

Arnaldo Cordero

My Name is Arnaldo Cordero, and I am 42 years old. I am a recovering alcoholic, and I'm HIV positive. I was diagnosed on August 7th, 2004 and I want to share a little bit of my story.

On June 17th 2004, I lost my mother she died from natural causes, I was able to be there with her, holding her hand and telling her that it was okay to let go. I was there for her last breath. She opened her eyes, a tear rolled out, she smiled and then she stopped breathing.... that was one of the saddest moments of my life. A month after that I was diagnosed with HIV, and thought I was going to die.

I went to Mexico to tell my family that I was positive. They all rejected me. I used that heartbreak as an excuse to start drinking again. Inside I knew that drinking would only send me in a downward spiral. I wanted to turn my life around so I so I decided to learn more about HIV/AIDS.

I started to volunteer at two agencies, PACTO Latino and Christie's Place in San Diego, CA. There was something about Christie's Place that really attracted me. Their staff treated me as no one ever treated me. They showed me love and understanding. After a short time there as a client, I realized that I wanted to help to the entire HIV community.

The HIV services I received early in my diagnosis helped me to get to where I am now. I have turned my life around and I am now helping others. I am not a full-time caseworker at Christie's Place. My viral load is virtually undetectable because I stick to my medical regimen and visit my doctor regularly. I also continue to attend my Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. In 2005, I was nominated as the Best Volunteer in the community.

Even though my biological family is no longer in my life, I have found a new family among my co-workers, colleagues, clients, the HIV community and the AA community.

My name is Arnaldo Cordero, I am HIV positive and a grateful recovering alcoholic.