



## **Art Against AIDS to Benefit HIV/AIDS Community**

Chicago, IL - Calling attention to the need for action in combating HIV/AIDS, art aficionados from across the country will make their way to the River East Art Center, 435 E. Illinois, from 6 to 10 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 28, for the Art Against AIDS® benefit, a live and silent art auction produced by the Junior Board of Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights. Tickets are \$100 in advance and \$125 at the door.

More than 80 works of art in a variety of mediums, including original pieces by local artisans and artists from across the country, will be available for purchase at this philanthropic after-work party.

"Art Against AIDS® pulls together the talent of artists nationwide and, most importantly, has an important impact on society by helping fund crucial support services for people living with HIV/AIDS who have little or no health insurance," said local graphic designer and photographer Michael Vesper, honorary cochair of this year's event. "As an artistic community, it's incredibly rewarding to channel our creative energy into making a drastic difference in the lives of those living with this disease."

At present, Illinois has the seventh-highest number of AIDS cases in the nation, with 30,000 reported cases of AIDS since 1981. The disease has claimed an estimated 16,500 lives. While nearly every county in the state has reported at least one case of HIV or AIDS, Metropolitan Chicago cases represent 88 percent of the state total. The North Side community of Uptown, where Heartland's community health center is based, has the highest ratio of HIV/AIDS patients in Chicago.

Proceeds from Art Against AIDS® support Heartland Alliance's comprehensive HIV/AIDS services, including primary care, referrals, assistance with transportation and lab costs, housing, complementary therapies such as chiropractic services and massage therapy, HIV prevention education and the Midwest's first dental centers specializing in oral manifestations of HIV/AIDS.

Heartland Alliance has worked on the frontlines of this disease to provide HIV/AIDS human services since 1985. Heartland provides health, hope and opportunity to the most poor and vulnerable populations disproportionately afflicted with the disease, including individuals who are homeless or severely impoverished and refugee populations.

Events like Art Against AIDS® allow Heartland to have the flexibility to adapt to healthcare needs as they arise. For example, Heartland was able to fill service gaps after the nonprofit AIDS Alternative Health Project closed its doors in December 2000. This allowed more than 900 people with HIV/AIDS without access to care for drug side effects and disease management to continue treatment.

As the pandemic knows no borders, Heartland Alliance remains on the cutting edge of service provision. Heartland has been collaborating with nongovernmental organizations in Rwanda to implement training, treatment and a research project designed to assist Rwandan women who are HIV-positive as a result of genocidal rape.

For more information or tickets, call 312-660-1313 or visit [www.heartlandalliance.org/events/a3.html](http://www.heartlandalliance.org/events/a3.html).