True Grits

San Francisco’s Matt Levine is hot for love

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Matt Levine is a walking advertisement for average Joe. Levine is a regular, everyday, nice guy who just happens to be living with HIV. He tested positive for HIV in the spring of 1990. “I got hit by a car two weeks later on my bike,” he says of the accident he walked away from with only minor scratches. “It kind of put my life in perspective.”

Levine, 32, a food salesman and distributor in San Francisco, frankly admits that “HIV is a drag.” But he’s learned one rule: You can’t live not to die. As if to uphold that adage, he recently -- after much hesitation -- took on a new, more stressful job. Now he drives 150 miles a day pushing gourmet products. “My fear was keeping me in my old job,” he says. “So far, I feel great.”

Even though Levine lives in northern California, his roots are deep in New England. He grew up as the prototypical nice Jewish boy in Connecticut. He says his family is very close and genuinely supportive. “My mom worries about me,” says Levine. “But the great part is I can count on them.” Levine goes as far as comparing his family to the saint-like fictional family portrayed in *Philadelphia*, the highly successful AIDS film.

Levine remembers that when he was much younger he would tell his family that he was a big hockey fan and pretend to go to New York Rangers games when, in point of fact, he was in Manhattan attending gay youth group meetings.

“I used to panic, thinking I had no time,” says Levine. “Now I know things go on. His only priority is getting a date. ”I’m attracted to people who eat hot cereal for breakfast." Aren’t we all?

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