

Thank you all for being here today to commemorate World's AIDS Day with us at God's Love.

The idea for the NAMES Project Memorial Quilt was conceived in 1985 by AIDS activist Cleve Jones during the candlelight march, in remembrance of the 1978 assassinations of San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone. For the march, Jones had people write the names of loved ones that were lost to AIDS-related causes on signs that would be taped to the San Francisco Federal Building. All the signs taped to the building looked like an enormous patchwork quilt to Jones, and he was inspired. The Quilt Project was officially started in 1987 in San Francisco by Jones, Mike Smith, and volunteers Joseph Durant, Jack Caster, Gert McMullin, Ron Cordova, Larkin Mayo and Gary Yuschalk.

At that time many people who died of AIDS-related causes didn't receive funerals, due to both the social stigma of AIDS felt by surviving family members and the outright refusal by many funeral homes and cemeteries to handle the deceased's remains. Lacking a memorial service or grave site, The Quilt was often the only opportunity survivors had to remember and celebrate their loved ones' lives. The first showing of the Quilt was in 1987 on the National Mall in Washington, DC. The Quilt was also displayed in full on the Mall in Washington, D.C., in 1996, and returned in July 2012 to The Mall to coincide with the start of the 14th International AIDS Conference, 2012.

The Quilt is a memorial to, and celebration of the lives of people lost to the AIDS pandemic. Typically very personalized, individual quilt panels are created by the loved ones of someone who has died of AIDS-related causes. Each panel is 3' by 6' the average size of a human grave. Panels are donated to The NAMES Project Foundation where they are grouped with other similar panels and assembled into 12' by 12' sections, called "blocks". These blocks can be seen at local displays of The Quilt, typically containing 8 individual panels per block.

The NAMES Project Foundation is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, and has 21 chapters in the United States and more than 40 affiliate organizations world-wide. The AIDS Memorial Quilt itself is also warehoused in Atlanta when not being displayed, and continues to grow, currently consisting of more than 48,000 individual memorial panels and weighing an estimated 54 tons.

Goal and achievement

The goal of the Quilt is to bring awareness to how massive the AIDS pandemic really is, and to bring support and healing to those affected by it. Another goal is to raise funds for community based AIDS service organizations to increase their funding for AIDS prevention and education. As of now:

Funds Raised by The Quilt for Direct Services for People with AIDS has exceeded \$4,000,000

- The number of visitors to the Quilt to date is more than 20 million
- The number of names on the Quilt is more than 94,000
- The Size is 1.3 million square feet
- The viewing time to see the entire Quilt, spending only one minute per panel takes over 33 days

Yet, only about 20% of the people lost to AIDS related causes are represented in the Quilt.

One of those represented is my long-term partner of 19 years Joe Garcia who died on Memorial Day 1991. Another loved one of someone whose panel is represented in the block on display here today is our dear and beloved volunteer Roz.

