

The stories below are from real people who use and benefit from services offered by The Center (names have been changed). We encourage you to share these with your friends and family. Show them why The Center is so important to you and our community and then ask for their support!

Eve's Story

Eve came to The Center with her brother Chris for the weekly Wake It Up Wednesdays Vogue drop-in, hosted by The Center's HIV and Sexual Health team. Since it was her first time at The Center, she was very interested in the services The Center had to offer to the community. Bobby, on the HIV and Sexual Health team, explained what The Center offered and the work done in the community. Eve was impressed and quickly asked if she could receive a cost-free HIV test. Bobby pre-counseled and tested her, followed up by sharing her results, and conducted post-counsel about PEP and PrEP. During post-counseling, Eve revealed her sexual behaviors and her concern with the risk of contracting HIV. She also expressed how she wished there was a preventive treatment for women she could take like her brother did. Bobby explained the risk of her sexual behavior further and enlightened her on a new PrEP available for cisgender women and men. He went further and made an appointment for her at a clinic in her area that could prescribe the medication. Later, Eve was thrilled to report back that she had completed her first PrEP appointment and was now on a preventative medication regimen.

Eve says, *"I feel way more comfortable sexually now that I feel better protected! Thanks to Bobby and The Center for educating me about my options."*

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Nikolai's Story

As the political environment in Russia became more and more threatening to LGBTQ folks at home, Nikolai, who is living with HIV, and his partner made the difficult decision to make a perilous journey to find safety and community. They came to the U.S. through the southern border and landed in New York, alone and unable to use their housing voucher to find an apartment. Thanks to the close-knit HIV/AIDS activist community in New York, they were referred to The Center, where they not only found connection to a safe apartment, but also signed up for free services like ESL classes, as well as an immigration support group. Nikolai received legal representation for his asylum case, and his work authorization was processed in just a few months.

Nikolai says, *"It is not easy starting a new life far from home. But The Center helped us with so many services. I can manage my health, and I am not afraid of the future anymore."*

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Lidia's Story

Lidia initially came to The Center to manage her addiction to crystal methamphetamines. She had been homeless and staying on a friend's couch. But when Lidia's daughter became unable to care for her son, Lidia wanted to make a life change towards sobriety so she could care for her grandson. Since Lidia was living with HIV, her case manager at The Center found her emergency housing, and then a permanent apartment through the HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA). She is now sober and happy to be caring for her grandson.

Lidia says, *"I had never even heard of HASA before they told me about it at The Center. Now I have a home. I am staying clean and taking my meds and I love being here for my daughter and grandson."*



Ousmane's Story

After Ousmane learned about his HIV diagnosis, his family found out about his sexual orientation and threatened to kill him to "preserve family honor". He left his home in West Africa, where the stigma of HIV/AIDS and homosexuality still persist, and came to New York. Ousmane went to The Center, where staff made his HIV medical care a top priority. The Center case management team helped arrange a safe place to live through the NYC HIV/AIDS Services Administration and found him a Portuguese interpreter to help him secure legal representation for his asylum case.

Ousmane says, *"I feel I had no choice but to leave to save my life. And now I have a home and medical care. I am very grateful."*



Jack's Story

At 20 years old, and living in Argentina, Jack met the man who would become his future husband. They fell in love immediately during a time when Jack hadn't come out to his friends or family. Thinking nothing would happen, they did not wear condoms. Time passed and they both started getting sick. When Jack fell ill with a vicious pneumonia they were both diagnosed with HIV. He waited until he was undetectable and then told his family that he was gay and positive. He wasn't judged by a diagnostic, but loved for being who he was as a person.

Jack decided to see a doctor, and get into treatment, which is when he found a place called Fundacion Rosas. They took part in a lot of campaigns to educate the general public, but the focus was on prevention. So the idea came to Jack to focus on people living with HIV. Jack started cycling some time before, and decided he'd show how someone living with HIV could do things that even many people with

negative results can't. With the Foundation, they made a campaign called Pedaleando Vivo, where they showed Jack's preparation and participation on a tough 50 mile mountain bike race in Argentina.

Jack says, *"My goal was always to tell my story, not just to everyone, but for that person who just got their diagnosis and doesn't know how to carry on. I was frightened crying in a bathroom once too, but I overcame it with the love of family and friends. If I can do it, anyone can. Just go out there and live your life to the fullest."*

Charlie's Story

Charlie had been hesitant to get tested for HIV for several years, but he finally came in to get tested at The Center, saying that he knew it was time. His Community Engagement Coordinator on The Center's HIV Services team helped get him comfortable and gave him counseling before his test. Charlie tested positive, and after receiving counseling around his treatment options, he was referred to one of our affiliates who got him an Uber the very same day, getting him connected to treatment and care. Charlie is still regularly in touch with the HIV Team at The Center, and he is successfully adhering to his medication.

Charlie says, *"I had a feeling I was positive, but I was very hesitant to get tested all this time. The folks at The Center made me feel like it was going to be okay no matter what, and they were right!"*
