

Nancy's Story, USAF Veteran & JAHVA Employee



March 31st is the International Transgender Day of Visibility. It is an important day for the transgender community and for me. I lived in hiding for so long in my life and I had no way of knowing why I was feeling the way I was. I was scared and lying to myself about the feelings I had. I had to act different and deny my feeling. I had to be someone I was not so that people would accept me. I had no role models... no one I could look up to... no way to find out what was happening to me. Why did I feel the way I did? Anything that involving being transgender on TV, in movies or any other place was always scary, negative and frightening. In this dark time, I kept searching for answers, but there were none. Every child needs to be able to see someone like themselves. I did not have that growing up. I was often told by my father that that is the way girls do things and that I am a boy so “Act like one.” I was even told that I was too emotional, that I cried too much, that I was always sad, that I needed to perk up be happy and be who I was ‘supposed to be’ not who I knew I was.

As I grew older, I found more and more people like myself, transgender individuals struggling with their identity - struggling to be who they are. Now we have a day of visibility, a day where we educate people, a day where we let people see that we are here, a day where people see that we can live successful and happy lives. Unfortunately, there are still so many transgender individuals who do not have a positive role model. They are scared because of the marginalization, the anger, and the violence against the transgender community. With this day we showcase our positive role models, especially for those who are younger, those who are still struggling, those who are afraid to come out, and those who are in hiding for so many reasons. The negative portrayals that I grew up with are disappearing. Now we're seeing the positive influence of transgender people in society. We are doctors. We are lawyers. We are pilots. We are veterans. We are neighbors. We are sons and daughters and children.

This day is to help us remind those who are still in hiding that they aren't alone. That they can succeed by being their true self. So I'd like to take this opportunity to be a voice for those who don't have a voice, an example of the life that can be lived successfully and happily. A life in which one does not have to stay in hiding. So please - on this day especially, but also throughout the year - educate yourself on the contributions of the transgender community to our society. Because everyone should be able to live their true authentic life without fear of violence, discrimination, and even murder for just being who they are.

Nancy Jones, CRPS-V (She, Her, Hers)

WOC – Peer Support Specialist
Mental Health & Behavioral Sciences
James A. Haley VA Hospital
Transgender Veteran Care Point-of-Contact
Office Number: 813-631-2506
Veterans Crisis Line: (800) 273-8255

VA Serves All Who Served!