LET’S TALK

PROFILE:
Jasmine Ahumada
By Trudie Mitschang

Trudie: Tell us about life before CVID.
Jasmine: Prior to being diagnosed with CVID, I was a healthy, active young woman. I was in the process of buying my first home, in a steady relationship and working at a job that I loved. For almost 10 years, I worked as an instructor at a day program for developmentally disabled adults, and I loved it with all my heart. During my last few years there, I was chronically ill but didn’t know why, especially since previously I had always been healthy. Even as a child, I lived a normal, active life with very few medical issues. Suddenly, I found myself in my mid-20s with constant infections and medical problems.

Trudie: When did you suspect something was seriously wrong?
Jasmine: I suspected something was wrong when I realized that my doctor visits were getting more and more frequent. It seemed like I was sick all the time. I would get infections that wouldn’t go away, I was feeling drained, and I just lived with that very “unwell” feeling. At first, I was blaming my illnesses and infections on the fact that I worked out in the community and in a school-type setting where people were often sick.

Trudie: When were you finally diagnosed?
Jasmine: When I was 27, I developed a methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) infection on my leg. The infection was very serious and landed me in the hospital for about a week. After healing from that, I continued to get small staph infections randomly on different parts of my body. While this was going on, I was also suffering with lung infections and pneumonia. I went to my primary care physician literally every other day. I would tell him I feel unwell and that something must be wrong. Finally, after many appointments with him, he sent me to an infectious disease specialist. It was that doctor who actually listened to me and ran the one test that confirmed I was making little to no antibodies.

Trudie: What is your treatment plan?
Jasmine: I receive intravenous immune globulin (IVIG) at my local hospital once every four weeks. IVIG has changed my life for the better! Now, I rarely get infections, and I am sick less frequently. I have the support of my medical team, as well as my family and friends.

Trudie: How did you get involved with face and body art?
Jasmine: I have always been into beauty and makeup, and through television and social media outlets, I was seeing this face and body art more and more. I became interested in it and decided to try it out for myself. I thought it would be fun, but I had no clue that I would actually be pretty good at it! As I got into it, I realized that it helped fill a void I didn’t even know was there. Before experimenting with face and body makeup less than a year ago, I had never done any type of art.

Trudie: Your work is beautiful and very dramatic. How do you promote it?
Jasmine: I have recently found the

JASMINE AHUMADA was an active 27-year-old with a career she loved when her life took a dramatic turn seven years ago. After chronic illness and a serious staph infection left her hospitalized and grappling for answers, Jasmine was eventually diagnosed with common variable immunodeficiency (CVID). Unable to work, the 35-year-old California resident began to dabble in makeup artistry, and discovered a new talent that she’s using to raise awareness for patients in the primary immunodeficiency (PI) community.

After a healthy, active childhood, Jasmine Ahumada was diagnosed with CVID when she suddenly was plagued with recurrent illnesses in her mid-20s.
wonderful world of Instagram, and that’s where I promote all the looks I do. Instagram has a large, supportive and talented community of artists like me. I also have a Facebook page where I share my makeup with family and friends.

**Trudie:** How are you using your art for advocacy?

**Jasmine:** I’ve created special images that represent the primary immunodeficiency disease patient experience. I created a look for Invisible Illness Awareness Week that depicts the way my immune deficiency makes me feel on the inside, though I do not often appear that way on the outside. I also painted on my implanted power port where I receive my monthly IVIG infusions. I wanted to show a visual of what my port looks like; you can’t see it by just looking at me, but it is now very much a part of me. Another image I’m proud of is called the “golden zebra,” which is also representative of the PI community. I realize some images may be shocking to some, simply because I tend to always have a wonderful attitude and outlook on life.

**Trudie:** What are your goals for the future?

**Jasmine:** In the future, I hope to grow in my artistry, go to school or study more in this field, and possibly do freelance makeup of all types.

**Trudie:** Are you a part of any support or advocacy groups?

**Jasmine:** I am a part of a few support groups on Facebook. I also follow and am active with the Immune Deficiency Foundation. Being able to listen to and communicate with others like me has been greatly beneficial.

**Trudie:** What has CVID taught you about yourself?

**Jasmine:** The biggest thing that CVID has taught me is that I am stronger than I ever imagined I could be. It has taught me that no matter what this disease throws at me, I can handle it. It has also taught me to be even more grateful and compassionate. I feel more blessed and thankful than I ever did before. I see the world in a whole new light. Without this diagnosis, I’m not sure I’d view life the same as I do now.

**Trudie:** What advice do you have for others?

**Jasmine:** The best advice I could give to somebody with CVID is to remain positive. Oftentimes our attitude will directly determine what our day will be like. Positive thoughts equal a happier life. It’s easy to get caught up in how horrible you feel, what you’re unable to do and what you don’t have. The more important thing to remember is that you are blessed with so many things. You just have to think about how good you do feel, what you are able to do and what you do have. I do not let my disease shape who I am or how I live. I am blessed.

**TRUDIE MITSCHANG** is a contributing writer for IG Living magazine.

*Editor’s note: See more of Jasmine’s makeup artistry by following her on Instagram at @Butterflyjasmine49.*