable to join you and your colleagues at The Alison Gertz Foundation for tomorrow's important news conference. But two small children and an over-booked travel schedule have conspired to keep me in Washington.

Jeffrey Schmalz's posthumous and eloquent plea in yesterday's New York Times has made the case for increased national compassion and awareness in stunning and evocative terms. As he said, from his deathbed, "time is running out...."

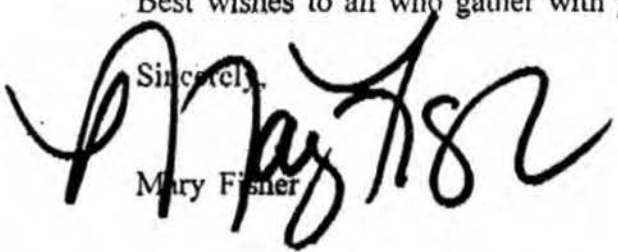
Alison and her parents knew this reality during her lifetime. And millions of living Americans know it today. The nation is growing weary of worrying about a problem we have not solved, hearing about a crisis we cannot avoid, and resentful of those who continue to observe -- correctly -- that history's deadliest plague is marching bravely, and largely undeterred, across America.

I commend those whose voices have not and will not be stilled in the appeal for greater wisdom and resources. I salute those of you who are making your statement in places and ways that it may be heard. And I offer this pledge of partnership: I will be ceaseless in prayer for and commitment to all who champion the call for communities that are marked by compassion rather than stigma and hope in the place of despair.

Best wishes to all who gather with you tomorrow. Give those I love my warmest greetings.

Sincerely,

Mary Fisher





P e d i a t r i c A I D S F o u n d a t i o n

Love for Children with AIDS

1 December 1993

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Lori Wiener, Ph.D., A.C.S.W.

Dear Friends,

I am writing this letter in appreciation of the commitment that Love Heals has demonstrated by continuing in Ali Gertz's name to raise awareness and consciousness about HIV/AIDS. By organizing education and advocacy programs in schools, they have made a statement to others that it is essential to learn the truths that surround this disease.

Today marks the observance of World AIDS Day. It is today, and every day, that we must reach out to those who are infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Today is a day we can decide to make a difference. Today we can choose to educate ourselves, and to embrace others living with this disease.

Love Heals has called this press conference to do these very things. They are setting an example that it is not only alright but necessary to care and to make a difference. I know that Ali Gertz would be very proud of her friends for their commitment and hard work.

By confronting problems unique to children with HIV/AIDS, the Pediatric AIDS Foundation brings hope to my family and so many others. The efforts of programs such as Love Heals enable us to continue moving forward in our battle, and give us confidence that together we can, and will, create a better future for children with HIV/AIDS and their families.

Alison Gertz remains in all our hearts, and gives each of us who are infected the strength to keep fighting.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Glaser
Co-founder

CO-FOUNDERS Susan DeLaurentis/Elizabeth Glaser/Susan Zeegen
1311 Colorado Avenue, Santa Monica, California 90404
TEL: (310) 395-9051 FAX: (310) 395-5149

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 30, 1993

Ms. Dini Von-Muessling, Executive Director
Love Heals
Allison Gertz Foundation
345 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Ms. Von-Muessling:

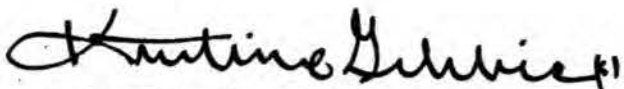
Thank you for sharing with me information about your work in prevention education for adolescents at risk for HIV transmission. The need to provide this information to adolescents at risk for HIV infection is critical in our work to end the epidemic. Your project delivers much needed health promotion information to this population at risk.

The President has entrusted me with taking the steps necessary to end the epidemic. In order to stop AIDS, it is important for those of us at the National level to provide the resources and coordination and for local communities to implement the programs necessary to educate those at risk and provide care for those already infected. Adolescents are one of the populations that require special attention in our communities.

After 12 years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic there is still a lot of work to be done. Programs like yours deliver an effective message to the community about the need to continue in our labor until we end the epidemic.

I wish you success in your endeavors.

Sincerely,



Kristine M. Gebbie, R.N., M.N.
National AIDS Policy Coordinator

JERROLD E. GERTZ

October 6, 1993

Ms. Dini von Mueffling
Executive Director
LOVE HEALS
345 Park Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10022

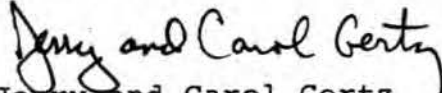
Dear Dini,

We want to acknowledge you, Stefani and Victoria for the wonderful and important work you are doing at Love Heals and for continuing the effort started by our daughter, Ali, to educate young people about the dangers of AIDS.

At a time when the disease is spreading through the young heterosexual community, education has been an unacceptably low national priority. Your honest and frank, face to face presentations to junior high, high school and college students throughout the country, are having a powerful impact; and although it is too late for Ali, you may be instrumental in protecting many thousands of young lives today and in the future, and hopefully will prevent other families from going through the tragedy suffered by ours.

We enthusiastically thank you and support your efforts in every way.

With Love,


Jerry and Carol Gertz



October 28, 1993

Dini von Mueffling
Executive Director
Love Heals
345 Park Avenue
New York NY 10022

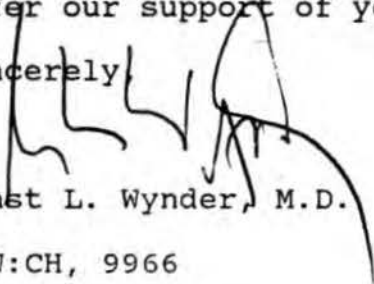
Dear Dini:

On behalf of the American Health Foundation, I want to commend you on your efforts to promote the health of our country's youth by educating them about HIV/AIDS.

Among the health concerns facing young people today, HIV/AIDS is certainly of the highest priority and needs to be discussed in an open and honest forum. You are spreading the message directly to students in ways that television and the news media cannot accomplish.

You are making students aware that they have the power to choose to lead their lives in a responsible and safe manner, and I offer our support of your important work.

Sincerely,



Ernest L. Wynder, M.D.

