Letters—September 2010

August 10, 2010

The Comfort of Creatures

In "Pawsitivity" (June 2010), eight HIV-positive people shared how their pets have helped them live happy, healthy and long lives. Here's what you had to say about your pets.

I certainly wouldn't consider getting rid of my two cats. They know when I'm sick and don't feel good, coming to curl up with me in bed. I often joke that they are nothing but "cat food–powered poop machines," but I love them to death. I just got a Bluetooth keyboard and mouse so that when they decide to lie down on my desk, I can work around them. They are way more important than answering an e-mail. They're my kids.

Kevin Bradley
Independence, MO

I was diagnosed with HIV in 1987 and AIDS in 1997. My pets CC (Cecilia Carol), a cat, and Barney, a yellow Lab, kept me alive. They have since died, but I believe we will be reunited. Now there is Lucky, a Russian blue (cat), and Willie, a mastiff/shepherd mix. They keep me going. They give me purpose. They share my solitary life as well as the joys, sorrows and grief caused by multiple losses over these last 23 years. I am so grateful for them.

Michael Palumbaro
Philadelphia, PA

I have two dogs, Bonnie and Clyde, who were abandoned where I worked in the Port of Albany, New York. The girls at the vet gave them their names because they were on the run. I may have provided them with a much needed home, but it was Bonnie and Clyde who rescued me. I've had them for 11 years, and we're all having our age health issues. For all those who are caring for our aging furry friends I would suggest reading Mark Doty's Dog Years. Doty's memoir talks about his two dogs and how one was devoted to his partner dying of AIDS-related illness. The book explores dealing with our aging pets, coping with losing them and learning how to love unconditionally. This has prepared me for what is to come.

Robert Gonzalez
Albany, New York

Transgender Positive

Tim Murphy's "Positively Trans" (June 2010) showed that discrimination against HIV-positive transgender people makes it difficult for them to access health care.

Thank you for helping put a face on HIV and transgender people. It is real and not only limited to larger cities. The work we do at TransHealth Coordinators helps transgender people know their HIV status and follow through with medications if needed. This is a great article and a great program in New York. I wish you would do a whole issue on the HIV/transgender topic to show all the faces in the community that live with HIV—including mine! I'm Jennifer Barge, director of TransHealth Coordinators, and have been living with HIV for 13 years.

Jennifer M. Barge
Asheville, N.C.

Belly Fat Be Gone

On May 25, POZ.com reported on the FDA panel that convened to decide whether to recommend approval of Egrifta, a belly fat–busting drug for HIV-positive people with lipodystrophy. (The panel did recommend the FDA approve the med.)

This condition makes one very self-conscious psychologically, and I too have become quite depressed about the belly fat. My waist has always been 32 inches or smaller, but my stomach makes me look pregnant. I hope this drug gets approved, works and is covered by Medicaid/Medicare and affordable to all who need it.

Name Withheld
City Withheld

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