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## AIDS Agencies Using Full-Court Press to Get Magic on Their Team

**BYLINE:** By WENDY E. LANE, AP Sports Writer

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Magic Johnson, one of professional sports' most active philanthropists, has raised millions of dollars for charity with his immense star power. He smiles, and people's checkbooks seem to open, well, magically.

Now, infected with the HIV virus and retired from the Los Angeles Lakers, his cause is AIDS awareness, and research foundations and other AIDS service agencies are using a full-court press to get him on their team.

How much fund-raising clout does Johnson wield?

Consider this: For the past three years, golfers have forked over more than \$ 1,000 apiece to play in Magic's Golf Classic, a benefit tournament for the American Heart Association. The event netted \$ 132,000 this year - and Johnson didn't even play.

Barely an hour after Johnson appeared on national television last week to announce he is HIV-positive, a small agency called L.A. Shanti Foundation had assembled a proposal package and whisked it to Johnson's agent, Lon Rosen.

It was the first of many pitches Rosen has received as agencies began jockeying for Johnson's endorsement.

"It's very intense," Mark King, spokesman for L.A. Shanti, said of the competition. "There isn't anyone who isn't trying to team up with him."

For a small-budget organization like L.A. Shanti, teaming up with Johnson can mean the difference in providing service to thousands, instead of hundreds of people with the HIV virus and full-blown AIDS.

The organization wants Johnson to appear at an event to raise money to put on seminars for people who have recently tested HIV-positive.

"He absolutely has the ability to turn this event from a \$ 200,000 event to a \$ 1 million event," King said. "He could fund the seminar for years to come with that one appearance."

"He's going to make a lot of money for whoever he chooses to go with," he said.

Just how Johnson will choose to use his considerable clout is still up in the air. He has mentioned promoting AIDS awareness in the black community and may even start his own foundation.

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"It's still in the planning stages," said Janice Wise, who works with Rosen in planning promotions.

Donations already have started flowing.

At a Lakers game three days after Johnson's announcement, Harold Foonberg, a Beverly Hills businessman and Lakers season ticket holder wrote a check for \$ 10,000.

In all, the Lakers and Rosen have received about \$ 20,000 - and hundreds of pieces of mail haven't been opened yet.

And a local AIDS telethon over the weekend far exceeded its fund-raising expectations, raising \$ 1.14 million simply by coming on the heels of Johnson's disclosure.

Johnson, who has given freely of his time, already has an impressive track record of fund-raising achievements.

In 1990 alone, he raised an estimated \$ 2.65 million for various charities from the Muscular Dystrophy Association to tiny Rust College, a predominately black school in Holly Springs, Miss.

To date, the biggest benefactor of Johnson's philanthropic endeavors has been the United Negro College Fund, which supplies scholarships to 41 private colleges and universities.

His annual all-star game, a Midsummer Night's Magic, has raised more than \$ 4 million over the past six years and is the largest ongoing money maker in the fund's history, said development director Vincent Bryson.

The NBA's biggest stars - including Michael Jordan, Dominique Wilkins, Larry Bird, Charles Barkley and Isiah Thomas - suit up for the event.

Johnson has said he wants the game to continue, but Bryson said he is more concerned now about Johnson's health than what the superstar can do for his organization.

"We have not had a chance to talk about it but I'm really not concerned," he said. "If he never did it again, he will have been the greatest volunteer we have ever had."

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