Coolest Thing Ever Written About Us (by Charlotte Martin)

June 17, 2011 By Shawn Decker

So Gwenn and I have been out as a sero-diverse couple for over a decade now. Safer sex with a smile and trying to enlighten people that positoids, people with HIV, can have a healthy relationship is at the top of our list of goals. As a result of being out there, we've had more than a few articles written about us.

On the best side of things, our message is understood, and shared beyond what our capabilities to reach people are, such as when Poz profiled us back when My Pet Virus was published, or when CNN.com did a story for World AIDS Day a few years back. The worst case was a British tabloid that chose the tag line: "SLEEPING WITH MY HUSBAND COULD KILL ME!" When they published that fictitious quote from Gwenn, *I* could have killed them.

Anyway, as everyone knows I love nothing more than a tall, cool iced mocha. I really enjoy my coffee shop dates with Gwenn. We've gotten quite friendly with a lot of the baristas in town, some of whom know a lot about our work and others who know very little. So I was really touched when Charlotte, a cool barista at Shenandoah Joe, wrote about us on her Tumblr page, A Heart Like Mine.

I'm posting this because lately I've felt so burnt out on AIDS. I receive so much encouragement about the work that Gwenn and I do, but I would be lying if I didn't say that 24 years of being diagnosed with HIV- and spending the last 15 years talking and writing about it- is wearing on me. I do the best I can to stay motivated and mocha'd. Big thanks to Charlotte for handling both sides of that.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

Shawn and Gwenn
blog post by Charlotte Martin

I know this great couple who have been on the list of my top favorite customers at SJ for my entire employment

there (a very long time). They are the ones who keep me sane a little bit. They have all the qualities of FCM (Favorite Customer Material): they don’t take themselves seriously, they get coffee to stay, they dress uniquely, they are smiley, they give a shit (constant theme of people I like), they make good jokes, they understand, and they aren’t like everyone else. Shawn and Gwenn are great. I really like them even though I don’t know them that well. Shawn is slightly goth, has hipster glasses, great graphic t-shirts, and a disarming smile. Gwenn is very much a woman. She always looks fashionable without belonging to one sort of genre of clothing. They’re married and Shawn is HIV postive. They travel around the country on a regular basis raising awareness about their relationship, safe sex, and the realities of the controversial illnesses that are HIV and AIDS. Shawn has also written a book which I recently read called My Pet Virus. The book pretty much changed my life a little bit.

In his book, Shawn talks about what it was like growing up with a disease that he acquired from tainted blood

products. Growing up during a time when ignorance about HIV/AIDS was more widespread and deathly than the disease itself, Shawn found himself getting kicked out of school for being HIV positive. Consequently, he became very secretive about his condition during his grade school years. Upon graduating high school, he decided to come clean about his secret on the world wide web by creating a website called My Pet Virus. What I love about Shawn's life is that the best thing he ever did was come clean. His life helps other people. When he and Gwenn go to high schools and colleges to talk about these issues, people become knowledgeable, less ignorant, less afraid of these things: sex, STDs, and AIDS. It is necessary and vital that people be educated about this. AIDS is a huge epidemic that a great deal of the world faces. There are still people who point the finger and force shame on those who don't deserve it. Shawn's hilarious and forgiving perspective about his condition brings great things to people and schools in the US.

I also love that Shawn and Gwenn's life is not normal in

any way. They aren’t your normal run-of-the-mill couple who went to college, got engaged, had a nice American wedding, and lived happily ever after with their 9-5 jobs, picket fence, and kids. Shawn didn’t go to college. He blogged and wrote music instead. Gwenn was the one who proposed. Their wedding was far from “normal,” their job is more of a travel log, full of late nights, and iced mochas. As for their picket fence and kids? To quote Gwenn’s words: “I have no maternal instincts.”

I LOVE THIS COUPLE.

I love that they don’t hide. I love that a potential secret that could have made them fearful and quiet, instead has made them live life to the fullest, enjoy their coffee to stay, talk loudly and proudly about sex and HIV, and be the confident, kind, and quirky people they are.

I wanna be like them.

-C

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.