



I Am Woman

Advocacy comes in many forms, and every action—big or small—brings us closer to ending the epidemic.

February 16, 2026 By Jennifer Morton

As the managing editor of POZ for more than 20 years, I've witnessed many high and low points in the fight to end the epidemic. The actions of the current Trump administration rank among the lowest points. From massive cuts to HIV funding to attacks on public health and science, the progress we've made is being undermined and threatened. Yet the HIV community—rooted in resilience, powered by collective action and driven by a commitment to help one another—remains strong. To paraphrase Helen Reddy, you can bend but never break us.

Longtime survivor Sherri Lewis exemplifies this resilience. Nearly 40 years ago on her birthday, she learned she was HIV positive. A former pop singer, Lewis has used her voice and shared her story to educate and support others. She's survived COVID-19, hepatitis C, colon cancer, homelessness and multiple losses. Recently, she served on the board of the newly opened STORIES: The AIDS Monument in West Hollywood. [Go here](#) to read her first-person essay.

For more than three decades, AIDS Alabama CEO Kathie Hiers has been using her voice to help reshape national HIV policy and fight for people living with HIV in the South. [Go here](#) to read a Q&A with Hiers about her legacy and what's next as she plans for her retirement.

Heather O'Connor found her voice as an advocate when she became pregnant. She felt a deep responsibility to create safe spaces, not only for her children but also for herself and others. When she wasn't supported in her choice to breastfeed her newborn, she spoke up and now advocates for other women living with HIV. She also empowers long-term and life-term survivors at The Reunion Project. [Go here](#) to read her story.

Women on antiretroviral therapy can have healthy babies born free of HIV, and breastfeeding is an option for those with viral suppression. [Go here](#) to learn more about women and HIV.

Hyacinth, New Jersey's largest HIV organization, is another example of the community's resilience.

Last fall, it marked 40 years of serving people living with and at risk for HIV. [Go here](#) to learn how the organization educates and supports the communities it serves.

Last year, when the State Department instructed employees and grantees to “refrain from publicly promoting World AIDS Day through any communication channels, media engagements, speeches or other public-facing messaging,” advocates responded. [Go here](#) to see how the HIV community—including Madonna—marked the day with protests, candlelight vigils and more.

Advocacy comes in many forms, and every action—big or small—brings us closer to ending the epidemic. [Go here](#) for the POZ advocacy poster and discover how you can make a difference.

Together, we have the power to end HIV.

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