ELW:CH, 9966

THE 1994 CLEARASIL NATIONAL TEEN SUMMIT AIDS PLATFORM

The following list of recommendations from 1994 Clearasil National Teen Summit delegates was compiled by summit representatives Ngoc Dinh and Baxter Vendrick:

AIDS Education & Awareness: General

- Since we know how to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, we should be educating those who do not have the virus yet how not to get it.
- We need to combat fear, which is the biggest problem concerning AIDS. The fear of isolation prevents open discussion of the disease, as well as how to prevent it.
- In rural America, a person living with HIV/AIDS feels like a leper. More AIDS awareness should be focused on the Midwest, smaller communities, and college campuses.
- When we discuss AIDS, we talk about sex, drugs, and condoms. We need to create a comfort level about these topics that encourages open discussion, or we will have to start discussing life and death.
- President Clinton should mention [AIDS Awareness] in an address.
- One day of the week should be set aside for everyone to wear the AIDS red ribbon, promoting AIDS awareness.
- We need more role models, not more free condoms. People such as [Los Angeles Laker] A.C. Green should be encouraged and promoted as true-to-life role models who are not going to have sex until they are married. The AIDS movement should be centered behind people like Green and Magic Johnson.
- No parent should have a problem with having his or her child know about HIV/AIDS.
- Teenagers should have a more active role in AIDS awareness and prevention. AIDS awareness packets and plans of action should be offered to teens through a public service 800 number that also provides information on how to start an AIDS awareness group in their own communities.

AIDS Education & Awareness: In the Schools

- We should have an AIDS Awareness Week across the entire nation at every school. Many parents do not educate their children about sex, drugs, and AIDS. Most kids find out information concerning the disease from peers, and this information can't be counted on for accuracy.

- A sex education course should be offered to every student in every school in the United States. Included in the sex education course should be at least one to two weeks focusing on HIV/AIDS.

I think we definitely need AIDS education. We hear stories from our friends; there's no way to get the facts. [People] only have myths to go on. A lot of adults feel that kids don't need to know about it.

*Ryan Tolbert, 12th grade
Clovis, N.M.*

I think there's an extreme need for education [among younger people]. In my experience, teenagers can be a much more receptive audience than adults. I think it's a myth that elementary and junior high school students are not mature enough to take in means of prevention. It's necessary.

*Gretchen Rohr, 12th grade
Billings, Mont.*

I think AIDS education needs to be better in all schools. It should be standardized—not, if you're lucky enough to get it, you get it.

*Brenna Saunders, 10th grade
Kansas City, Kan.*

I would recommend that you make sure that there's [AIDS] education in the schools and that there's someone making sure it's happening. Here in North Dakota, there is none, and it's not even missed. Perhaps there is some way of enforcing it.

*Christopher Swanson, 12th grade
Fargo, N.D.*

I think that all [students] should have the opportunity to speak with someone with AIDS. You don't learn as well about it from a textbook. Until I heard Love Heals' presentation (with a woman with AIDS) [at the Clearasil National Teen Summit], I never was worried. I learned more from that one day than I ever had. When you know someone who has it, it makes more of an impact. It makes a big difference.

*Jennifer Swanson, ninth grade
Wayne, N.J.*

My recommendation is to try the best to educate at a very low elementary school level. That is, to me, the most important thing to do.

*Victor Vela, 11th grade
Longmont, Colo.*

I think that we need a mandatory AIDS education curriculum. Just like we have basic driver's ed. requirements, why don't we have the same for AIDS?

*Fiona Rose, 12th grade
Ann Arbor, Mich.*

- It should be a goal to have condoms available in all schools throughout the country, because it is an absolute necessity in this day and age.

I would recommend that you encourage schools to implement condom-availability programs.

*Bret Seltzer, 11th grade
Ann Arbor, Mich.*

- Confidential HIV/AIDS testing should be held periodically free of charge in every school.

Federal Action

- The federal government needs to realize that AIDS is not a moral issue; it is a health issue.
- The distribution of free condoms and needles should not be [allowed to be] outlawed by protest groups.
- There should be a federal policy that makes AIDS education mandatory in schools.

I think whatever new [education] program you are planning, teens must be a part of it. AIDS is striking teens and not the 50-year-old, white males who make up the majority of Congress.

*Robert Rutland-Brown, ninth grade
New Smyrna Beach, Fla.*

I think there needs to be a lot more money allocated to research and more money from the federal government for development of drugs. [I would recommend that] federally funded education programs be instituted in schools. [And that they be] mandatory.

*Alexander Tuneksi, 10th grade
Alpharetta, Ga.*

- The U.S. government should send every household in America literature concerning HIV/AIDS in simple language that could be understood by adults, so they can educate their children concerning the risks of the disease.
- All insurance policies should have to cover HIV/AIDS treatment.
- Accessibility to aggressive care at medical centers is not found readily across the nation. The metropolitan areas are the haves, with the resources and medical technologies, as well as knowledge concerning the disease; while the smaller, isolated communities are the have-nots concerning access to information and treatment. The daily needs of every person living with AIDS should be met regardless of their geographic location.

*I would recommend that the U.S. give money to other countries—specifically,
Third World nations—to fund AIDS education there.*

*Alice Robinson, 11th grade
Sterling Heights, Mich.*

Feb. 19, 1994

Dear Everyone at BKG Youth:

Thank you so much for the best week of my life!!! I had the coolest time in Ann Arbor during the Teen Summit. I met so many cool people, and I learned more than I imagined I ever would. I came away with a positive attitude, thanks greatly to Joey DiPaulo. Inviting him was a brilliant idea, and hearing him gave me a new self image to create change in AIDS education. I am starting an AIDS Awareness group in my school, and Joey said that he would come and speak at my school.

I can't seem to find an address for Clearasil, so if you speak to them, tell them thanks a million for all that they did, too! Really...you did so much for all of us that I will never forget any of you. You created many friendships that will last a lifetime.

I was wondering something, though. Since I am starting an AIDS Awareness group, could I possibly get a copy of Joey DiPaulo's speech? I will buy it, but I am hoping that you have a copy of it since you guys taped everything, including all of the speakers. I am going to keep in touch with him, and since he gets so much mail everyday, I thought that maybe I would hear back from you sooner. Also, do you have the AIDS panel discussion on tape? If you guys do, and have copies, can I buy one please to show in my group and to the school? I will pay anything, just so that I can have it for reference.

Once again...thank you so much for the teen summit. Your goal of putting youth power to use was definitely accomplished within myself.

Keep in touch, and please let me know about the videos.

Thanks again,

Susie

Susie Sticka

*Thank
u
so much!
#*

103D CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. _____

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. NADLER submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress with respect to information on AIDS and HIV infections, and for other purposes.

