

COURAGE

Finding Home in Altadena

BY MICHELLE LONGO | PHOTOS BY COURAGE

What do you call someone who is a full-time actor, voice actor, community organizer, scareactor, mascot performer, activist, and wears a wolf tail?

You call him Courage.

Born in Nebraska, Courage has lived in Los Angeles for more than ten years. In that time, he's lived in thirteen locations, but none felt like home like Altadena does. For him, the forward-thinking diversity of a city coupled with the humility of a small town come together to create a beautiful area unlike any other.

He said, "Never had I lived in a place that felt so uncharacteristically ungentrified, communally connected and wholesome, and filled with artists, visionaries, and eccentric types (like me)!"

Courage's family tree has many branches. He is the youngest of fourteen children in a blended family; his father had ten children and his mother had two before they married. Together, they had Courage, now 36, and his sister. There's a significant age difference between the siblings, and his oldest brother is currently in his eighties. Although there were so many children in the family, Courage essentially grew up as an only child, as everyone had moved out by the time he was around seven years old.

About his family, Courage said, "My dad's side of the family migrated from the lands of the Tarahumara in Chihuahua in 1919, where they soon arrived in Nebraska and intermarried with the Lakota and other Indigenous people from that area."

Courage traveled a bit during his childhood, with fond memories of trips to Orlando, FL, with his family. He recalls the long car trips through endless farmland to Omaha, then back to his hometown of Scottsbluff, NE. He also ventured across the Midwest with his parents to participate in talent contests, including an annual trip to

Las Vegas for a showcase. While travel isn't something he gets to do regularly these days, he looks forward to more of it in the future.

Courage is a proud member of the Furry community, which is a popular fandom subculture made up of folks who love non-human fantasy characters. He's been wearing a wolf tail for sixteen years. Furies often create ambitious original character costumes, and Courage hopes to construct and design his this year.

A lifelong gamer, Courage plays everything from his original 1983 Nintendo to classic Atari, as well as modern systems like Playstation 5, Nintendo Switch, and Xbox Series S. At the same time, he also has a passion for parkour. Prior to the pandemic, he met with many local groups in parks across Los Angeles to practice, and he also trained for a year at Tempest Freerunning Academy.

Courage discovered the Altadena area while attending an outdoor survival class that was held weekly in Hahamongna Park in 2017. When Covid-19 took the life of a loved one four years ago, he was forced to start over and find another place to call home. Through this challenging time, he found peace in Altadena.



