The POZ 100: N-R

November 12, 2018

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Eric Novak

Age 62

Columbus, OH

Eric Novak

Living with AIDS has not defined Eric, but it has been the driving force in how he lives his life. For the last four years, he has been a member of Equitas Health's (formerly AIDS Resource Center Ohio) client advisory committee and is currently in his second year as chairman. He sits on both the Ohio State University's AIDS Clinical Trials Unit and the HIV Prevention Trials Network's community advisory boards. He is also a voting member of the Central Ohio HIV Planning Alliance for Ryan White. Last year, Eric developed and moderated a panel discussion on long-term survivors at the Transforming Care Conference in Columbus. He plans to focus his advocacy on the growing long-term-survivor population as he continues to survive and thrive.

Charlie Palmer

Age 52

Joliet, IL

Charlie Palmer

Diagnosed with HIV in 2000, Charlie has been an active advocate in the Will County area since 2005 and has worn many hats. He’s currently a peer advocate at Regional CARE Association, a Joliet-based agency that provides medical and counseling services for people living with HIV as well as HIV awareness and prevention services for the community at large. Whether he’s passing out condoms in the streets or working tirelessly in the office doing HIV testing and outreach, Charlie is always the one you want on your team. He might not have traveled the world fighting the epidemic, but fortunately for those in Will County, he’s getting the job done at home.

Jesse Peel

Age 78

Atlanta, GA

Jesse Peel

Jesse, a retired psychiatrist, long-term survivor of HIV and avid theater fan, has advocated and

allied with nearly every ASO in his hometown of Atlanta. He is a founding member of the original Atlanta Buyers Club and sat on the founding boards of AID Atlanta, Positive Impact and a number of HIV advisory boards across the city. In his spare time, Jesse can be found dispensing advice to local advocates in cafés across the city, hosting one of his infamous Sunday afternoon parties (an Atlanta staple for over 30 years) and volunteering with Lost and Found, an Atlanta agency that assists homeless LGBT youth. He may have retired, but clearly he hasn’t stopped working.

Osvaldo Perdomo

Age 59

New York, NY

Osvaldo Perdomo

Osvaldo, the secretary and cochair of the development committee at GMHC, isn't passionate only about HIV advocacy—he's also an art lover. He is the cocurator of the Art & AIDS exhibitions, a project that has him directing and planning annual shows featuring more than 40 GMHC artists living with HIV—as well as creating panels with leaders from the community to supplement the exhibitions. Osvaldo previously worked as a co-facilitator for HIV support groups at New York's LGBT community center, and he spoke about HIV prevention to high school students as part of Friends In Deed. These days, he also organizes fundraisers and events for GMHC, including "Light Up New York," an HIV awareness initiative started in 2014 that lights iconic New York buildings red during the week leading up to AIDS WALK New York.

Robert Pompa

Age 55

Allentown, PA

Robert Pompa

Feeling hopeless after his HIV diagnosis at age 38, Robert decided to turn his despair into fuel for finding his purpose. He is currently the behavioral change specialist and prevention coordinator for the Lehigh Valley Health Network AIDS Activities Office. He raises awareness by educating others about the virus and by emphasizing the importance of testing and treatment as prevention. He advocates for awareness regarding stigma and trauma-informed care and serves on multiple boards, councils and groups, including the HIV Planning Group for the State of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Special Pharmaceutical Benefits Program Advisory Council and the CDC’s Medical Monitoring Project Advisory Board. Robert believes there is still much work to do to eradicate the stigma that surrounds those three silly letters: H-I-V.

Rob Quinn

Age 59

Boston, MA

Rob QuinnJensen Larson

After attending USCA in 2017, Rob received a mini-grant that allowed for the creation of a Community Wellness Day in April at the Boston Living Center (BLC) that focused on healthy aging for those living with HIV 50 and older. Diagnosed in 1993, he remains focused on advocating for older members of the HIV community and long-term survivors. In addition to serving as an HIV-positive advocate with BLC, he is on the Statewide Consumer Advisory Board at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences and on Boston's Ryan White Planning Council. Plus, he serves as resource faculty for the New England AIDS Education and Training Center. Rob founded Working POZ, a peer-led support group for those living with HIV in the workplace, and OpenlyPoz.com, an online resource that aims to empower and support others living with HIV. He was also named one of NMAC's 2018 HIV 50+ Strong and Healthy Scholars.

