

LetsStopAIDS Launches “Spread Trees, Not AIDS” in South Africa

TORONTO, ONTARIO — Canadian youth-driven charity LetsStopAIDS has recently returned from South Africa after successfully completing a three-week pilot project for their new campaign “Spread Trees, Not AIDS”.

“Spread Trees, Not AIDS” combines two of the world’s most pressing issues: the environment and HIV. The correlation between environmental degradation and increased HIV prevalence rates has never been clearer. Poor environmental conditions increase susceptibility to, and the progression of, HIV; likewise, HIV affects the environment.

“Through educational workshops, leadership training and tree planting, we want to inspire youth to take action locally,” says Shamin Mohamed Jr., President of LetsStopAIDS. Also included in the workshops was an emphasis on the role of sports and the arts as powerful tools for self-expression and interpersonal collaboration.

The LetsStopAIDS team worked in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa – the region with the highest HIV prevalence in the world, and where deforestation is a major environmental challenge. The team engaged youth through workshops, created a network of youth HIV peer educators, and hopes they inspired youth to take action in their communities.

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LetsStopAIDS was founded in 2004 by then 15-year-old Toronto student Shamin Mohamed Jr. The organization is now a nationwide network with over 400 volunteers hosting programmes in Canada, Asia and Africa. LetsStopAIDS’ work has been endorsed by Bill Clinton and Bill Gates at the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto. It is a youth-driven charity with no government assistance. Spread Trees, Not AIDS has been endorsed by the AIDS Foundation of South Africa and Foods & Trees for Africa. The DAREarts Foundation is a prime supporter.

Members from the LetsStopAIDS team will be participating in the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City from July 30th to August 8th 2008. LetsStopAIDS will also be hosting a virtual AIDS Conference Hub on Thursday, August 7th from 12PM – 6PM at the Astronomy and Astrophysics Building (Rm.107) at the University of Toronto (St. George Campus).

Additionally, on Tuesday, July 29th 2008 at 10:00 AM, there will be a news conference at the National Club (303 Bay Street, right beside the parking lot that will become the Trump Tower)

For more information, please contact:

Paul Cadiente, Public Relations Department

Email: pcadiente@LetsStopAIDS.org Web: <http://www.LetsStopAIDS.org>

Tel: 416-231-2333 x9 Toll-free: 1-866-530-AIDS x9

Mobile: 416-451-0767