Whereas 315,390 cases of AIDS have been documented and more than 194,300 AIDS-related deaths have resulted in the United States;

Whereas the AIDS crisis is a national epidemic resulting in at least 40,000 new HIV infections annually in the United States;

Whereas many adults and adolescents are not being provided thorough and easily accessible AIDS education in order to prevent the contraction of the disease; and

Whereas improved education and prevention efforts to adolescents as well as adults has shown to reduce the likelihood of contracting AIDS: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of Congress that—

3 (1) all States should provide quality education
4 in school sex education programs respecting—

5 (A) AIDS, and

6 (B) HIV infections,

7 (2) the Secretary of Health and Human Serv-
8 ices and the Surgeon General should develop guide-
9 lines for the prevention of AIDS and HIV infections
10 and should distribute such guidelines for parents
11 and their children,

12 (3) the television and motion picture industry
13 should encourage the use of condoms in movies, tele-
14 vision shows and public service announcements,

15 (4) advertisements for condoms should be en-
16 couraged, and

17 (5) the National Commission on AIDS should
18 be reinstituted.

LOVE HEALS
THE ALISON GERTZ FOUNDATION FOR AIDS EDUCATION

Love Heals is a non-profit AIDS education foundation established by AIDS activist Alison Gertz. On August 8, 1992, Ali died after a painful four-year battle with AIDS. After her death, three of Ali's best friends pledged to keep her legacy alive by assuming responsibility for Love Heals.

Love Heals believes that the best education for young people comes from young people. In keeping with Ali's commitment, Love Heals speaks to high school and college students throughout the country about the importance of understanding and preventing the spread of AIDS. A twenty-minute documentary film about Ali, narrated by actress Molly Ringwald, will accompany these lectures.

Ali was infected through a single sexual encounter when she was sixteen. She brought her story to the public in an effort to help others, and soon became an internationally recognized spokesperson for AIDS awareness and prevention. Speaking to young people in schools and through videos, she became one of the first credible voices of her generation to alert her peers to the reality that anyone can get AIDS.

Ali had a powerful impact on those who heard her speak. Her story was featured in numerous magazine and newspaper articles, a documentary film by the World Health Organization, and an ABC made-for-television movie. After the movie was shown in March, 1992, the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, received over 189,000 phone calls to its AIDS hotline. Ali also received an award from Secretary of Health and Human Services, Louis W. Sullivan for her contribution to AIDS awareness and education.

Young people currently comprise the second-fastest growing group of HIV-infected people in America. Love Heals believes that education is an indispensable component for an AIDS-free world for everyone. The only way to stop future generations from dying is to halt the spread of HIV today.

Educate your mind. Protect your body.

Stefani Greenfield
Victoria Leacock
Dini von Mueffling

Co-Chairpersons

Love Heals, Inc. 345 Park Avenue New York, NY 10022 (212) 371-1335

BIOGRAPHIES

Stefani Greenfield is the National Sales Manager for the DKNY Jeans division of the Donna Karan company.

Victoria Leacock is a filmmaker who has just completed a documentary on AIDS produced by Jonathan Demme and is currently the host of a New York television talk show called "Film and Filmmakers."

Dini von Mueffling is a print and television journalist and is currently the Executive Director of Love Heals.

[women right now]

● Wedding gifts ● Street harassment

What I owe my friend who died of AIDS

BY DINI VON MUEFFLING

LAST SUMMER, WHEN OUR BEST FRIEND, Alison Gertz, was dying of an AIDS-related illness, Stefani Greenfield, Victoria Leacock and I decided that we could not let her dream of an AIDS-free future for young people die with her. She had spent the past four years urging people to listen to her story and heed its message: You can become infected from just one night of unprotected sex. That's what happened to Ali when she was 16.

When Ali first appeared in *The New York Times* in 1989, her story—that a heterosexual teenager from a wealthy Park Avenue family could contract AIDS—hit a nerve. After an ABC television movie about Ali's life aired in March 1992, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's national AIDS hot line received a record 189,251 phone calls within the next 24 hours. Ali was a symbol of how *anyone* could be at risk.

But for Stefani, Victoria and me, Ali wasn't a symbol. She was our best friend—the one we went dancing with, went to the movies with, the one we cried over bad boyfriends with. Then suddenly Ali became the one we went to Oprah with, on speaking engagements with, and to the hospital to visit. Later, she became the one whose diaper we changed.

We all struggled to accommodate Ali's wishes. After one of our friends accidentally got pregnant, Ali laid down the law. "I don't want to see you," she said, "unless you swear to me that you will always use condoms from now on. Otherwise we can't be friends."

We are committed to continuing Ali's work in educating young people about AIDS through her foundation, Love Heals. We talk to teenagers in schools, because teenagers represent one of the fastest-growing groups currently being infected. According to a CDC report, only 45 percent of high school stu-

dents who are currently sexually active said that they or their partner had ever used a condom.

When we go into the schools we invite the assembled students to ask us questions about how HIV is transmitted or what happens once someone is infected. One big obstacle is getting them to talk openly in front of administrators, who sometimes are nervous about our message. We always discuss our curriculum with the school in advance, so it should be no surprise when the word *condom* is mentioned. Still, we recently spoke at a school where, minutes before we were to address the student audience, the teacher who invited us said, "You'll just talk about abstinence, right?" We politely reminded her that she had known our agenda in advance. We were able to go on, but when condoms and dental dams became the focus of our presentation, the auditorium lights suddenly began flickering as a wary teacher signaled the end of the session.

Later, after the principal had left, many of the guidance counselors thanked us. They told us that they had learned things *they* didn't even know, and asked for help with questions they might get later from students. One teen came up to us to say that her best friend had just died of AIDS: she had been told the illness was cancer until after the friend had died. She pressed

a \$100 contribution into Victoria's hand and ran from the room without telling us her name. Just as that girl's friend inspired her to act, so did Ali move us. The three of us cannot be silent. Ali cannot have worked so hard and died for nothing. For more information about the AIDS education programs offered by Love Heals, write to: Love Heals, 345 Park Avenue, New York NY 10022.



Dini, Victoria and Stefani, above from left, are educating teens about the disease that killed Alison Gertz, left.

