



Are You Positive You're Negative?

“Status Is Everything”

March 1, 2010 By Willette Francis

On World AIDS Day, the Newark, New Jersey-based African American Office of Gay Concerns (AAOGC)—with support from its state Department of Health and Senior Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—launched “Status Is Everything,” a campaign to encourage black men who have sex with men (MSM) ages 16 to 24 to get tested for HIV and reduce high-risk behavior. In 2006, this age group accounted for 5,220 of the 10,130 new HIV cases among all black MSM nationwide; 80 percent were previously unaware of their status.

Unlike many of the other youth-based awareness campaigns, this one is tailored to its unique audience. “It’s specific to Newark, it’s specific to gay black men, and you’ve got a gay black organization spearheading the project,” says Gary Paul Wright, executive director of AAOGC.

“Status Is Everything” directs users to local HIV testing centers via text messaging, a hotline (1-866-HIV-CHECK), print ads and digital outlets such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

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