What It Really Looks Like to Live With HIV

Photographer Rachel Wisniewski documents the many faces of HIV.

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For her senior thesis, recent college grad and budding photojournalist Rachel Wisniewski pursued a project a bit more personal than the news and food assignments she has shot for The Philadelphia Inquirer newspaper and Table Matters magazine.

Titled Positive (adj.), the project consists of portraits of a diverse group of people living with HIV—gay and straight, black and white men and women ranging in age from 25 to 75—in and around their homes, leading healthy, ordinary lives. (The portfolio includes folks who have appeared in the pages of POZ, such as Michelle and Raven Lopez, Myron Gold and Nancy Duncan.)

Wisniewski became interested in HIV as a subject after regularly attending AIDS Fund Philly's monthly GayBINGO! events in Philadelphia, where she began to meet people living with the virus. What she learned at the events, which help raise money for local AIDS service organizations, helped dispel some of her misconceptions regarding HIV/AIDS.

In addition to showing that many different kinds of people are living with HIV, Wisniewski's intimate, naturally lit photos seek to make the point, especially to young people, that HIV is just one of many things that describe her subjects (hence, "adj.," for "adjective," in the title) but does not define them.

To view Wisniewski's work, check out her site here.

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