Watch Boston's Heartwarming Video to Bust HIV Stigma

"You already know and love someone living with HIV" is the message of an anti-stigma campaign in Boston.

August 4, 2021 By Trent Straube

A common sentiment among today's HIV community is that stigma can be just as deadly—if not worse—than the virus. To tackle this challenge, a new campaign in Boston aims to dismantle stigma by sharing the personal journeys of six people living with HIV in the greater Boston area. The centerpiece of the "Someone You Know & Love" campaign is a video that features their stories and leaves viewers with the realization that they might already know someone who is HIV positive.

An image from "Someone You Know & Love," an anti-stigma campaignYouTube/Boston City TV

Funded by the Boston Eligible Metropolitan Area (EMA) Ryan White Planning Council, the campaign debuted July 28 at a Boston City Hall event that included a panel discussion with many of the campaign's participants. The video of the launch event is posted at the top of this article. (To view the eight-minute campaign video, start at the 11:55 mark.)

The video's six stars—Alfredo, Catherine, Darren, Larry, Raymond and Tim—represent the diversity found in the HIV community, including long-term survivors and the newly diagnosed. Partners, spouses, parents, children and pets all make appearances in the video, showing the array of

support and allies that people living with HIV can depend on.



View this post on Instagram

A post shared by Someone You Know and Love (@someoneyouknowandlove)

One person recounts a partner getting an HIV diagnosis—and then being told never to return by the health provider. Another remembers being made to use disposable plates and utensils at family gatherings. But the greater message is one of perseverance, strength and love. Or, as one of the participants says: “I’m a person living with HIV, but I have goals and I want to continue living life.”

An image from “Someone You Know & Love,” an anti-stigma campaignYouTube/Boston City TV

During the panel discussion at the campaign’s debut event, Tim told the crowd that he was proud to be part of the HIV community. “I’m a proud gay man who is living with HIV, and I never thought as a young person that I would ever say that—one, that I was HIV positive and two, that I would be proud to be a person in this community, supporting and loving one another, growing, educating and changing the lives of people around me.”

An image from “Someone You Know & Love,” an anti-stigma campaignYouTube/Boston City TV

“Our message to you is that you already know and love someone living with HIV,” Tim says at the video’s end. “You might be their spouse, partner or ally. Whether you know it or not, you may have seven seen parts of yourself in the stories you’ve heard. Our strength as a whole lies in our ability to see each other fully beyond a diagnosis. Love transcends HIV, and compassion binds us together.”

Boston has received about $15 million annually since 1990 as part of the federal Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, reports Boston.com. The funds not only provide testing and treatment but also support programs to improve health outcomes for people living with HIV—which can include efforts like the new anti-stigma campaign.

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SomeonYouKnowAndLove.com offers bios on the participants as well as anti-stigma resources and the following mission statement:

> The campaign will illuminate the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS by empowering PLWH [people living with HIV] to share their personal experience. These stories will be used to educate the general public and dispel harmful myths about PLWH. Our hope is our audiences will think about the people they know and love in their lives and realize they may already have a close relationship with someone living with HIV.

“There’s only one life,” Catherine says in the video, “you might as well live it the way you want to live it and be happy.”

An image from “Someone You Know & Love,” an anti-stigma campaignYouTube/Boston City TV

“We can…live productively,” adds Larry, “and have a whole life and be HIV positive, and that’s a

beautiful thing.”

It’s also a thing that can help break down stigma.

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