

3/5/97 Pediatric AIDS Found.  
Elizabeth Glaser Award

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
REMARKS TO THE PEDIATRIC AIDS FOUNDATION  
ELIZABETH GLASER SCIENTIST AWARDS

Thank you for being here for this very important occasion.

I want to thank Suzie and Suzan, and all of you who are part of the board and staff of the Pediatric AIDS Foundation. I want to thank my friend Paul for his extraordinary grace and commitment and willingness to share his feelings and experiences with the rest of us who can only imagine what it is like for him to be worried about whether he will be able to find the drugs that Jake needs.

We are here to honor the life and the living legacy of Elizabeth Glaser. I'm so grateful that Elizabeth's work has been carried on by her devoted friends and husband. It is something that gives all of us a lot of hope because what Elizabeth did when she was with us, was constantly to inspire and provoke and ask those questions that Paul was referring to. I want to congratulate the Elizabeth Glaser Scientists. You are very fortunate to have the opportunity to receive that award, and we are very fortunate that you are using your considerable skills and the passion we heard from each of you on behalf of this cause. None of it would be possible without the generosity and commitment of the supporters of the Pediatric AIDS Foundation. Many of you are here tonight and I want to thank you. Some of you have been supporters of PAF for many many years. Some of you are new to its work, but you are making an extraordinary contribution, not only to this foundation, but through this foundation to work that will literally change and save lives. I hope that when we think of Elizabeth Glaser, we think of how she kept pushing the envelope, and pushing the rest of us. We no longer can hear her voice in person but I hear it often in my head, and any of you who have heard it as well, I hope are still listening. That voice is being heard loudly and clearly.

Over the last four years, funding for AIDS research, prevention, and care has increased by more than half. Support for AIDS research alone has increased by 42 percent to \$1.5 billion and we now have a powerful Office of AIDS Research at the National Institutes of Health. Funding for the Ryan White CARE Act increased by 158 percent, while the AIDS Drug Assistance Programs, which help low-income, uninsured people with HIV and AIDS afford much-needed therapies, have grown three-fold.

Like anything else in life, when you put in considerable effort, you are more likely to see results. And we have seen results from this greater commitment. For the first time since the AIDS epidemic began in 1981, the number of AIDS deaths has dropped substantially all over the United States. The number of reported cases of mothers transmitting the AIDS virus to their babies fell by 27 percent between 1992 and 1995.

That is good news, but there is still so very much to be done. You've already seen and heard from scientists who are on the front line looking for cures, vaccines, doing all they can to understand this disease. We know that daily we are trying to strengthen our prevention and education and treatment efforts here and around the world, and it is especially important as we look at the good news that we have received from the Center for Disease Control here in the United States, not to forget that 90 percent of all AIDS cases occur in other countries, countries that are often without any resources whatsoever to treat the disease, countries where the numbers of those who are infected with HIV are continuing to increase almost geometrically. So we have a lot to do here and abroad to be sure that we are able to provide lifesaving prevention information to women and young people and other groups here in our country and all those elsewhere who are still experiencing very high rates of infection.

We also know that much of the increase in survival rates here in the United States is due to new drug therapies. And we need to make sure that all people, but particularly all children living with HIV- AIDS have access to these life-prolonging treatments. The Administration has already taken steps to make it easier for companies to tailor drugs for children. But, unfortunately, too many therapies still have not been tested on children or are not in a form that children can readily take. We cannot, children like Jake cannot wait forever to resolve this problem. We won't wait forever. This is a serious problem, and this Administration is committed to addressing it. But it is very important that all of you who care about this Foundation and about children living with HIV and AIDS, make your voices heard.

Our continued success in the fight against AIDS will depend not only on the strength and breadth of the government's commitment to research, prevention, and treatment, but also on strong private sector leadership and support provided by such organizations as the Pediatric AIDS Foundation and the scientists we honor tonight. One of the ways that we can honor Elizabeth is to make sure that we are united in calling for the approval and testing of drugs that children with HIV and AIDS require. If we do that then we will continue to move down the road that Elizabeth started, and we have all fought.

I last saw Elizabeth at a fundraiser two months before she died. Though she was in great physical pain, she had traveled across the country to New York because she never gave up hope that the next research dollar would yield the cure she sought for her son, that the next clinical trial would yield the answer that could allow her to disband the Pediatric AIDS Foundation for good.

Elizabeth's life is a testament to the fact that hope can triumph over despair, that we can all find more meaning in our own lives by helping others. Her spirit is crying out for all of us to do that with respect to those we can reach, touch, and help. So I want to congratulate all of you for helping to bring us to this point this evening, and I hope that not only the scientists who we honor tonight and the other Elizabeth Glaser scientists who are toiling in their labs, working so hard to help defeat this disease, but everyone of us, will think about how we can make the difference in this continuing struggle. When we do so, we not only honor Elizabeth Glaser, but we honor our connection as human beings, and we give each other the greatest gift we can- that we care and that we remain committed to ensure that every person is treated with the dignity and the respect that a person deserves. Thank You:

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