My Authentic Self

I want people living with HIV to be seen as everyday people that go shopping, have fun and live our lives!

September 20, 2022 By Teresa Sullivan

When I was selected to be one of the talents for a photo shoot for the CDC campaign “Let’s Stop HIV Together” I was filled with enthusiasm. I would be lending myself to a higher purpose! And joining people living with HIV who are dedicated to ending HIV for all people living with HIV ensures we are seen in our community as people.

As a 60-year-old African American woman living with HIV for 28 years, I am part of the first generation of people over 50 who are living with HIV. I felt it was extremely critical to be part of the Let’s Stop HIV Together” campaign.

The photo shoot gave me the opportunity to have fun with my colleagues who were HIV testers, activists, peer advocates, musicians, and performance artists. We traveled throughout the city of Philadelphia, like the FDR park in South Philly, walking and talking together in the streets. It was such an amazing experience for me and a pleasure to do the photo shoot in a city I’ve called home for over 50 years. I was allowed to shine and be my authentic self in a city I love.

The first three hours of the photoshoot was done in an astonishing, beautiful Germantown home. The owner was an artist and they had incredible art on the walls. The art gave us mind-blowing backgrounds for the shoot.

One of the most enjoyable times for me was when we traveled to Center City to shoot photos in the Philadelphia Historical Reading Terminal Food Market, taking amazing group photos, shopping for food, buying items for myself and my home and showing that people living with HIV are just people, just like anyone else!

From my participation in the CDC Let’s Stop HIV Together photo shoot, I want people living with HIV to be seen as everyday people that go shopping, have fun in the park, participate in our healthcare needs and live our lives!

As an HIV activis, director and prevention educator for TEACH (Treatment, Education, Activists Combating HIV) programs, my aspiration for the photo shoot would be to contribute to ending HIV stigma that continues to fuel the HIV epidemic preventing people from getting tested and knowing the HIV status.

“Let’s Stop HIV Together” in the lifetime of people living with HIV!

For more information on the “Let’s Stop HIV Together” campaign, please visit the CDC’s website.

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