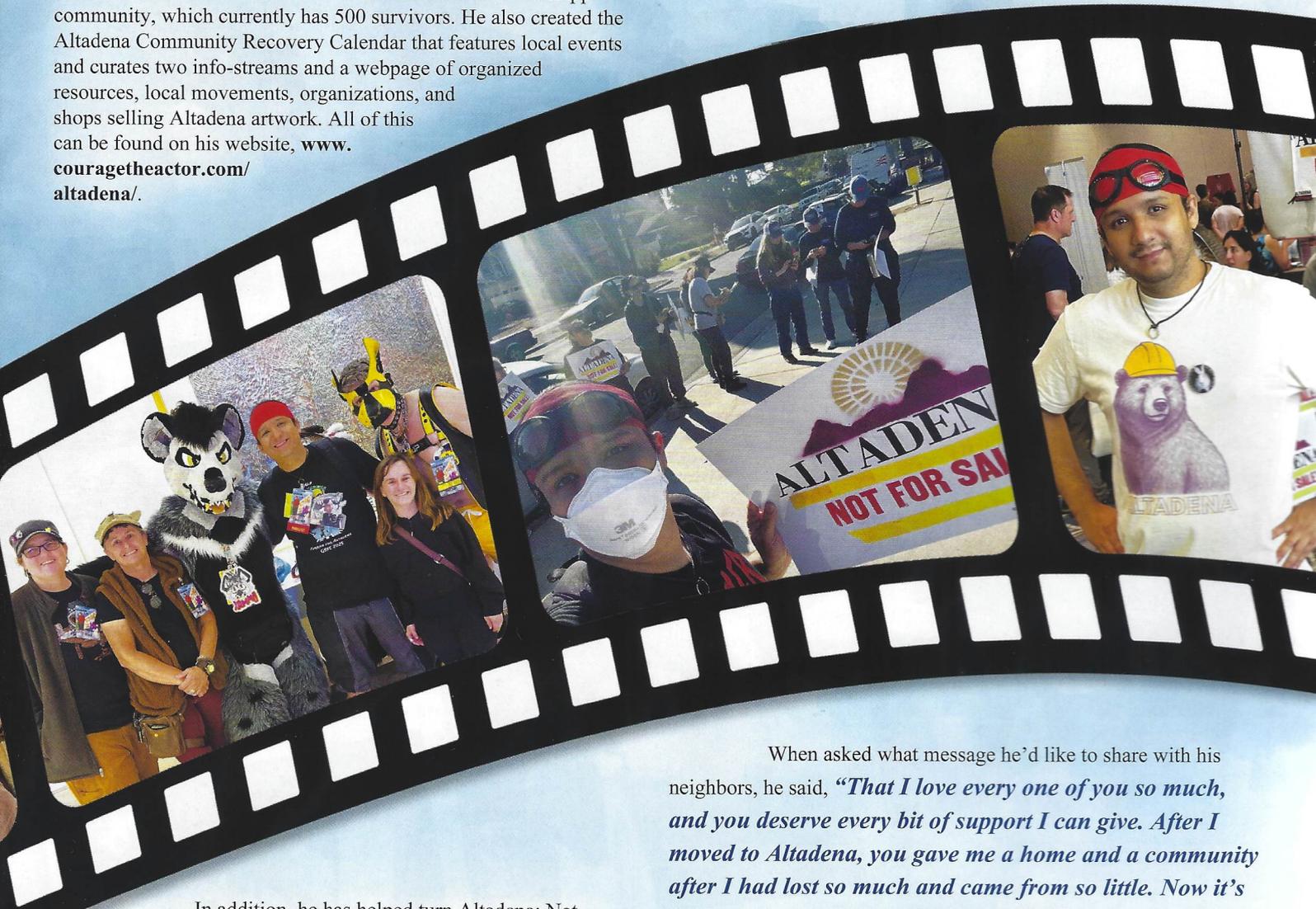
Like most locals, however, the Eaton fire had a devastating effect.

Fortunately, the fire did not claim Courage's home, but to this day, his is the only occupied house on his street. He worked frantically in the early days with neighbors to put out spot fires with pool water and kept watch at night to ward off looters. He was without power for weeks and running water for months, sandbagging and preparing for a mudslide. Later, during debris

removal, he started suffering health effects from the fire that lasted for months and could not go outside at all, at least not without a respirator.

Despite these tragic events, Courage's devotion to being an active community organizer shone through as he endeavored to save his beloved Altadena. He runs the Altadena Forever WhatsApp community, which currently has 500 survivors. He also created the Altadena Community Recovery Calendar that features local events and curates two info-streams and a webpage of organized resources, local movements, organizations, and shops selling Altadena artwork. All of this can be found on his website, www.couragetheactor.com/altadena/.

dinners to give local restaurants a boost in business, and he attends every weekly meeting of the Eaton Fire Collaborative. He's dedicated to protecting the Latino community during the current climate of racial profiling and abductions, while also serving as a block captain for Altgether.



In addition, he has helped turn Altadena: Not for Sale into an online movement and has become their mascot, Mr. Sale. A fundraiser run through a Furry convention raised \$2,000, and he also helped make the Altadena Future Fair possible, drawing 800 attendees to the Pasadena Convention Center. He's met with local representatives and traveled to Sacramento to fight for Altadena as well.

Courage served as a key organizer to make the fourth annual Altadena Pride a reality, something he was actively involved in for years. Prior to the fire, he also volunteered with Rhythms of the Village multicultural festival, which led him to become involved with Soul Force and the "peace and love" community. He started a journey to become an Aztec dancer in the local "Danza" group, Yankuititl. Two years ago, he became a founding member of the Altadena Filmmakers group.

Continuing his commitment to community outreach, Courage is focused on helping the Altadena Dining Club organize community

When asked what message he'd like to share with his neighbors, he said, *"That I love every one of you so much, and you deserve every bit of support I can give. After I moved to Altadena, you gave me a home and a community after I had lost so much and came from so little. Now it's time for me to return the favor. I won't stop until every one of you have your lives back."*

