

ACTIVISM

Young activist gets help from heavyweights

BY TOM BLACKWELL

TORONTO • Shamin Mohamed is clearly an overachiever, founding his own AIDS organization at age 16 and later being named one of Canada's "Top 20 under 20."

Not only that, but his group's impressive-looking Web site refers to him as a humanitarian, a motivational speaker and a leader.

Mr. Mohamed, now 18 and just graduated from high school, earned more recognition yesterday when a former U.S. president and the world's wealthiest man — both ardent AIDS activists themselves — offered him their advice before an international audience of hundreds.

The Toronto teenager had passed forward a question to Bill

Clinton and Bill Gates, the two speakers at a packed session of the International AIDS Conference.

Charlayne Hunter-Gault, the moderator, said the question came from someone who must be a "wonderful young citizen," prompting a round of applause from the delegates.

In answer to his request for advice to young AIDS activists, Mr. Gates said the most valuable contribution from most people in rich countries such as Canada is money for programs in the developing world.

Mr. Clinton also suggested that young people in the West lobby their governments to spend more on the HIV war. But he also suggested they could help improve communication between the developing world and wealthy nations.

"If young people of the world spoke across the income divide ... that would be something worth doing."

Mr. Mohamed, a diminutive ball of energy, later said the experience was "amazing."

"To get my question answered by Bill Clinton and Bill Gates ... was an experience I would definitely not forget."

He said he started the Children's AIDS Health Program two years ago after learning about the toll the disease takes on youth. "I started realizing that 11 million orphans are lot of children that need help."

When his school principal initially balked at his request for an AIDS event at Runnymede Collegiate, asking if it was some kind of scam, the discouragement only spurred him on more, said Mr.

Mohamed, born in Toronto of Guyanese descent.

The group has raised \$15,000 and earlier this year its founder travelled to South Africa, where he met with AIDS orphans and other young people and distributed 500 condoms and 19,000 nutritional tablets.

"It was a life-changing experience," the teenager said. "There is a lot of difference between talking about a country and actually going there. I feel a lot more passionate about it."

Next month, Mr. Mohamed starts health science studies at the University of Ottawa, with dreams of becoming an AIDS researcher.

His group's Web site is LetsStopAIDS.org.

National Post
tblackwell@nationalpost.com

Young activist gets help from heavyweights

Tom Blackwell

National Post

Tuesday, August 15, 2006

TORONTO - Shamin Mohamed is clearly an overachiever, founding his own AIDS organization at age 16 and later being named one of Canada's "Top 20 under 20."

Not only that, but his group's impressive-looking Web site refers to him as a humanitarian, a motivational speaker and a leader.

Mr. Mohamed, now 18 and just graduated from high school, earned more recognition yesterday when a former U.S. president and the world's wealthiest man -- both ardent AIDS activists themselves -- offered him their advice before an international audience of hundreds.

The Toronto teenager had passed forward a question to Bill Clinton and Bill Gates, the two speakers at a packed session of the International AIDS Conference.

Charlayne Hunter-Gault, the moderator, said the question came from someone who must be a "wonderful young citizen," prompting a round of applause from the delegates.

In answer to his request for advice to young AIDS activists, Mr. Gates said the most valuable contribution from most people in rich countries such as Canada is money for programs in the developing world.

Mr. Clinton also suggested that young people in the West lobby their governments to spend more on the HIV war. But he also suggested they could help improve communication between the developing world and wealthy nations.

"If young people of the world spoke across the income divide ... that would be something worth doing."

Mr. Mohamed, a diminutive ball of energy, later said the experience was "amazing."

"To get my question answered by Bill Clinton and Bill Gates ... was an experience I would definitely not forget."

He said he started the Children's AIDS Health Program two years ago after learning about the toll the disease takes on youth. "I started realizing that 11 million orphans are lot of children that need help."

When his school principal initially balked at his request for an AIDS event at Runnymede Collegiate, asking if it was some kind of scam, the discouragement only spurred him on more, said Mr. Mohamed, born in Toronto of Guyanese descent.

The group has raised \$15,000 and earlier this year its founder travelled to South Africa, where he met with AIDS orphans and other young people and distributed 500 condoms and 19,000 nutritional tablets.

"It was a life-changing experience," the teenager said. "There is a lot of difference between talking about a country and actually going there. I feel a lot more passionate about it."

Next month, Mr. Mohamed starts health science studies at the University of Ottawa, with dreams of becoming an AIDS researcher.

His group's Web site is LetsStopAIDS.org.

tblackwell@nationalpost.com

© National Post 2006

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2006 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.