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ACTION! ALERT

For a good gay cause (Gay)
Rainbow Fund seeks gay money to fight world poverty

By [ELIZABETH A. PERRY](#)
 Friday, July 14, 2006

The Rainbow World Fund is asking gay men and lesbians to dig deep into their philanthropic pockets to help promote human relief efforts across the globe.

Rainbow World Fund joined officials from CARE, a humanitarian organization fighting global poverty, at the National Advocacy Conference in Washington, D.C., held June 7-8 to address issues of government funding, global poverty and HIV/AIDS.

Rainbow World Fund founder and president Jeffrey Cotter said the Bush administration proposed a \$350 million budget cut that would move funding away from the core humanitarian budget that offers help to the sick, hungry and poverty stricken throughout the world.

The groups also are urging Congress to support a humanitarian aid budget equal to or greater than last year's amount.

RAINBOW WORLD FUND is an all-volunteer organization founded in 2000 that works to help alleviate hunger, poverty, disease, oppression and war through global relief fundraising and by raising awareness among gays.

RWF works with other international groups to support existing relief projects, including global HIV/AIDS treatment, water development, landmine eradication and hunger abatement in countries in Africa, Asia, Central America and the Caribbean.

Cotter said a mobile medical unit in Guatemala runs on a budget of \$20,000, about equal to the cost of a new Toyota Camry. A school funded by RWF in Guatemala cost \$175,000 to build, less than half the cost of a one-bedroom condominium in most large urban suburbs.

Cotter said the fund distributed \$700,000 in humanitarian aid last year, thanks to individual gifts from gay donors, as well as a \$10,000 grant from the School Sisters of Notre Dame. After \$10,500 in operating expenses, the bulk of the funds were used for Thailand tsunami and Gulf Coast Hurricane Katrina relief.

Other projects included a water project in Honduras, support for an orphanage, medical clinic and school in Guatemala and Hurricane Stan relief.

"It is amazing what a little bit of money can do to improve lives around the world," he said.



Rainbow World Relief Fund volunteers Louann Pironti, Mike Thomas, Jeany Heller, Jeff Cotter, Karen Dickinson and Michael Hicks join the group's annual mission trip. This year's travels will take place July 29-Aug. 6.

ACTION! INFO

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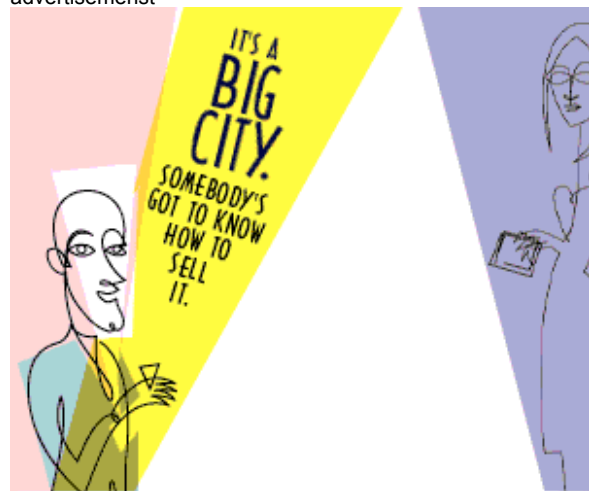
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THE FUND SPOKE OUT AGAINST President Bush's international AIDS policy, which requires one-third of HIV funding to be used for programs advocating abstinence until marriage. The fund advocated eliminating special conditions, or earmarks on funding for AIDS programs.

"This doesn't reflect the reality on the ground," he said. "Not when 80 percent of women around the world who are practicing monogamy are getting infected. If money is given to Uganda without the earmark, they can apply the money to programs in ways they know will work."

At the conference, fund officials met face-to-face for the first time with Africare, an African-American relief organization that serves South Africa. The groups began a joint AIDS project five months ago that trains young Africans to work as peer educators and case managers.

"We wanted to bring the African-American and GLBT communities together to heal Africa," he said.

The Rainbow Fund also advocated rebuilding of the infrastructure in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Cotter said that during the region's civil war, 4 million people were killed, 2 million were displaced, and 38,000 are dying due to disease and a lack of basic services. Cotter said gays should care about what happens in other countries because all people are interconnected.

"Our survival on this planet calls on all of us to take care of each other and live as one human family," said Cotter. "HIV taught us that the more we give, the more we have to give. When we are serving ourselves, we are serving others. RWF aims to end the separation consciousness — taking the lessons of AIDS, about caring and loving each other, and applying them to the larger [global] community."

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