Esquire

MARCH 1993

The Power of Three



WE HOPE you remember Alison Gertz, the lovely young woman from a wealthy New York family who contracted AIDS. Gertz knew that her privileged status made her the perfect person to persuade young people that AIDS was not just the disease of gays and IV drug users, and she used it to the hilt. In August 1989, she was *Esquire's* Woman of the Year. By August 1992, she was dying, and her three best friends knew it. Dini von Mueffling describes the day spent sitting on Ali's bed

with Victoria Leacock and Stefani Greenfield: "We were being heavy and morbid like you're supposed to be, but Ali was fighting it. She was furious." From some reservoir of best-friend intuition, they began trading funny stories. "She heard us laughing," Von Mueffling says, "and that's when she decided to let go, when she knew we would be okay."

Today the three women run the fledgling AIDS-awareness group Love Heals (212-371-1335). They raise money for direct-care services, and they speak to high

school students, spreading the gospel of Ali. "We're three girls in our twenties, and we speak to them honestly," Greenfield says. "We're not their mothers."

With a rare sense of shared self-consciousness, Gertz and her friends regarded the last years of her life as something not to be wasted. Leacock filmed as much of Ali as she could, up to and including that last day. An edited video will soon accompany Love Heals on its school visits. "Ali was gorgeous," Greenfield says, "but people have to see the beginning, middle, and end." 12

ALI'S PALS: Dini von Mueffling, Victoria Leacock, Stefani Greenfield talk love and condoms.

LEFT: JOHN HUBA; ABOVE: RICHARD PIERCE



From left: Victoria Leacock, Dini von Mueffling, and Stefani Greenfield

Who: Victoria Leacock, 30; Dini von Mueffling, 27; Stefani Greenfield, 26. **What they do:** Cofounders of Love Heals, an organization that holds AIDS education and awareness workshops in junior and senior high schools across the country. **In memory of:** Ali Gertz, their close friend who died of AIDS when she was twenty-six. **Daily heroics:** Dini says, "I get to save lives for a living." Victoria says, "I'm driven. I don't want anyone else going through the fear and pain of losing a close friend to AIDS." **Facing facts:** Dini says, "Teenagers are the second-fastest-growing group becoming infected with AIDS and HIV. We focus on prevention, and we're effective educators. Kids hear us when we

talk. We won't go to a school that places restrictions on what we say. If the administrators don't think that kids are having sex, then their heads are in the sand." —Sabrina Solin

The Goods on Doing Good

Education required: Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts. A second language never hurts, especially Spanish.

Ground-floor jobs: Try for internships with organizations like the one you want to work for. Another idea: Volunteering gets you in the door and will give you a taste of what the real world is like on an imaginary salary. **The good news:** You'll have a warm, fuzzy feeling when you go to sleep at night. And you'll make an impact on others' lives.

What's not so great: Low pay and long hours.

Moolah: Generally starts at about \$14,000, and executive directors with lots of experience can make as much as \$50,000.

The bag: A cloth knapsack.

What's in it: Petitions, little pencils, a bottle of water, information pamphlets, stickers, instant coffee, Magic Markers, and some fruit for long hours on the go. —S.S.

Who: Mary Desmond, 23. **What she does:** Canvass director of Pennsylvania Public Interest Research Group (PIRG). Mary organizes grass-roots campaigns for environmental causes and supervises the groups of workers who go door-to-door with information and petitions. **Roots:** "I started working for PIRG when I was in college. I wanted to make a difference." **Pressing issues, pressing flesh:** "I want to continue working at the grass-roots level, getting my hands dirty. Then, in twenty years, I'll run for office." —S.S.

Eco-activist
Mary Desmond



Who: Suzanne Muchin Stern, 25. **What she does:** Executive vice president of programs for Teach For America, a national organization that sends teachers to underprivileged school districts. **Where she's coming from:** "I joined Teach For America right after I graduated from college, and I taught for two years, then worked for a year as a recruiter." **The young and the relentless:** "Everyone in this organization is so focused. We're doing it—we're making quality education accessible to every child." **Back to the blackboard:** "I know eventually I'll teach again." —Rory Evans

Suzanne Muchin Stern thinks everyone deserves a great education



Photographs by Mark Contratto



Valentine's Day message: Dying for love shouldn't mean AIDS +

By Leah Ingram

WPG SUMMIT REPORTER

AIDS is the No. 1 concern of American teens, according to a recent survey. So it makes perfect sense that AIDS education will be a big part of the Clearasil National Teen Summit in Ann Arbor, which begins Saturday and ends Wednesday.

Monday — Valentine's Day — is going to be completely dedicated to

Molly Ringwald as Alison Gertz

the topic, which Stacey Patton, a delegate from Warren, thinks is completely appropriate.

"Some people might have sex on Valentine's Day as a valentine, and AIDS awareness is very important," says Stacey, 16, a junior at Fitzgerald High School. "Teens are very ignorant. They think (AIDS) won't happen to them, but it can."

It happened to Alison Gertz, who was 16 when she contracted AIDS from a heterosexual encounter. Before she died in 1992, she started speaking at local schools to let teen-agers know that they can get

AIDS. Her three best friends, Dini von Mueffling, Stefani Greenfield and Victoria Leacock, decided to continue Alison's message by founding Love Heals: The Alison Gertz Foundation for AIDS Education, and will be bringing the message to the summit.

On Sunday night, summit teens will see *Something to Live For: The Alison Gertz Story*, a made-for-television movie starring Molly Ringwald that was broadcast on ABC-TV last year.

Von Mueffling says Love Heals also is starting an interactive hot line

called 800-NOAIDSX.

"It's going to be a hot line written by teens for teens," says von Mueffling, who hopes to have it up and running by April 1. "What's great about going to the summit is that by talking to the delegates, we'll be able to hear what a teen-ager in Topeka, Maui and Fairbanks is thinking about, and we can create the hot line based on (the questions of teens) in all 50 states."

■ Leah Ingram is a free-lance writer based in Ann Arbor.

Study: Teenagers blind to AIDS risk

By **LEE SIEGEL**

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Teenagers face an enormous risk of AIDS because they like to experiment with sex and drugs, take risks and live for the moment, and because they feel immortal and defy authority, says a report.

"The major finding of the report is a little bit scary: youths don't seem to see themselves at risk," said Dr. Marvin Belzer of Childrens Hospital Los Angeles.

AIDS "is the most frightening problem facing youth in the 1990s," said Belzer, who is also chairman of the Los Angeles County Adolescent HIV Consortium. "All youth seem to consider HIV someone else's problem, regardless if they're gay or straight."

