John Pecina

October 23, 2015

Olympia, Washington
Positive since 2001

My name is John and I'm from Texas. I am 43 years old and I have been living with HIV since December 28, 2001. I really don't know how I contracted the disease, but I would guess it was from my first partner, because we had unprotected sex. It has been really hard on me, my family and my friends, but they support me 101 percent. There are some people who are not lucky enough to have moral support, and I am thankful for mine. My partner of 13 years passed away last year of a heart attack. He was not responsible with medications and alcohol. I have learned from his mistakes.

I wake up every morning and take my Atripla pill. I've had weird side effects. But I changed the intake from night to morning, and now I have none. I've been taking Atripla since 2004, and now I am undetectable and my counts are excellent. I also have hepatitis C and diabetes, so it's a struggle. I continue on for my parents and for all my friends who believe in me.

Plus, I am not a selfish person. I live with HIV every day, so I tell my potential sex partners that I am positive, and sometimes the person sees me as a disease. But that is their loss, because I am a unique person, and they do not deserve my love. And I have a lot to give.

Since the passing of my ex, I do hope to find another partner who can be there for me when my time comes. All I ask of people who are positive is to please stop passing this mad disease to other humans, because no matter what, we all deserve to live a healthy life.

What three adjectives best describe you?
Compassionate, honest, trustworthy

What is your greatest achievement?
Living a better and healthier life

What is your greatest regret?
Not helping my ex live a better and healthier life

What keeps you up at night?
How my cremation will be paid for

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?
Being more honest with my doctors

What is the best advice you ever received?
Keep taking your medication.

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

What drives you to do what you do?
My parents, family and friends

What is your motto?
Live day by day like it is your last.

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?
My bird, Elliott, that I've had for 13 years. She was my ex's baby for 27 years.

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?
A bird, so I could fly and see the world

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