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# SUCCESS STORY

## HIV-Positive People Reveal Their Faces

**Film advocates that communities treat those living with HIV humanely**



Photo: Viktoria Feoflova

A documentary on people living with HIV/AIDS features among others Oleksandr, an employee of the Cherkasy regional department of the All-Ukrainian Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS.

***A survey revealed that after viewing the film, 65 percent of young people changed to a more positive attitude toward HIV-positive people while only 2 percent remained negative.***

Antonina works as a press secretary in the Cherkasy regional department of the All-Ukrainian Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH), where Oleksandr works as a social worker. Several years ago, they each learned separately that they were HIV-positive. Oleksandr was infected from injecting drugs; Antonina was diagnosed during her second pregnancy.

Oleksandr and Antonina, unlike many HIV-positive people, chose not to hide their status. In the educational documentary, “HIV: The Right for Life,” released as a part of USAID-supported project by Moloda Cherkaschyna, a coalition of youth non-governmental organizations, they speak on camera on their HIV-positive status. No silhouettes, no shadows and no covered faces. They talk openly about their work, and share their feelings and dreams. By revealing their faces, they take a dramatic step forward in asserting their right to be treated humanely and with dignity.

The film features Cherkasy residents asked about their readiness to express themselves as openly in discussions with HIV-positive people as with others. Some said they felt sorry for HIV-positive people, while others voiced quite provocative statements (such as proposing to quarantine HIV-positive people in reservations separated by a wall).

The documentary, the first such video on HIV/AIDS in the Cherkasy Region, was shown on local television and used as instructive material for working with youth, teachers and medical personnel. The video invoked all kinds of comments. “Nice film! It is not very often possible to see how people live with HIV,” commented one of the students. “A very, very good film! It changed my attitude very much,” exclaimed a teacher. A more reserved doctor put an interesting twist on the matter, saying, “As for me, this film should be shown to adults only. Otherwise children might think that HIV is not so horrible.” A survey revealed that after viewing the film, 65 percent of young people changed to a more positive attitude toward HIV-positive people while only 2 percent remained negative.

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