The POZ 100: T-Z

November 13, 2017

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Introduction | A-C | D-G | H-K | L-O | P-S | T-Z

Chuan Teng

HIV Negative

Oakland, California

Chuan Teng

When Chuan was in high school, she produced a fashion show to raise awareness for people living with HIV. Fast-forward to today, and she is the managing legal director at Positive Resource Center, an organization that has provided comprehensive benefits counseling and employment services to the HIV community in San Francisco for almost 30 years. What's more, Chuan is a founding member of the Frontline Organizing Group, where she is a strong presence in the trainings and networking events it provides for workers at the forefront of the epidemic. She's a passionate advocate whose most recent project includes helping develop a resource guide for people aging with HIV.

Demetra Tennison-Grant

HIV Positive

Austin, Texas

Demetra Tennison-Grant

A long-term survivor, Demetra puts her own life experience to work every day as a counselor for AIDS Services of Austin’s CLEAR program. CLEAR pairs clients with experienced counselors in order to teach them the coping and life skills they need not only to manage living with HIV but also to address related issues, such as medication adherence, stigma and depression, by having them set small, manageable goals from session to session. Demetra, who started out at AIDS Services Austin as a peer assistant for the Women Rising Project for women with HIV, is also active in advocacy. She serves as a member of the Texas Medication Program’s advisory board and the Texas Black Women’s Health Initiative and has lobbied the Texas legislature for better health care for people living with HIV.

Desiree Thompson

HIV Negative

Butler, Wisconsin

Desiree Thompson

Desiree is the author of A Positive Superhero: Growing Up with HIV, a children's book that seeks to educate young readers about the virus and encourage kids not to be afraid of people who are medically different. The book was inspired by her adopted son, who is HIV positive, as a means to help him feel confident about his status and teach his friends about what it's like to live with HIV. Desiree also wrote the book in an effort to combat the many misconceptions and stigma that her son and other HIV-positive children like him still face while growing up in America. Now that's a

superhero!

Julene Tripp Weaver

HIV Positive

Seattle, Washington

Julene Tripp Weaver

As one of the founders of the Seattle-based Babes Network, “a sisterhood of women facing HIV together,” Julene has advocated for women with HIV since her own diagnosis in 1989. She worked for 18 years in HIV services at the Northwest AIDS Foundation and the Lifelong AIDS Alliance and has also been involved in HIV/AIDS education and given HIV-related talks and trainings. As a

private practice psychotherapist who witnessed firsthand the devastation of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and ’90s, she is uniquely qualified to counsel her clients in coping with trauma and chronic disease. Furthermore, Julene reaches many others through her verse: She is also a poet whose latest book, truth be bold—Serenading Life & Death in the Age of AIDS, was published earlier this year.

Evany Turk

HIV Positive

Forney, Texas

Evany TurkJonathan Timmes

As a woman living with HIV and mother of two, Evany was shocked seven years ago when she

found out her teenage children weren't learning about sex in school. She decided she had to do something about it, so she began visiting schools in the Chicago area to talk with and educate young people. She even worked closely with the Illinois Alliance for Sound AIDS Policy to get a comprehensive sexual health education bill passed in the state. Now living in Texas, Evany serves on PWN-USA's board of directors and the Ryan White Planning Council of the Dallas Area. Her work involves developing effective testing programs, operating support groups and engaging in community outreach. She is "committed full-time to loving on other people who [are] trying to live a life with HIV."

Jennifer Vaughan

HIV Positive

Watsonville, California

Jennifer Vaughan

In 2016, when Jennifer was diagnosed with HIV and then AIDS a week later, she decided to share her story via YouTube. At the time, she wanted to find another woman who shared her experience, but instead, she found nearly 100 women looking for support. This catapulted her into starting a channel (Jennifer's Positive HIV Life) on which she regularly posts videos about living with HIV and creating a support group on Facebook. Her dream is to become a full-time HIV advocate and speak with different groups of people to show them what HIV looks like today. But for now, she's honored to be spreading her message and HIV awareness through social media.

Brandi Velasquez

HIV Positive

Portland, Oregon

Brandi Velasquez

Brandi tested HIV positive when she was just 15 years old. Since then, she has diligently advocated for women living with HIV. One of the ways she does this is through her role as peer mentor and facilitator for the Women of the Wisdom program, which provides support services and a community of sisterhood at the Quest Center for Integrative Health in Portland. Her goal is to remind women with HIV that they are not alone. Brandi was also recently named one of 14 fellows chosen for the inaugural PWN-USA's Policy Fellowship program. She plans to further her knowledge of HIV and policy to help end HIV and the stigma associated with it.

