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## Foundation gives 285K to AIDS fight

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By Jay Polansky Special Correspondent

The Greenwich-based **Red Ribbon Foundation** recently distributed \$285,000 to 20 organizations in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Red Ribbon gives grants for prevention education for high-risk individuals, and research and assistance programs for those living with the disease.

Every two years the foundation holds a musical fundraiser. In the past, the organization has featured such bands as The B-52s and The Commodores. Last November, the organization presented the cast from "Rent," a musical about a group of young bohemian artists facing AIDS in New York City.

The AIDS Alliance of Greenwich, the Greenwich Chapter of the American Red Cross, Family Centers Inc. and the Connecticut Children's Medical Center split \$160,000. St. Luke's LifeWorks of Stamford received \$12,000.

Six U.S.-based organizations working in Africa, including Grassroots Soccer, received funds. The organization engages African youth by having professional soccer players promote HIV prevention. GRS has educated 270,000 and hopes to educate 1 million youth by World Cup 2010.

The president of the **Red Ribbon Foundation**, Andrew Levison, said the disease has personally affected him.

"My closest friend growing up -- Michael Faerman -- died from this terrible disease in the early 1990s. At that time, we were just beginning to understand the various treatment options. This is how the **Red Ribbon Foundation** came into being -- as a tribute to Michael Faerman's life, knowing that he would have wanted his friends and family to do all they could to fight this disease and care for those affected by it," Levison said in a written statement.

Nicole Hazard, the foundation's executive director, said, "Domestically, now, there is a rise in HIV cases in youth populations. It's really an epidemic."

About 70 people live with HIV/AIDS in Greenwich, according to state health department records, said Tom Mahoney, director of the Office of Special Clinical Services at the town Health Department and a Red Ribbon board member.

Since 1981, 106 cases of AIDS have been reported in town.

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