Affirmative Ally in Idaho

February 3, 2011 By Willette Francis

Soon after he tested positive for HIV in 1999, Duane Quintana contemplated what, exactly, would have prevented him from contracting the virus and what would have helped his family deal with his diagnosis.

He wrote those ideas in his diary and scribbled them on napkins. In 2003, those notes came to life in the form of Quintana's brainchild: Allies Linked for the Prevention of HIV and AIDS (a.l.p.h.a.), an organization based in Boise, Idaho, that raises HIV awareness through education and testing and also provides support services across that state for those living with and affected by HIV.

Quintana, executive director of a.l.p.h.a., talks with *POZ* about what fuels his fight.

What three adjectives best describe you?
Optimistic, determined and compassionate.

What is your greatest achievement?
Beginning to love myself more and knowing who I am.

What is your greatest regret?
I have no regrets because I am at a point in my life that helps me to be the person that I am.

What keeps you up at night?
Phone calls, reading and writing e-mails or having conversations on Facebook with coworkers, a person living with HIV or a family member dealing with a loved one's status. I do this often until the wee hours of the morning.

What is the best advice you ever received?
[It came] in a moment in my life when I was kind of giving up, when I'd started doing drugs and partying. My mom said, "You know what, you're not dead. You're not dying yet, so knock it off. You need to take control of your life."

Who in the HIV/AIDS community inspires you?
Nina Martinez. She might have been the first person I met on the Road to Hope Tour [organized by Hope's Voice] in DC while we were at George Washington University. She got HIV as a young child,

but she continues to just do everything. She’s doing what she wants to do professionally. She’s a really great friend. She went out of her way for me. That’s really admirable.

What drives you to do what you do?
My hope is that I can help people with HIV see that they still matter, that people still care about them.

What is your motto?
The difference between people who do things and those who don’t is that they do them. I’m not anyone special. I am just a guy with HIV who decided to do something about it. I really believe that we all have the potential to change the world in a positive way.

Go to alphaidaho.org for more information.

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