Andrew Pulsipher

May 15, 2015

Queen Creek, Arizona
Positive since 1981

My name is Andrew Pulsipher. I am HIV positive and have been since birth.
Here are the facts about me.

1. I am married to an amazing woman and we will be celebrating our 10th anniversary this October.

2. I have three beautiful children. They are ages 5, 3 and 1.

3. I have been HIV positive for almost 34 years. I can't say with complete confidence that I have been living with the disease the longest, but I am pretty sure I am at least one of the oldest living people prenatally infected or born with HIV.

4. Kids who are born with HIV and are not treated usually die around ages 3 to 7. I started taking medication when I was 8.

5. I am undetectable. No, it doesn't mean I am a ninja. This phrase relates to the amount of virus detectable in my blood, although it still can be hidden in other parts of my body. It also means that the medicine I take every day is working!

6. Both of my parents died from ["complications due to"?] AIDS. My dad died when I was 4, my mom when I was 8.

7. None of my brothers and sisters is HIV positive, just my parents and I. This virus will end with me.

8. I grew up with my aunt, uncle and their four children. I call them my mom, dad, brothers and sisters because that's what they are to me.

9. I grew up very rarely telling people I was HIV positive. Only few family members outside of our immediate family and a couple close friends knew. This was to allow me to have as normal a childhood as possible.

10. I am sharing this with you because for the first time I can be completely honest with myself and others. This has taken me a very long time to be comfortable with (almost 34 years!). I know HIV has a negative stigma, but it doesn't have to, and I want to help change that. It is a treatable disease and you can live a normal life with it. I am proof of that. I want to educate people so that we can get past the how you got the disease and to how you are living your life with it. There are many miracles in the world, and I believe my life is one of them. I am not the only one and we all have stories to tell. If you feel drawn to share my story, please do. I would love to be part of the change in how we talk about HIV.

What adjectives best describe you?
Healthy, happy, strong

What is your greatest achievement?
Living

What is your greatest regret?
Not getting my story out sooner

What keeps you up at night?
That my story will not reach everyone

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?
Ooh, that's a hard one. That there was a cure.

What is the best advice you ever received?
Take your meds!

What person in the HIV/AIDS community do you most admire?
Magic Johnson

What drives you to do what you do?
To help others

What is your motto?
HIV: the virus that causes life

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?
My family!

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?
Uh…A bear…don't mess with me or my family!

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