The 2018 POZ 100: Celebrating People 50 and Over

This year’s list included many advocates who are also long-term survivors.

November 16, 2020 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr., Joe Mejía , Jennifer Morton and Trent Straube

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About half of the 1.2 million people living with HIV in the United States are 50 or older. Within a decade, the proportion is expected to jump to 70%. That means this particular age group is the future of the epidemic, and it is increasingly important to understand the unique challenges related to growing older with HIV. These include, for example, dealing with isolation and comorbidities (other health issues that coexist with HIV, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and depression) and understanding how the virus and its treatment affect the aging process.

Many of the people living with HIV who are 50 or older are also long-term survivors, meaning they were HIV positive before 1996, when effective treatment first became available. Many long-term survivors never expected to live to see 50, and yet many honorees on the 2018 POZ 100 list were well beyond that age; the oldest was 78. It is also true that many people contracted HIV while in their 50s or older—one man was actually diagnosed with AIDS on his 50th birthday—a reminder that it’s important to discuss HIV prevention strategies with people of every age.

The 2018 POZ 100 presented more than an opportunity to celebrate a diverse roster of HIV-positive advocates. It was also a chance to show the world that it’s possible to survive, thrive and age well with the virus.

Catching Up With…

Rosa Rivera Avilés

Rosa Rivera AvilésJensen Larson

Why do you advocate for people living with HIV?

When I received my HIV diagnosis nearly 24 years ago, I had two paths before me: to let myself die or to advocate for my rights and for others living with HIV who dare not speak publicly. I decided that the best legacy I can leave is to create a more dignified life for those with HIV. My dream is that people with HIV can be treated with respect.

Bryan Jones

Bryan JonesJensen Larson

What advice do you have for people doing HIV advocacy work today?

Read The Denver Principles because they are important to understand. As an advocate, you may have to voice an unpopular opinion, and it may make people in the room uncomfortable. But why stay silent? My rule is, if I’m uncomfortable, everyone in the whole damn room is going be uncomfortable because I’m going to speak my voice loud and clear.

Anselmo Fonseca

Anselmo FonsecaAngel Valentín

What advice do you have for people doing HIV advocacy work today?

If this is not your passion, stay away. If it is, remember this is about survival; get ready for very hard work. You must pace yourself. You are in it for the long haul. Along the way, some will not stay or be with you. Don’t get discouraged; many others will, and those who do will be enough.

2018 Medical Milestone

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the national annual HIV infection rate dropped 15%.

The 2018 POZ 100

Waldon Adams

Stephen Addona

Moisés Agosto-Rosario

Tez Anderson

Lillian Anglada

Stephen Aube

Proscovia Ayoo

Karla Barnett

Robbie Bergman

Randy Boyd

Wanda Brendle-Moss

Chris Bridges

William Brochinsky

Reginald T. Brown

Marilyn Burnett

Giulio Maria Carbelli

Brian Carmichael

Marco Castro-Bojorquez

Joel Caudle

Orbit Clanton

Neil Coffman-Grey

Robert Cornelius

Shelia Crockett

William Scott Daly

Mark A. Davis

Larry Day

Yolanda Diaz

Reggie Dunbar II

Jace Dyckman

Bryan Fleury

Anselmo Fonseca

Larry Frampton

Randall Furrow

Lillibeth Gonzalez

Mark Grantham

Aundaray Guess

Jesús Guillén

Carlos Gutierrez-Solana

Bill Hall

Mitchell Handrich

Graham Harriman

Danny Harris

Michelle Harris

Deborah Helm

Patrice Henry

Ángel Luis Hernández

Matthew Hodson

Franceina Hopkins

Mark Hughes

Olga Irwin

Edward Jackson

Eric Jannke

Ronald Johnson

Bryan Jones

Mary Frances Jones

Perry Junjulas

Pat Kelly

Mark S. King

Kevin Koerner

Kenneth Lamb

Bob Leahy

Kevin Lish

Abad Lopez

Michelle Lopez

Randal Lucero

Carlos Maldonado

Steven Manning

Eunice Marshall

Kalvin Marshall

Joyce McDonald

Enrique Menendez

Susan Mull

Aaron Myatt

Eric Novak

Charlie Palmer

Jesse Peel

Osvaldo Perdomo

Robert Pompa

Rob Quinn

Melanie Reese

Lepena Reid

Robert Riester

Rosa Rivera Avilés

Raul Robles

Michael Rouppet

Thomas Sampson

Charles Sanchez

Steve Schalchlin

Scott Schlaffman

Harold R. “Scottie” Scott

Chanelle Sessooms

Robert (Bob) Skinner

Winthrop Smith

William Snow

Steve Stagon

Tom Straley

John Tenorio

Larry Watson

Hector Xtravaganza

Michael “Zee” Zalnasky

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