An able and affable ambassador

The American Foundation for AIDS Research picked well when it chose Harlem’s Maria Davis as one of its “Making AIDS History” ambassadors.

Davis, 53, has been living with AIDS since 1995, and she is always using her years as event planner to the stars, her HIV/AIDS ministry at Harlem’s First Corinthian Baptist Church, and her recently awarded bachelor’s degree in communications to get the word out.

“I don’t go to sleep without thinking of inventive ways of getting the message out to people,” Davis said in preparation for Thursday’s National Black AIDS Awareness Day observance. “I jumped at the chance when amFAR asked me to do the campaign because the research they do is so important.”

Davis got her latest idea while watching “Black Ink Crew,” a reality television show on VH1 about a Harlem tattoo parlor not far from her home.

Her idea: she would get an AIDS flag tattooed on one arm.

The show’s crew could follow her as she visited her doctor to get advice on how it could be done, then back to the shop to watch the artist tattoo her in sterile conditions and discard the ink and needles after use.

“It would be a chance for us to open up the conversation about HIV/AIDS and tattooing,” she said. “That would be great! So I put together this package for them and took it around to the shop. My son got two tattoos from them.”

Davis says she is still awaiting a response from the network, but if it comes off, it would be the kind of big splash that HIV and AIDS education sorely needs.

Three decades into the AIDS crisis and the statistics for African-Americans have gone from bleak to heartbreaking.

In 2013, nearly half of the new HIV infections in the country are contracted by African-Americans, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Harlem’s Maria Davis is spreading awareness of AIDS. Emi Alvarez/News

But with two kids—son Joshua is 30 and daughter Jannah is now 23—Davis needed steadier work. She was a catering waitress at the legendary Sylvia’s Restaurant, then worked as a waitress and bartender at Cellars on the upper West Side where she got to make friends with music industry giants like Freddie Jackson and Valerie Simpson and her late husband, Nicholas Ashford.

Soon, Davis was planning events for clients like Knicks great Charles Oakley and hosting extravaganzas at Sweetwaters, also on the upper West Side.

“God has a very good sense of humor,” Davis said. “I thought he was setting me up as a big-time promoter, the whole world knowing me. He was setting me up so I could be on the world stage as an HIV/AIDS activist.”

Davis learned she was HIV positive when she took a blood test as part of an application for a $100,000 life insurance policy. She said famed AIDS treatment pioneer Dr. Joseph Sonnabend, groups including Lifebeat and Friends In Deed, and her First Corinthian Baptist Church Pastor Michael A. Wardrop Jr. were instrumental in helping her become a voice in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

“She was a second daughter to me,” Davis said. “We can no longer have a blind eye and turn our heads, because it is not only affecting people living with HIV and AIDS, it’s affecting people’s children and their lives.”

See amFAR.org, friendsindeed.org and fcbsermons.com for more information.

Clem Richardson / NY Daily News

Fresh off her electric performance of the National Anthem before the power went out in Sunday’s Super Bowl, Alicia Keys plays for 100 lucky fans in Ginny’s Supper Club at Red Rooster Harlem on Tuesday. After playing the set in honor of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, which is Thursday, the multi-talented musician from Hell’s Kitchen accepted a donation to her Keep a Child Alive Foundation from Oralsure Technologies’ Debra Fraser-Howze (r.). Courtesy Interactive One