

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

*The Normal Heart* was among the first plays to deal with the then-still-emerging AIDS pandemic. Now, a special one-night-only reading of the play by a celebrity cast will benefit Emory University's Vaccine Center on Monday, May 12, at 8 p.m. at the home of the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

The Emory Vaccine Center and Action Cycling Atlanta ([www.actioncycling.org](http://www.actioncycling.org)), in conjunction with The NAMES Project ([www.AIDSQuilt.org](http://www.AIDSQuilt.org)), which is the custodian of the AIDS Quilt, is presenting the event at the NAMES Project's AIDS Memorial Quilt Building in Atlanta (637 Hoke Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30318-4315). Portions of the AIDS Quilt will be on display, surrounding the actors, during the reading.

This benefit reading of Larry Kramer's seminal 1985 play stars Mitchell Anderson (*Party of Five*), Dan Butler (*Frasier*), Peter Paige (*Queer as Folk*), and Amanda Bearse (*Married with Children*). Bearse also is directing the show.

*The Normal Heart* is a searing drama about the beginnings of the AIDS epidemic and the formation of the nation's first AIDS service organization. The play was originally staged at New York's Public Theatre on April 21, 1985. It is a tale of the fear, denial, anger, love, and, ultimately, heroism of those whose lives were forever changed during those first terrifying years of the AIDS crisis.

"We feel that this event and the AC200 present both the history of AIDS and our hope for a cure," says Todd Wiggins, AC200 Ride Director. "Finding a vaccine is a long-term commitment. Our ride symbolizes this determined mindset that will eventually prove successful in stopping AIDS."

Executive Director Julie Rhoad of The NAMES Project Foundation/AIDS Memorial Quilt adds, "The AIDS Memorial Quilt is the perfect backdrop for a reading of Larry Kramer's 'The Normal Heart,' as both are powerful artistic responses to the AIDS pandemic. The Quilt and the play both offer, through their poignant stories, the chance to reflect on our history and to prepare for the important work ahead – including the crucial work of the Emory Vaccine Center."

"More than 20 years later, those who still live with HIV and AIDS and those who are diagnosed every day find hope in research facilities like the Emory Vaccine Center, whose groundbreaking work will soon enter the second phase human trials," says Mitchell Anderson, who is now Atlanta-based and who is the proprietor of MetroFresh Café. He continues to act periodically.