Editor’s Letter

The Power of POZ

May 1, 2009 By Regan Hofmann

Thanks to *POZ*, I am no longer alone with this horrible virus. Each month, as I look at the faces of those of you who are also living with HIV, I take heart. In your stories, I hear my own fears, wonder, determination and dreams. Knowing that I am fighting this virus with all of you—and *POZ*—by my side makes me feel fortified.

POZ has always empowered me. More than once, before becoming its editor, I marched into my doctor’s office, brandishing a page from the magazine and proclaiming, “But in *POZ*, it says….” And my doctor would address my question or concern. Being armed with information based on the collective knowledge of many people living with the virus is critical. It allows me to play an active role in my health care—and therefore, my destiny. Participating in the discussions and choices about what will ultimately happen to me is the difference between feeling like a “patient” or a “victim”—and feeling self-empowered.

POZ magazine and the self-empowerment it engenders have always been key pieces in the puzzle of effective AIDS activism—and therefore, in our survival. As you will read here, Sean Strub founded the magazine in response to the lack of available information; he wanted to ensure that all people living with and affected by HIV had access to the unbiased information we need to help save our lives. Thanks to Sean’s vision, many lives have been enhanced—and saved.

I would like to offer my deepest gratitude to Sean for founding *POZ* and for his invaluable editorial advice and mentorship. The spirit of his generosity and concern for others while he himself was struggling to survive infuses *POZ* to this day. Sean’s wonderful sister Megan Strub, our publisher, has also been instrumental in *POZ’s* success. Since the magazine launched in 1994, Megan has tirelessly ensured that it has received the support necessary to keep doing its important job. I would also like to thank Walter Armstrong, *POZ’s* former editor-in-chief, for encouraging me to tell my story, and Bob Ickes for his editorial prowess and friendship.

Thanks are certainly due to *POZ’s* extraordinarily talented staff—past and present—and our editorial advisory board. Without you this magazine would not come to fruition each month, let alone win awards (Smart + Strong has won 24 in the past four years) and, most important, link people to care and encourage them to live long, healthy lives. In particular, I would like to thank the amazing Jennifer Morton, one of *POZ’s* great unsung heroes who pulls it all together so

gracefully each month; and our outstanding editorial team, Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr., Kate Ferguson, Laura Whitehorn, Kellee Terrell, James Wortman, Trenton Straube and Kenny Miles; and our visionary art department, Steve Morrison and Michael Halliday, who make the magazine shine each issue. I offer special thanks to the incredible Tim Horn, president of AIDSmeds, and his editor, David Evans, who guarantee that our treatment information is the most accurate and current available.

I'd like to offer special thanks to Jeremy Grayzel, CEO of Smart + Strong, *POZ's* parent company. Through his courageous leadership, *POZ* continues to keep its moral compass pointed at true north and, in doing so, continues to educate and empower all of us. Thanks to Ian Anderson, our president, for his incredible operational skills and his superb staff who work their magic behind the scenes bringing us the online capabilities that allow the HIV community to communicate with each other and with us.

Finally, I would like to thank Frank Oldham Jr., Tom Kujawski, David Munar and the entire board and staff of The National Association of People with AIDS for their leadership, advocacy efforts and decision to create The Denver Principles Project with us. With your support, the project will lead the HIV community back to its roots and further empower us all. Thanks, too, to Robert Greenwald for his brilliance, insight and commitment to NAPWA.

But most of all, I'd like to thank you, our readers—especially those of you who e-mail, call, write letters, comment on our website, answer our surveys and even take us to task when we need it. You are our inspiration and the reason we do what we do.

People often ask me, "What does *'POZ'* stand for?" And I say, "It means positive, as in HIV positive and positive in terms of mind-set and outlook." There isn't a day that goes by when I am not awed by what the community of people living with HIV accomplishes, despite the massive stigma and fear surrounding this disease. If I have learned one thing through all the years I've been part of the *POZ* family, it's that people with HIV could teach the rest of the world a thing or two about how to fight for one's life—with strength, compassion and dignity.

I cherish having been entrusted with the task of protecting *POZ's* bold and important mission. Each day I try to ensure that *POZ* continues to do for you what it has done, and still does, for me—serve as my friend, my inspiration and my lifeline.

On the occasion of our 15th anniversary, I also wish to pay tribute to all who have fallen to AIDS—and to all of you who continue to stand bravely against it.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/poz-anniversary-hiv-16488-7350