Remembering Dennis Daniel

The POZ staff pay tribute to our late friend Dennis Daniel, who helped launch the magazine and stayed with the company until his death.

January 8, 2014 By POZ Staff

The POZ family lost a beloved member when Dennis Daniel, 54, died Saturday, November 23, after a battle with cancer. He passed away peacefully at his home in New York City, surrounded by his family and his partner Ken Lundie.

It is no exaggeration to say that anyone who ever worked at POZ magazine knew and adored Dennis—and not just because he was the guy who handed out the paychecks.

On our masthead, Dennis is listed as the company's comptroller. But he was so much more than a numbers and human resources person, though he excelled at both areas by remaining a rock-solid confidant and listener and by keeping the office running smoothly. Importantly, he was our resident historian, having worked with founder Sean Strub before the magazine launched until now; as such he supplied a wealth of insight and information. He always remained up-to-date on emerging trends and topics (especially those related to theater). He often pitched story ideas and contributed his own bylines and blog posts. And he was instrumental in managing the POZ Personals, patiently assisting anyone who had questions or concerns about their profiles.

Yet all that sounds so formal and proper. In truth, Dennis was the life of the party. Generous and kind, Dennis was very much a fun-loving spirit that brightened each workday. He was the one who, with his partner in crime managing editor Jennifer Morton, planned all the company parties, decorated the offices for the holidays, and brought that extra sparkle to every luncheon meeting and birthday celebration (and let it be noted that nobody ever rocked a sparkly vest like Dennis). He was the colleague who made work fun. And when we were off the clock, he knew how to have even more fun.

Born and raised in Louisiana, Dennis loved all things Mardi Gras. He always insisted we celebrate the holiday in the office, complete with colorful beads and a King cake—a traditional treat that Dennis was happy to explain to any novices (he was always regaling us with historical facts and tidbits).

Dennis also loved theater, having received an MFA in theater from Brooklyn College in 1988. He wrote the book for the stage production of An Evening With the Gershwins, Hosted by Rex Reed

and directed a revival of The Normal Heart by Larry Kramer. He also was instrumental in putting on several POZ-related theatrical fundraisers.

Cherry Grove on Fire Island was like a second home for Dennis. In typical Dennis fashion, he was the housemother of his house each summer, organizing the parties, settling any squabbles between roommates, and in general being sure that everyone had a wonderful time.

He was the housemother for POZ, too. If we needed help navigating paperwork or personal problems, or if we just wanted to gossip about last night's eye candy on True Blood, we all knew his office door—and his heart—was always open for us.

The loss of someone so pivotal and generous is staggering. We're still processing it. But we know he would want us to continue with the work of POZ and HIV/AIDS advocacy and that he'd want us to find joy and fun in that process. And so we will. Thanks to him, we have a good example to follow. Rest in peace, Dennis.

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