The consortium, run by county health officials and Childrens Hospital, wrote the report as a "strategic plan" to combat teenage AIDS, which "is not highly visible."

Education urged

It urges intense AIDS prevention and education efforts with special attention to homosexual and bisexual youths, runaways and minority adolescents with different cultures

and languages.

The report also calls for creation of confidential AIDS-testing centers for adolescents and says governments must reduce barriers that prevent youths from learning about AIDS or getting treatment.

It warns that AIDS grew 62% among Americans in their teens and early 20s from 1989 to 1991, and that only 15% to 31% of them regularly use condoms during sex. About 70% of 18-year-olds are sexually active, it adds.

Built-in risks

"If we examine the prevailing norms of adolescence — risk-taking, experimentation, feelings of invulnerability and immortality, defiance of adult authority — we can then realize the enormous potential risk for high rates of HIV infection in youth, as well as the complex challenges . . . in attempting to diminish that risk," the report says.

The document was issued Friday during a conference on AIDS and teenagers, but the audience included mostly government officials and AIDS service providers.

The report was based on interviews with 81 providers of AIDS-related services and 36 youths during 12 intense discussion groups.

An Unlikely AIDS Sufferer's Message

Continued From Page 29

people who are going through this, and warn others of the danger," she said. "I want to make a condom commercial, do speaking engagements, whatever I can."

"All the AIDS articles are about homosexuals or poor people on drugs, and unfortunately a lot of people just flip by them," she said. "They think it doesn't apply to them."

But she added: "They can't turn the page on me. I could be one of them, or their daughter. They have to deal with this."

Statistics show that the number of AIDS cases is rising alarmingly among heterosexuals who get the virus by sharing needles for drugs and then pass it to their sex partners and babies.

Although there is no evidence that AIDS is spreading rampantly among other heterosexuals in this country — as it is in Haiti and parts of Africa — cases like Ms. Gertz's do exist. About four percent of all newly reported AIDS cases stem from heterosexual intercourse, and that rate has been remaining steady.

New York City has recorded 524 cases in which women got acquired immune deficiency syndrome through sexual intercourse. The men they were with were infected through either drug use or sexual contact with other men. Another 83 cases were of women from Haiti or Africa.

'It Took Only One Time for Me'

"I want to talk to these kids who think they're immortal," Ms. Gertz said. "I want to tell them: I'm heterosexual, and it took only one time for me."

Ms. Gertz is certain how it happened. "It was one romantic night," she said. "There were roses and champagne and everything. That was it. I only slept with him once."

Ms. Gertz has since learned that the man was bisexual and that he has died

of AIDS. Had she known his past then, she said, she doubts it would have made a difference. "At that point they weren't publicizing AIDS," she said. "It wasn't an issue then."

AIDS is no respecter of wealth or social status. Ms. Gertz is a granddaughter of a founder of the old Gertz department stores in Queens and on Long Island. Her father, Jerrold E. Gertz, is a real-estate executive; her mother, Carol, is the co-founder of Tennis Lady, a national chain of high-fashion shops.

'People think this can't happen to them.'

Ms. Gertz went to Horace Mann, an exclusive private school in the Bronx, then studied art at Parsons School of Design in Manhattan.

'Probably Just a Bug'

When AIDS struck, Ms. Gertz said, "I was just, as they say, starting out in life." Her goals had been simple: "I wanted a house and kids and animals and to paint my paintings."

She had recently signed on with an art agent, embarking on a career as an illustrator. She had also quit her pack-a-day smoking habit and joined a health club "to get really healthy," she said.

Then fever and a spell of diarrhea hit last summer. A doctor told her it was "probably just a bug," she said. But the symptoms persisted, so she checked into Lenox Hill Hospital.

When her doctor told her the diagnosis, he had tears in his eyes. "I said: 'Oh, my God. I'm going to die.'" she re-

called. "And as I said it, I thought to myself, 'No I'm not. Why am I saying this?' I thought my life was over. 'I'm 22. I'm never going to have sex again. I'm never going to have children.'"

Determined to Keep Going

From that initial shock, Ms. Gertz bounced back with the ebullience so well known to her friends — they call her Ali for short — and with the fervor of activism that runs in the family. Recovering from her first treatment, she returned to her apartment, her pets (a dog, Saki; a cat, Sambucca, and tropical fish) and a new course in life.

"It's a dreadful disease, but it's also a gift," she said. "I've always been positive, optimistic. I thought, 'What can I do with it?' I like to think I'm here for a purpose. If I die, I would like to have left something, to make the world a little bit better before I go, to help people sick like me and prevent others from getting this. It would make it all worthwhile."

She and friends are organizing a fall theater performance and dinner-dance to raise money for an AIDS newsletter and other AIDS services. Her parents and their friends are planning a spring benefit for an organization they are forming called Concerned Parents and Friends for AIDS Research.

To keep her functioning normally, Ms. Gertz each day takes AZT, Ganciclovir and Bactrim pills, which fight the virus and opportunistic diseases. "We just have to keep her healthy until there's a breakthrough and they find a cure," her mother said.

'I Started to Cry Softly'

"I'm not afraid of death, but I am afraid of pain," Ms. Gertz said. She is learning psychological and behavioral techniques to withstand it, and doctors have promised medication if she needs it. "As far as dying goes, it's okay," she said. "There's no point in thinking about it now."

But her frequent high spirits do not erase her pain. While watching a soap opera love scene one day, she said, "I started to cry softly."

"I've made a conscious effort not to cry in front of people," she added. "But I do give myself a certain amount of time each month to be miserable, to cry and to vent."

Ms. Gertz is an only child. Her illness "was an enormous shock," her father said. "AIDS was the furthest thing from my mind. I used to suspect they magnified the statistics to get research money." Now he's giving and raising money himself and feels "anger at AIDS happening to anyone."

"It certainly turned our lives around," Mrs. Gertz said. "It changes your perspective on what's important." For her, every day starts with a morning call to her daughter's apartment, a block away.

One of Ms. Gertz's first concerns was not for herself. "I was worried about my previous boyfriends," she said. "I didn't want them to be sick." Two past boyfriends have been tested, she said,

and "both of them are O.K."

Her current boyfriend "is wonderful," she said. "He's stood by me." But AIDS has changed their relationship. "Yes, you can have safe sex. I know all the facts, and so does he. But still, in the back of his mind, he is scared, so we don't sleep together any more, and that's rough."

