Letters—March 2012

February 22, 2012

Celebrating Champions

In "The POZ 100" (December 2011), we shared the 100 people, things and ideas we loved in the year 2011.

As a direct result of being included in the POZ 100 list, we received a deluge of calls and emails lauding us and the work [AIDS.gov] does. You cannot overestimate the value of this for us! POZ's recognition of what we do has turned a spotlight on AIDS.gov and has allowed us to have many additional conversations about our work that would never have happened without POZ's kudos.

Miguel Gomez
Washington, DC

It was always exciting to see who was on the POZ 100. Now it's a little disappointing to see [so many] foundations and agencies instead of advocates who work hard to make a difference, and some of the ones listed were a little disappointing as well. Everyone I have talked to said the same thing.

Anthony
New York City

Fighting Suicidal Thoughts

In "Taking Back Our Lives" (December 2011), Mark Leydorf explored how, despite the advent of lifesaving meds, people who receive an HIV diagnosis are still more likely to have suicidal thoughts. He also spoke with an HIV-positive man who attempted suicide.

Mark Leydorf's sensitive article on suicide reminded us that HIV still packs a wallop emotionally, and that with other risk factors, like substance use, domestic violence and depression, people with HIV are at greater risk of potentially falling into the pit of despair. This remains why being part of a supportive community of peers is so important for HIVers. It helps inoculate us against the worst potentiality of isolation.

Christopher Murray
New York City

I'm 52 and have been HIV positive for 22 years. I never thought I would live this long. I struggle now with suicidal thoughts daily. I'm in a limbo where I'm not going to go away anytime soon but really don't have the energy to do full-time work. I can't [find] a date, even though I don't look ill and think I'm in pretty good shape for an HIV-positive 52-year-old. I keep thinking: Is this as good as it gets? Yet, I think of how lucky I am compared with my peers who passed before effective drugs came along.

Hammy J.
Location Withheld

I've found that men who lived through the AIDS crisis, like people who survived other mass traumas (the Holocaust, for example), have a similar gravitas about them, as well as an aura suggesting that by embracing the mysteries of life, including its tragedies, one opens a door to the richness of life.

JJR
New York City

True Beauty
In "The Princess Diary" (December 2011), Michelle Anderson talked about how she was crowned Ms. Plus America (as in plus-size) and became the first HIV-positive woman to win a national pageant title.

This story is touching. I am HIV positive too, and it hasn't been easy for me to cope. But your story has really encouraged me.

Angaye
Nigeria

One problem I have with this article [is this quote]: "It is my hope that other African-American HIV-positive women step up to the plate and become involved in making better decisions." Why can't it be hope for all American women, or better yet, all women in general?

Guy32
Location Withheld

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