Martha Warriner Jarrett

HIV Positive

Bakersfield, California

Martha Warriner-Jarrett

In 2014, shortly before her 70th birthday, Martha tested HIV positive. She landed in the emergency room with acute respiratory failure and learned her HIV status after waking up from a medically induced coma. Although she'd felt sick for several years, her doctor never thought to test her for HIV, mistaking her symptoms for those of fibromyalgia. Since then, Martha has written a memoir, A Rough Season, and become active in the HIV community with the Kern County Health Department. She also speaks locally about HIV/AIDS education through Planned Parenthood and has organized testing sites for National HIV Testing Day and is doing the same for World AIDS Day. Martha's mission is to serve as a wake-up call to everyone to get tested for HIV. She looks forward

to doing more over the coming years to promote HIV awareness and education, and she recently became a POZ blogger.

Cynthia Watson-Catha

HIV Negative

Las Vegas, Nevada

Cynthia Watson

As community health program director at the Community Counseling Center of Southern Nevada, which provides HIV testing and counseling as well as services for people with mental health and substance disorder issues and survivors of abuse, Cynthia manages medical cases and determines

Ryan White Program eligibility. With 10 years' experience in family counseling, she also knows how to partner with other organizations to make sure her clients can overcome the intersecting barriers on their path to total health. This can mean finding food sources to deliver snack bags for clients who need to take food with their medications or arranging client transportation to a food pantry.

Marguerite Wheeler-Lara

HIV Negative

Moreno Valley, California

Marguerite Wheeler-Lara

Marguerite is the chief of staff and head of health initiatives for women of color at TruEvolution, a Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS–funded nonprofit dedicated to fighting for LGBT justice and advocating for HIV prevention and elimination. She has been involved in LGBT organizing since 2007, when her son Gabriel Maldonado (who was on the 2014 POZ 100 list) came out to his family. Marguerite has since helped hundreds of Black and Latino gay men who are at risk get tested for HIV, obtain access to PrEP and find support no matter their status. As a Ryan White provider, she also offers HIV and hepatitis C testing and emergency housing services. She has also helped develop several sexual and reproductive health initiatives for women of color in her community.

Lisa Diane White

HIV Negative

Atlanta, Georgia

Lisa Diane White

Lisa Diane facilitated her first support group for women with AIDS 27 years ago. That was before she even really understood how HIV was transmitted. Though she was scared, she persevered. Now, as deputy director of SisterLove, where she has worked since 2004, she has her sights set on the future of prevention, from women-empowering microbicides to PrEP and PEP to vaccines. Since 2006, Lisa Diane has been working in a local partnership with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases' HIV Vaccine Research Education Initiative's to ensure that women and African Americans are not only counted in research but also included and supported in the clinical trials that could one day help end the epidemic. Now that's sister love!

Terri Wilder

HIV Negative

New York, New York

Terri Wilder

Terri is a passionate and committed advocate who's been involved in the fight against HIV for almost 30 years. She previously worked at the now-defunct AIDS Survival Project, fought for microbicide clinical trials and access, and advocated for ADAP funding while living in Georgia. While at the New York City Department of Health, she created The Positive Live Workshop for people living with HIV and managed contracts for Ryan White–funded mental health, supportive counseling and harm reduction services. In 2014, Terri was appointed to the New York Governor's "Ending the Epidemic" Task Force and helped create a blueprint to end the epidemic in New York State by 2020. Today, she is the director of HIV/AIDS education and training at the Mount Sinai Institute for Advanced Medicine in New York City and travels across the state making sure medical

providers receive the training needed to provided exceptional HIV and hepatitis C care. She is a devoted member of ACT UP and has been a longtime advocate for PrEP as a prevention tool—especially for women.

Victoria “Tori” Williams

HIV Negative

Houston, Texas

Victoria Williams

Since 1986, Tori has been helping people living with HIV to access government funding, treatment, care and education. She is currently the director of the staff that supports Houston’s Ryan White

Planning Council, where she recently spearheaded an oral history project that gathered testimonies from people who were involved in the early days of the fight against the epidemic in southeast Texas. She has also helped organize Project LEAP, a free 17-week training program that teaches consumers how to navigate the HIV care system and the realm of HIV prevention so that they can become better advocates. She has presented her work at USCA and the National Ryan White Grantee Conference. Tori has made a huge difference in the lives of many Texans living with HIV.

Valerie Wojciechowicz

HIV Positive

Sarasota, Florida

Valerie Wojciechowicz

Valerie is a peer program manager at the Community AIDS Network (CAN) in Sarasota. She's also a motivational speaker who travels throughout Florida and across the country inspiring and empowering individuals living with HIV through a series of workshops. Her education includes training activists and advocates on the importance of eliminating biased language and generally helping improve their effectiveness in their respective roles. When she's not doing that, Valerie raises money for the HIV community by participating in the cycling fundraiser SMART Ride, from Miami to Key West; she also raises money for the Sarasota AIDS Walk and CAN's Women's Group. In addition, she is a wellness expert who uses her knowledge to help people living with HIV through her website 4HIVHelp.com. She believes in empowerment through education.

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