Ms. Gertz has not felt ostracized as many AIDS patients have. But there have been a few exceptions.

"The nurses told me this one resident doctor, a woman, insisted that I must have used IV drugs or must have had anal sex," Ms. Gertz said. She interprets the doctor's remarks as a denial of the doctor's own possible risk by regarding the patient as different.

Loss of a Friend

"And one friend I lost," Ms. Gertz said. "She left. She deserted me." That, too, she understands. "She was with me at Studio 54 during those earlier years, and she was much more sexually active than I was. It wasn't my mortality she was facing; it was her own. She just couldn't handle it."

Health insurance is a problem that has made her financially dependent on her parents. "I think the insurance company owes me about \$50,000," she said. "I haven't gotten one dime. They're trying to prove I knew I had this before I signed up for the policy two years before."

That angers Ms. Gertz because of the dozens of exhaustive, sometimes pain-

ful, tests she underwent to find what was wrong.

The Gertz family praises the hospital staff and their doctors, but it does regret that AIDS wasn't checked earlier. Mrs. Gertz said, "Because of her background, nobody thought this was a possibility."

"It stands to reason you're going to see more people like Ali," her mother said, since AIDS symptoms may not show up for 10 or 12 years.

Indeed, such cases are appearing. Dr. Jody Robinson, an internist in Washington who has written on AIDS, said that other cases like Ms. Gertz's are "out there."

"How many is a tremendous unknown," he said. "It may not be an overwhelming number, but what will it be five or six years from now?"

The danger, he said, is that because experts have said there has not been an explosive outbreak among heterosexuals, people have become complacent.

"The common wisdom has gone back to the idea that AIDS is really the gay plague and disease of IV drug users that it was set out to be in the first place, and the warning on heterosexual spread was a false alarm," he said.

Alison Gertz struggles against AIDS with the benefit of a number of factors unknown to most patients — she has a determined optimism bolstered by the love of family and friends, financial aid and first-class medical care.

Gathered on a sofa for photographs,

the Gertz family was all hugs and smiles. "I never felt from the beginning that this was anything to be hidden or ashamed of," Mrs. Gertz said. After a few pictures were taken, she wondered aloud, "Should we be looking so happy for such a serious subject?"

For a few seconds the family managed sober expressions for the camera. But soon, for at least one more day, the smiles broke through again.

Unlikely AIDS Sufferer's Message: Even You Can Get It

By **BRUCE LAMBERT**

Alison L. Gertz wasn't supposed to get AIDS.

She has never injected drugs or had a blood transfusion, and she describes herself as "not at all promiscuous." But she does say she had a single sexual encounter — seven years ago — with a male acquaintance who, she has since learned, has died of AIDS.

Though AIDS has hit hardest among gay men and poor intravenous drug users, it also afflicts people like Ms. Gertz.

"People think this can't happen to them," she said in an interview at her Manhattan apartment. "I never thought I could have AIDS."

Going Public

She is 23 years old, affluent, college-educated and a professional from a prominent family. She grew up on Park Avenue.

Now Ms. Gertz and her family are going public because they have a message. A message for heterosexuals who could make a potentially fatal mistake if they dismiss the threat of AIDS. A message for doctors who may miss a diagnosis; she spent three weeks undergoing exhaustive hospital tests for all other conceivable causes of her illness before AIDS was discovered. And a message asking for greater public support on AIDS issues.

"I decided when I was in the hospital I would give as much time as I can to help



The New York Times/Sara Krulwich

Alison L. Gertz, an AIDS patient, with literature on the disease at her home. She is on a campaign to warn other heterosexuals who are not drug users that they cannot dismiss the threat of AIDS.

Continued on Page 32, Column 1

One Victim's Campaign Changes Image of AIDS

By BRUCE LAMBERT

Going public about having AIDS has changed Alison L. Gertz's life almost as much as the illness has.

A member of a prominent New York family, Ms. Gertz, 23 years old, was infected seven years ago but did not get sick until last year. Upon discovering she had AIDS, she traced back and learned that a man with whom she had had a sexual encounter was bisexual and that he had since died of the disease.

She decided to campaign for AIDS prevention and services, using the slogan "AIDS can happen to anyone."

Since telling her story in March, Ms. Gertz has received almost 300 supportive calls and letters. She has received letters from infected women like herself, unsolicited donations, a poem from an inmate in the California state prison at Soledad and a note in Portuguese from a Brazilian urging a macrobiotic diet.

Big Impact in Albany

"Her case changed a lot of minds" about the wider threat, said Dr. Nicholas Rango, director of New York State's AIDS Institute. Timothy Sweeney, deputy director of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, the largest private AIDS services organization in the state, said that when he lobbied for funds in Albany, "all the legislators were talking about it."

AIDS hot lines reported callers

'Her case changed a lot of minds' about the disease.

referring to the article on Ms. Gertz that appeared in The New York Times on March 11. It was posted in several women's health clinics in Chicago. A New England physician said reprints impressed his patients more than anything else he ever distributed.

Ms. Gertz is giving speeches, making public-service announcements for radio and television and embarking on a round of interviews. On Friday, she will get her biggest audience yet, on the ABC news program "20/20."

In public appearances, Ms. Gertz emphasizes that new medications enable many patients to live better and survive longer.

Ms. Gertz and her parents, Jerrold and Carol Gertz, are now engaged in a friendly competition to raise money for AIDS research.

Her parents have formed Concerned Parents and Friends for AIDS Research. Last week, they were hosts at a dinner-dance at the Copacabana in Manhattan that raised more than \$75,000 for Lenox Hill Hospital's AIDS



The New York Times/Vic DeLucia

Alison L. Gertz, whose public disclosure about having AIDS has changed her life almost as much as the disease has.

unit and other AIDS programs.

Ms. Gertz is now organizing her own fund-raising event and has formed her own group, Love Heals, in cooperation with the Design Industries Foundation for AIDS. Recuperated from hospitalization, she looks fit but guards against tiring.

"My life is wonderful now," she said. "I'm really fulfilled, doing something I really believe in."

