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OBITUARIES

Leonard West

By Timothy Cwiek
 PGN Contributing Writer

Leonard West, an AIDS activist for more than a decade, died Nov. 20, 1996, from complications due to AIDS.

He was 58, and lived in Germantown.

"Leonard West was a role model for so many people," said Greg Hardy of We The People, an agency that West helped form almost 10 years ago. "He knew that HIV didn't discrimi-

nate, and neither did he."

Activist David Fair echoed those thoughts.

"I started working with Leonard in 1972 when he was a neighborhood organizer," Fair said. "He was, in many ways, a role model for me. His life wasn't about making money; it was about helping people who needed help. It wasn't just a career for him, it was a mission in life."

Fair said West worked hard to involve minorities in the political process.

"In his later years, AIDS was the cause that was closest to his heart," he said. "But his whole life was dedicated to the empowerment of disenfranchised people."

West worked for many years as a teacher in the Philadelphia public-school system, Fair said.

West was born in Atlanta, and graduated from Antioch College. He served in the Peace Corps in the early 1960s, and helped establish the Government Teacher Training College in Mubi, Nigeria.

AIDS activists mourned West's death last week.

"Leonard was that rare Caucasian who worked very hard to see equality for blacks not only in the AIDS arena,

but in the larger community as well," said Tyrone Smith, executive director of Unity Inc.

"Leonard was a gentle man and a strong advocate," said Jesse Milan of the city's AIDS Activities Coordinating Office. "He made it his personal responsibility to ensure that the process does, indeed, work for everybody."

Roger Cobb of the city's HIV/AIDS Commission said he was impressed with West's eagerness to help.

"The man had compassion and convictions; he'll be missed," Cobb said. "He was a wonderful advocate for HIV-positive consumers."

"Leonard was a fatherly figure who always was patient and willing to share his love," added Perry Riley, a PWA activist.

West is survived by his lover of 14 years, Keith Brown; his mother, Dorothy West of Florida; and two brothers, George and James, both of Virginia.

A memorial service is planned for 10 a.m. Dec. 5 at St. Luke and the Epiphany Church, 330 S. 13th St. Memorial contributions may be sent to the Leonard West Memorial Fund, 425 S. Broad St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19147. ▼

Reflections:
 "Tucked within your memory are the special days you shared, the hopes, the dreams, the quiet times - reveal you really cared.
 You spent your life devoted together day by day a friend, a companion, a confidant - more than words can say."
 -Corinne Laboon

Thinking about a final resting place for you and your loved one is never easy.
 Talk it over sympathetically and respectfully with someone knowledgeable in this subject.
 Who can answer those questions you always wanted to ask.

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