My Favorite Female-Empowered and Epicly Awesome POZ Mags #NWGHAAD

March 10, 2022 By Shawn Decker

I remember the first time I saw POZ Magazine. I was 20 and had just opened up about HIV. My doctor was so excited to hear that I'd done a complete 180 where disclosure was concerned. The patient with the fresh new website that wore HIV on his dialed-up sleeve was the same guy who, just five years earlier, didn't have the courage to tell his high school sweetheart that he was HIV positive...

"That's wonderful news!"

My doctor mailed me some issues of POZ that had piled up in his office and the magazine quickly joined Spin as required reading in my bedroom. Around the same time I had a crush on Justine

Frischmann of Elastica, but she had to make a little room for Lisa Tiger, who shared her story with POZ in 1994. Then at a POZ Life Expo I got to meet Rebekka Armstrong, the former Playmate that tested positive for HIV. You may have seen her recently on the Hef-exposé series, The Secrets of Playboy. Rebekka was POZ's first centerfold in 1998! I'd started writing my Positoid column for the magazine, and the centerfold pic of Armstrong featured her laying on her stomach, seductively reading an issue of POZ... that just so happened to be cracked open to one of my columns! She signed something cheeky for me on the picture of her partial cheeks.

And it was amazing.

Now, if you think I am objectifying women with HIV on this day of awareness, you are wrong. In just the same manner that Justine Frischmann's songwriting skills played a major part in my youthful celebrity crush on her, overarching attributes also contributed to my admiration of Tiger and Armstrong, as well as anyone who was also willing to share their lives lived with HIV. I ultimately ended up with a negatoid in Gwenn, but her work in HIV education is how we ended up meeting. And I'm so grateful for the HIV/AIDS community that accepted me with such open hearts and minds, which helped give me the confidence to appeal to such an exceptional human being over half my life ago.

Dawwwwww...

Sorry for the whiplash here, but I think it is safe to say that women have it worse off than men do on this planet. Adding any other challenges to the mix only compounds the unethical obstacles

humanity has constructed. HIV comes with so much stigma. Depending on where you live, if you are a woman and you test positive for HIV, community reactions can include anything from potentially losing your job to violence. That’s why most people decide to keep their status to themselves. In some places the risk reward ratio doesn’t even make it feasible. Anyone with access to the internet has the opportunity to reach out anonymously… but these days even that comes with some level of risk.

Thankfully, there have been many advances since POZ debuted in the mid-90s. And while my fawning days may be mostly behind me, so many people have won my heart’s admiration. You’ve

probably noticed the issues of POZ floating around this blog post. I'm sure I've missed some gems, but click on any of them to read features about everything from grandparents, to activists, to children who lost parents to HIV, to powerful allies and more.

All of my love- yesterday, today and every day- to all of the women who have made living with

HIV on this imperfect planet just a little bit easier.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/favorite-femaleempowered-epicly-awesome-poz-mags-nwghaad