Jeopardy's Alex Trebek joins the newlywed game

JULY 30, 1990 ■ \$1.95

Rolling Stone

weekly



AIDS: A Woman's Story

Her date came with champagne, roses . . . and AIDS. Eight years later, ALI GERTZ, 24, is fighting for her life and warning women that, yes, it can happen to you. Inside: Her story and those of six other women living with the deadly disease



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ONE WOMAN'S BRAVE BATTLE WITH AIDS

By Kristin McMurran and Michael Neill

Statistics say it should not have happened, yet well-to-do New Yorker Alison Gertz caught AIDS: Now she struggles for life and warns that no one is safe

Ali Gertz sleeps in a queen-size bed in a lace and rose-chintz bedroom with a cat named Sambuca and a dog named Sake. She reads the poetry of Rilke and the philosophy of Lao-tsu. She paints. She writes in her journal. She parties at the night spots of the young and chic. And every night she goes home alone to the queen-size bed where once she dreamed of love, marriage and a happy home filled with children and pets. But her future has been forever changed. Alison Gertz has AIDS.

At 24, pretty, poised and privileged, Gertz is an unlikely candidate for the disease. She lives on Manhattan's fashionable Upper East Side, not in the inner city, and she has never had a blood transfusion or been an intravenous drug user. In her case, AIDS comes down to a simple situation: one night with the wrong man.

The night that took away the promise of Ali Gertz's life was in the summer of 1987, when the disease was little more than a whisper in New York City. Gertz, a precocious 16-year-old, was infatuated

with an older man named Cort Brown, whom she had met a year earlier at Studio 54, the flashy New York City club where he was a bartender. "He was the most beautiful man I'd ever seen," says Gertz. "We were like brother and sister for a year, except that there was a very strong physical attraction. His best friend was gay, but when I asked Cort if he was gay, he said no." In retrospect there was another warning sign. At the beginning of the summer, Cort, 27, had been bedridden with shingles, an opportunistic infection sometimes associated with an impaired immune response.

With her parents out of town, Gertz decided to act on her attraction to Cort. She invited him over to the family's Park Avenue apartment. "He brought champagne, candles, a dozen red roses," says Ali. "It was very romantic except for one thing—when we made love, there were no fireworks. We both knew after that one night that we were not going to have a sexual relationship."

Shortly afterward, Gertz began an exclusive relationship. She drifted away from the Studio 54 scene and lost touch with Cort. His name didn't come up again until the summer of 1988. Ali had just given up smoking, was deeply involved with her boyfriend of three years and was searching for work as a free-lance illustrator after leaving Parsons School of Design in Manhattan during her junior year. That August, unable to shake a low-grade fever and chronic diarrhea, she was hospitalized. By that time, everyone knew about AIDS, but since Gertz wasn't in any high-risk group, doctors didn't suspect it as the cause of her ailments. "At one point," she says, "they thought I had Hodgkin's disease, and I was so upset because I knew all my hair would fall out." Finally, after more than two weeks of painful tests, she developed pneumonia—and a bronchoscopy solved the mystery. As Ali lay half-conscious, an oxygen mask covering her face, her family doctor came to her bedside with tears in his eyes and told her she had AIDS.

"My initial reaction," says Gertz, "was, 'Oh, my God, I'm going to die.' Then I thought, 'No, Ali, you're not,' but I was in very bad shape. I thought, 'I'm never going to have sex again. I'm never going to get married or have children.'" Nevertheless, Ali displayed great courage. "My parents were falling apart," she says. "My father couldn't look at me without crying. My mother was a mess. My boyfriend was in shock. My friends flew in from around the country, so I felt I had to be strong for them. During the day, I was absurdly cheerful. I only cried at night."

Gertz and her boyfriend lasted about three months. "We did sleep together twice," she says. "It was very protected. We used two condoms. It was a nightmare. He was too afraid, so we stopped having sex, but it was really tough. We'd curl up on the couch to watch TV, he'd get excited and then have to leave. I was only



In February, Gertz celebrated her 24th birthday with her parents, left, and friends like Victoria Leacock. "Some people get sick and give up," says Ali, at home, right. "But I'm not one of them."

► "I've been depressed, scared, sad, but I've always been hopeful," says Ali, having her blood drawn last year.

22. What depressed me most was that I would never have another relationship."

When she discovered she was infected, Gertz notified her previous boyfriends. They tested HIV negative. "I knew pretty much from the beginning that it was Cort," she says. When she found out from mutual friends that Cort had died of AIDS in 1988, it seemed to confirm her suspicions.

After her initial six-week hospital stay, Gertz came home determined to cope with her new role as a Person With AIDS. "I started reading and learning about people who had survived for more than eight years," she says. "Eventually my whole attitude about the disease changed. I decided that being depressed was an enormous waste of energy. I wanted to channel the strength I had into something positive."

Gertz was the subject of a film distributed by the World Health Organization and established a foundation, Love Heals, which funnels money to small, direct-care AIDS organizations. And to try to reach others who might be unwittingly exposed to the virus, Ali went public with her story, a move her parents supported. "We never hid it," says her mother, Carol, the 57-year-old co-founder of Tennis Lady, a chain of clothing boutiques. "So many parents refuse to believe that their children are sexually active and can contract this disease. We can't put our heads in the sand and say it's not happening." Her father, Jerrold, 68, a New York City real-estate developer, says, "Before Ali got sick, AIDS was something very far away from us. There are an awful lot of people out there who should know that AIDS is everybody's disease and everybody's got to fight it."

"This has been horrible for my parents," says Ali. "I'm their baby, their only child, and I'm supposed to outlive them. When I first got sick, I felt closer to my father because he was dealing with his feelings. He sobbed, he shouted, he communicated with me. My mother kept everything inside and put up a wall. But my being sick has helped improve my relationship with my parents. It has given my mother a second chance to be a mommy."

While her parents are deeply involved in a foundation called Concerned Parents for AIDS Research, Ali devotes her time to finishing an AIDS journal she hopes to pub-



lish and to taking her message to young people. "They might not listen to their parents or pay attention to the news," she says, "but they might understand it coming from me because I'm one of them." When she is well enough, Gertz lectures at high schools and colleges, as she did last March at Connecticut College in New London.

Ali and two girlfriends are picked up by a limousine for the 2½-hour drive to New London. Like teenagers at a slumber party, they gab about romance, music and TV, while chugging Cokes and gobbling potato chips. But once they reach the campus, Ali is all business. For nearly two hours she stands at the podium—dressed in a thigh-length red cashmere sweater and black leggings, telling her story and sounding the alarm. "The first time you have sex should be very meaningful," she tells an audience of more than 200 students. "It shouldn't be the result of a drunken night or peer pressure. If you're in love and you're going to have sex, then you have to protect yourself. But the only real safe sex is abstinence."

