

National AIDS Memorial Announces Recipients of the Mary Bowman Arts in Activism Award

National AIDS Memorial names 2026 Mary Bowman Award artists, celebrating art activism advancing health and social justice; applications now open.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, May 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- National AIDS Memorial Announces Recipients of the Mary Bowman Arts in Activism Award



Honoring the legacy of Mary Bowman

Application now open through June 20, 2026 for the next awards for the

HIV/AIDS arts and social justice program funded through the support of ViiV Healthcare's Positive Action Community Grants

SAN FRANCISCO, May 1st, 2026 – The National AIDS Memorial announces that Charlotte Isenberg of Appalachian State University, Mariela Morales-Inturias of NYU Tisch, Sam Charney of NYU Tisch, and Sydney Wright of the University of San Francisco are the latest recipients of the Mary Bowman Arts in Activism Award. In addition to announcing its awardees, the National AIDS Memorial reopened its application for 2026.

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Now in its sixth year, the Award honors the life of Mary Bowman, the poet, advocate, author and singer who passed away from AIDS in 2019 at age 30.

Funded through a multi-year Positive Action Community Grant from ViiV Healthcare, the only pharmaceutical company 100% dedicated to preventing, treating and ultimately curing HIV, the Award supports student and non-student art-activists whose creative work inspires communities, advances health and social justice and contributes to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Each awardee receives \$5,000.

The Award recognizes the power of the arts to dismantle stigma, foster empathy, challenge harmful social narratives and draw attention to the conditions that allow HIV to persist. Mary Bowman, born with HIV, used her art to share her lived experience and advocate for others. Her legacy continues to inspire a new generation of artists committed to ending HIV/AIDS or the broader issues of health inequity, stigma, discrimination and social injustice which allow HIV to endure.

“In a time when stigma, misinformation, and systemic inequities continue to fuel the spread of HIV, art activism is essential,” said John Cunningham, Chief Executive Officer of the National AIDS Memorial. “While these awardees’ work addresses a range of social and health justice issues, it speaks directly to the conditions that allow HIV to persist, including inequality, exclusion, and lack of access to care. Through their art, they challenge injustice, elevate lived experiences and confront the root causes of the epidemic.”

Charlotte Isenberg is an activist and writer completing her senior year at Appalachian State University. Identifying as an Appalachian, Southern and Cherokee woman, her work centers on reproductive justice, cultural preservation and Indigenous sovereignty. She is the founder of the App State Abortion Doula Collective and draws from her own lived experience to explore reproductive autonomy.

Mariela Morales-Inturias is an Indigenous Quechua filmmaker from Cochabamba, Bolivia and a graduate student at NYU Tisch. Her documentary work amplifies the voices of underrepresented communities and reflects both struggle and joy. She is also an advocate for Indigenous education and food security.

Sam Charney is a performance artist and student at NYU Tisch whose interdisciplinary work addresses transgender identity, anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and social injustice. Their recent work, “Transduction,” uses satire to challenge harmful narratives, while other projects confront systemic discrimination through semi-autobiographical performance and storytelling.

Sydney Wright is a junior at the University of San Francisco, majoring in Gender and Sexuality Studies and English Literature. As a queer student, they focus on creating inclusive, intergenerational dialogue. They lead the Lavender Lights Film Festival, which highlights queer elders and challenges harmful stereotypes about identity, aging and belonging.

To date, ViiV Healthcare has provided \$265,000 in support for the program. The current application cycle closes on June 30, 2026. Additional details about the Award and the awardees are available at www.aidsmemorial.org/marybowman.

“This Award supports young artists who use creativity to highlight our shared humanity and drive change,” said Randevyn Pi erre, Head, U.S. External Affairs, ViiV Healthcare. “Like Mary Bowman,

their work helps break down stigma and deepen connection, which is precisely why ViiV Healthcare is so proud to support programs like this. These artists exemplify how we confront stigma and misinformation head-on to strengthen local support networks, improve connections to care, and deliver culturally resonant programming, moving us closer to ending the HIV epidemic.”

About the National AIDS Memorial

The National AIDS Memorial shares the story of the struggle against HIV/AIDS, honors the lives lost and inspires new generations of activists to confront stigma, denial and hate. Through its programs, it ensures that the history and lessons of the AIDS movement are never forgotten.

About ViiV Healthcare

ViiV Healthcare is a global specialist HIV company established in November 2009 with GSK (LSE: GSK) and Shionogi as current shareholders. The company is dedicated to delivering advances in treatment and care for people living with HIV and for people who could benefit from HIV prevention. ViiV Healthcare’s aims are to take a deeper and broader interest in HIV and AIDS than any company has done before and take a new approach to deliver effective and innovative medicines for HIV treatment and prevention, as well as support communities affected by HIV.

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