Melanie Reese

Age 66

Baltimore, MD

Melanie Reese

Melanie is the executive director of Older Women Embracing Life (OWEL), the only organization in Maryland specifically for HIV-positive women over 50. As an advocate, she spends her days empowering women with greater self-advocacy and helps them to improve their health outcomes despite related challenges. Melanie also serves on several community advisory boards at other ASOs across the city. She recently served two terms as the chairwoman of the Greater Baltimore Ryan White Planning Council and is an appointed member of Maryland's HIV Planning Group. She is described as a dedicated leader with a never-ending charge to reduce new infections, discrimination, shame and stigma for those infected and affected by the virus.

Lepena Reid

Age 62

Tampa, FL

Lepena Reid

Lepena recognizes that self-acceptance is key to living with HIV. Although testing HIV positive in 1988 was a real challenge, she finds celebrating 62 years of life empowering. She attributes her resilience to teaming with fierce women’s organizations across the country; she is a member and media spokesperson for PWN-USA and a micro enterprising artist/trainer with Common Threads, a peer-led HIV training that is designed to increase self-esteem, sociability, economic well-being and HIV self-management. In 2012, she was inducted into the 2020 Leading Women Society by SisterLove. As a certified health educator and advisory board member with Florida Coalition, she believes that women should not be fearful when navigating services and that comprehensive health care is a right, not a privilege. Lepena is thrilled to see the modern advancement of PrEP and scientific evidence of U=U. Discoveries like these, along with continuing education, affirm that

she can embrace life and remain sexy for years to come!

Robert Riester

Age 57

Denver, CO

Robert Riester

Diagnosed with HIV in 1987, Robert works part-time at Mile High Behavioral Healthcare as a program coordinator for the Positive Impact program and as a community liaison. In his nearly 25 years of HIV advocacy, he has been president and founding member of Friends In Need NPO in Amarillo, Texas; a member and cochair of the Denver HIV Resources Planning Council; an

International AIDS Conference delegate; an NMAC HIV 50+ Strong and Healthy scholarship recipient; and an appointee to the Denver Commission on Aging. He is passionate about enhancing, promoting and elevating HIV/AIDS advocacy and activism. In his spare time, Robert enjoys artwork, photography and horticulture.

Rosa Rivera

Age 56

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Rosa RiveraJensen Larson

Rosa has never believed that she's living with HIV but that "Crunch" lives with her. This empowering way of thinking helped her overcome her initial depression and encouraged her to

live her life as a fierce AIDS activist in Puerto Rico. Since her diagnosis in 1997, she has been involved in the Funding Ryan White Planning Group, the Advisory Committee for ADAP, the Coalition Cero VIH PR and other advocacy organizations. She has also represented Puerto Rico as a delegate at conferences such as AIDSWatch, HIV is Not a Crime, PWN-USA's Speak Up! Summit and USCA, where this year she was named an NMAC HIV 50+ Strong and Healthy Scholar.

Raul Robles

Age 59

San Diego, CA

Raul Robles

Diagnosed with HIV in 1985, Raul has been a volunteer at The San Diego LGBT Community Center

since 2005, serving as a role model for others living with HIV and for those newly diagnosed. Working primarily with Spanish-speaking clients—for whom he recently started a support group for long-term survivors—Raul shares his experiences on living a healthy and productive life with HIV. His transparency and honesty about his HIV status has helped reduce stigma in the local Latino community. For the past four years, he has served as chair of the consumer committee for the San Diego HIV Planning Group. He was the recipient of the Health Line 2017 HIV Influencer Honors and was included on The 41 List in 2015 for being a role model in the Latina/o LGBTQ community.

Michael Rouppet

Age 50

San Francisco, CA

Michael RouppetTodd Sanchioni

As he fought eviction from a rent-controlled apartment in San Francisco in 2012, Michael became homeless for nearly three years. During this time, the long-term survivor found it difficult to access care and treatment. At one point, he feared he might develop AIDS. Fortunately, he received support from friends in the homeless community and from ASOs and decided to give back—and fight stereotypes about homeless people—by helping to raise over $3,600 in the annual AIDS/LifeCycle ride, which benefits free programs and services at the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. He also rode in memory of those he'd lost to AIDS. Michael helped create Marty's Place, a tenant-based housing model co-op that provides support to low-income people living with HIV. Today, he's the president of the board. He also volunteers at the Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco, where he continues to fight for housing rights as a tenant counselor.

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