The students listen raptly, give her a standing ovation and stay on for a question-and-answer session. The queries are polite, often medical in nature. One student comments on how healthy Ali looks. It is 11 P.M. when she flops in the back of the limo, exhausted but exhilarated. "When I go in there and say, 'Listen, babes, it's okay to be abstinent,' I think a lot of people are relieved," she says. "I don't care if there are 200 people who don't want to hear what I have to say—as long as one or two kids listen, that's all that matters."

Since she was diagnosed nearly two years ago, Gertz has suffered only one serious re-



lapse: Last October she was hospitalized with a severe allergic reaction to AZT. When doctors called for a lung biopsy, Ali balked. "I told them if they put me to sleep, I'd never wake up," she says. "My strength was gone." Released after 17 days, she recuperated at home, where her mother and girlfriends took turns nursing her around the clock. "They'd help me to the bathroom, feed me, see that I didn't fall in the shower," says Ali. "My knees were so bony, I had to sleep with a pillow between them." A switch to the experimental drug DDI, a powdery mixture she drinks twice a day, has restored her vigor, but Gertz remains susceptible to infections like thrush, a fungus that frequently affects the mouth. She has lost 30 lbs. since last summer, naps each afternoon and continues to visit her doctor every 10 days.

Unlike many AIDS patients, Gertz has the support of loving parents and loyal friends, and she has suffered none of the ostracism that others face. "I'm fortunate to live in a city where people are fairly edu-



◀ "Whatever time I have left to live, two days or 50 years, my goal is to be as happy as I can," says Ali, with pal Dini Von Meuffling in Westhampton, N.Y.



▲ "This is the time when the cool thing to do would be not to have sex," Gertz told a spellbound audience at her Connecticut College lecture in March.

cated about AIDS and are not afraid to touch me or share a fork with me," she says. "I have plenty of companionship—wonderful men friends who hug and kiss me—but I don't have passion in my life, and I miss it a lot." Meeting men, however, is no problem. She is often out at night with an assortment of her club-hopping comrades. "When I meet a man who begins to flirt, the first thing I tell him is that I'm sick," says Ali. "There's no point in going on unless he wants to, and the man who wants to will be worthy of my undying respect."

Gertz is realistic, but not one to mope about living with AIDS. "There are times when you don't want to wake up in the morning," she says, "when you can't sleep, when you're angry life is so unfair, but the worst thing you can do is sit at home and think about the misery of your life. When you're given an opportunity to see how precious life is, it gives you an incentive to make the most of it. The only thing that matters is what we do with the time we have." □

ALISON GERTZ

Woman of the Year

THIS WOMAN IS twenty-three years old. She grew up privileged, on Park Avenue. She went to good schools. She majored in art. One night she slept with a guy who, she learned afterward, was bisexual. Five years later he was dead.

Ali Gertz has AIDS now. She is living out the nightmare that the straight world keeps dismissing as someone else's paranoid dream. If her sex and her class hadn't made her story so shocking, she might have a different mission now. As it is, since being diagnosed last year, she has committed herself to the goal of educating the public about AIDS. She has formed a group—LOVE HEALS—that raises money for the cause, and she's writing a book with Mathilde Krim. Determined to undo the current and recurrent assumptions—that AIDS is a disease of the gay, the poor, the addicted—Gertz has been giving lectures about her experience to high school and college students. "I'm not sickly looking or frightening," she says. "They know they could be me."

She's not afraid of death, she says. Only of pain, and she's not in pain now.

"We all have to die sometime," she says, "and I don't plan on dying in the near future. I'd like to get married and have children, and I believe I will, and that through science they'll find an answer. I want all the things I ever did. Of course, I'm still surprised by it. I pinch myself and say, 'This is wild, this is wild.' But it's not entirely negative. I have a chance to do some good, and there's so much good to do."

Courage is a strange commodity. Unlike many other virtues, it can be entirely private. It doesn't depend on other people to be courageous *to*. Gertz, though, claims no credit for responding as she has. "People say, 'You're so brave,'" she says. She laughs. "It's embarrassing. I had no choice about how to react. It's part of who I am."

Photograph by Gregory Heisler

'BABY, IT'S OK TO GO'

For AIDS activist Alison Gertz, life was too short—but it was well-lived



A Gertz was tireless in her AIDS-related work. "She made such a mark," says her mother, Carol. "She changed people's lives."

AT THE END, ALISON GERTZ, 26, FACED death the way she lived her life as a person with AIDS: bravely and surrounded by love. When Gertz succumbed to AIDS-related pneumonia on Aug. 8 at her parents' summer home in Westhampton Beach, N.Y., her best friend, Victoria Leacock, was among the family and friends gathered round her bed. "Ali's mother and father were at her head kissing her, and I was holding her hand when she took her last breath," says Leacock, 28, a Manhattan filmmaker. "She came to at the last moment and looked into the eyes of her mother, who was saying, 'Baby, it's OK. I love you. You're allowed to go.' She was so caring, she felt badly about leaving us."

Gertz seemed a most unlikely candidate for AIDS when doctors diag-

nosed the disease in 1988. The only child of Jerrold Gertz, 70, a New York real estate developer, and his wife, Carol, 59, cofounder of the Tennis Lady chain of clothing boutiques, Alison grew up on Park Avenue. She had never had a blood transfusion or been an intravenous drug user. She fell victim to AIDS as a result of an early sexual encounter. She was 16 and wound up in a one-night stand with a man she would later discover was bisexual.

In 1988, Alison was hospitalized with a low-grade fever and chronic diarrhea and learned she had AIDS. "It was a big shock that Ali, of all people, got AIDS," says Leacock. "She'd had few partners and had been in long-term, monogamous relationships." Hoping that her life story might be a cautionary tale for

others, Alison hit the talk show circuit and toured college campuses. She was the subject of a PEOPLE cover July 30, 1990, and last March her life story was told in an ABC movie, *Something to Live For*.

"Ali got into a lot of religions at the end," says her mother. "One of her friends brought back a Dalai Lama necklace from Tibet, and we sent Ali off with the beads around her neck." Carol continues, "Her ashes are going to be brought to the bay in Westhampton where she used to tool around in her little boat, the *Ali Cat*. We are going to take her out in a boat and scatter her ashes where she had wonderful hours when she was a little girl." She adds: "She was never afraid of death, only of pain. And in the end, she went peacefully. She was not in pain." ■

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