



Sharing Experiences With HIV Across Borders

After taking a trip to Honduras, Courtney Bosca launched Youth Across Borders to raise awareness and reduce stigma through education and collaboration.

April 12, 2023

In December 2012, I took my first of many trips to an orphanage for children living with HIV in Montaña de Luz in rural Honduras. I was excited, curious and filled with anticipation. I had no idea what to expect, and I was nervous that I wouldn't know how to be around these children. I expected them to be sickly and unhealthy. When I arrived, screaming children of all ages surrounded my van and peered through the windows. Upon climbing out, I became a human jungle gym with children hugging my legs and jumping on my back. The children were singing a welcome song in Spanish. I immediately felt at ease, and any anxiety that I previously felt melted away.

I had been wanting to go on some sort of service trip for much of my life, and when I heard about this small orphanage that is the home to 28 children living with HIV, something called to me. I loved learning that in 2000, a group of people created a hospice for a devastating number of children who through no fault of their own were dying of HIV. I loved learning that when antiretroviral drugs became available in Honduras, making it possible for these children to live longer lives, the hospice transitioned into a home. I loved learning that the original morgue was now a computer lab.

After spending two days there, I knew that I wanted to keep returning and be as involved with this project as I possibly could. Before leaving the first time, I joined the morning circle of kids holding hands and singing. One of the teenage boys stood next to me and held my hand. When our hands connected, I honestly felt a jolt of what seemed like electricity. I was meant to do just this! I returned three more times that year and began to dream a bit about connecting my community in Ohio with this place, which has been truly life-changing for me. I got excited about the possibility of connecting local Ohio youth living with HIV with the children at Montaña de Luz.

To make a long story short, I connected with two incredible women and pitched them my idea. That was the day we launched Youth Across Borders, and we have been propelled forward ever since.

[Youth Across Borders](#) is creating a mutually beneficial cross-cultural experience where youth from Central Ohio and beyond use their life experiences living with HIV to connect with youth living with HIV in Honduras. By sharing experiences good and bad, sharing stories, fears, triumphs, information, tears, joys, disappointments and challenges, we are making connections and creating bonds where they have never before been experienced.

What three adjectives best describe you?

Accepting, empathetic, connector.

What is your greatest achievement?

My greatest achievement is having been brave enough to dream about, plan and actually make my dream of Youth Across Borders a reality. It has been going since 2015 and continues to grow.

What is your greatest regret?

I wish I had left the laundry and cleaning for later and just played with “my” boys more and spent more time on the floor with them.

What keeps you up at night?

Worrying about my children and teens living with HIV in Honduras. I worry about their psychological well-being and their safety from discrimination.

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?

I’m not HIV positive but if I could change one thing about HIV, it would be that the world would know the truths and non-truths about HIV, and everyone could receive a hug.

What is the best advice you ever received?

To stay in my lane. Stay focused on the thing at hand and not the what-ifs.

What person in the HIV/AIDS community do you most admire?

[Marnina Miller](#) is an extraordinary woman living with HIV who has made it her mission to tell her HIV story to better this world.

What drives you to do what you do?

A deep need in my soul to let people know that they matter no matter what. A need to be connected with the children in Honduras who are living with HIV.

What is your motto?

Remember that there are things that I don't know that I don't know. Stay open!

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?

All of the photos on my refrigerator from the last seven years of Youth Across Borders teams and Honduran kids living with HIV.

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?

A lion who is brave and has a loud roar to speak my mind. I would bring anyone who needed love into my den and keep them as long as they needed.

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