

Students learn impact of HIV-AIDS in Africa

By Katie Robinson
The Progress
krobinson@theprogress.com
Jan 23 2007

Logan Cochrane is bringing HIV-AIDS awareness to Africa, and Africa awareness to Chilliwack.

Cochrane – a former student of Chilliwack Senior secondary – spent the week educating Chilliwack’s students about what it’s like to live in Africa. He presented a slide show to eight schools – elementary, middle and secondary – that showed the sad faces of orphaned children who have lost parents to HIV-AIDS and who, themselves, are infected with the virus.



Logan Cochrane, with Working to Empower, shows a slide show to Chilliwack Senior students about HIV/AIDS education for people in Africa. JENNA HAUCK/ PROGRESS.

"I think it's important, because it gets kids thinking," said 22-year-old Cochrane, founder and director of Working To Empower, an organization raising awareness about HIV-AIDS in Africa.

"When I was in high school I had no clue about any of this stuff and I think that's typical – [students are] not being taught about it."

Since its inception in 2005, Working To Empower has become a vibrant, youth-led organization that has connected with over 100,000 people in the African region. It mainly focuses its education on the youth realm of things, providing fun seminars so that youth will actually attend.

It's done sports education, where a group of youth and peer educators get together for a game of soccer. They play the first half of the game, take a 20-minute break for education and then finish the game. It's done drama education, acting out short plays to draw a crowd. And it's shown hours of music videos – totally unrelated to HIV-AIDS – cutting in half way through for an hour or two of HIV-AIDS education.

"There are 14,000 people a day who are newly infected," said Cochrane. "And just about 50 per cent of that are youths aged 15 to 24.

"The hardest thing is to start a conversation about HIV-AIDS – there is such a stigma attached to it. These seminars are just a fun way of getting the message out."

And the message that Cochrane brought with him to the Chilliwack schools is that these people are so unfortunate, they don't have the opportunities people in Canada do, they need help.

Six of the schools Cochrane visited participated in Working To Empower's Canadian Schools \$1 Drive. Each student brought a \$1 donation, which will be pooled with other schools efforts and later be used to buy a house for orphaned children in Ethiopia living with HIV-AIDS.

For more information or to donate visit the Working To Empower website at www.workingtoempower.org.