

# Spotlight on Health



## Stepping Out Of The Shadows Of HIV

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(NAPS)—Ann is a 74-year-old retired principal and grandmother living in Connecticut. Robin is a 58-year-old community health educator and mother of four living in Maryland. On the surface, these women may seem to have little in common, but what brings them together is that for the last 25 years, both have been living with HIV. They have also chosen to step out of the shadows about their journey and help others get past the stigma surrounding HIV.

### Ann's and Robin's Stories

In 1998, Ann was shocked to receive an HIV diagnosis during a routine medical appointment, ultimately concluding that she may have contracted the virus during a hysterectomy 10 years earlier. After keeping her diagnosis a secret from everyone but some close family and friends for 20 years, Ann decided to open up about living with HIV so she could support others like her.

"When I was diagnosed, people living with HIV faced significant stigma among a number of other challenges," said Ann. "While HIV stigma is still very much around today, times have changed and we have made progress. I now choose to be open about my diagnosis. My hope is that this will help others know they are not alone and will change the way the world views what it means to be living healthy with HIV."

Like Ann, Robin was stunned to find out that she was HIV-positive while expecting her third child with her long-time partner, receiving her diagnosis when she was tested as part of prenatal care. After struggling with her status for more than a decade, Robin became a community health educator and now uses her story to inspire those in the community and ensure they know that HIV does not define who they are.

"When the doctor told me I had HIV, I was devastated, and it was compounded by my pregnancy and the fear that my baby could be born with it as



**Robin (left) and Ann not only live with HIV, they help many other people do so as well.**

well," stated Robin. "Fortunately, my daughter does not have HIV and I'm now using my experience to help those living in a similar situation come to terms with their diagnosis and live their lives to the fullest."

### The Good News

There has been significant progress in HIV treatment and care since the start of the epidemic more than 40 years ago, and for many people it is now a manageable chronic condition. People living with HIV may be on medication for decades, and with this comes important considerations around the lifelong impact of HIV treatment.

Ann and Robin considered a variety of different factors when discussing their HIV treatment regimen with their doctors, including aging well with HIV, taking fewer HIV medicines, co-morbidities and interactions with other medications they are on or may be on in the future, as well as other lifestyle considerations.

Much has changed since Ann and Robin were diagnosed with HIV, due in large part to the work of brave advocates like themselves. Today, they are demonstrating what it means to thrive with HIV and using their experiences to advocate for others and make a difference in the lives of people living with HIV.

### Learn More

For further information about a holistic approach to HIV care, visit ViiV Healthcare's website ([www.viivhealthcare.com](http://www.viivhealthcare.com)) or speak with your healthcare provider.