Enchanted

Two fearless young ladies keep AIDS experts honest.

April 1, 2008 By James Wortman

At the 2006 International AIDS Conference in Toronto, two intrepid journalists took on the top minds in AIDS, grilling them about treatment, stigma and condoms—all before naptime. Washington, DC, sisters Vineeta and Sevilla Hennessey—ages 4 and 6 at the time of the conference—now star in a new documentary based on their time in Toronto, *Please Talk to Kids About AIDS*. In the 26-minute film, the girls interview such leading AIDS thinkers as Pulitzer-winning journalist Laurie Garrett and the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Dr. Anthony Fauci. “If a kid asks a question,” Fauci told *POZ*, “and you don’t come in with an accurate answer, the child will try to get the answer someplace else—that’s how they get false information.”

But not all of the Hennesseys’ targets were so at ease. When Vineeta asked conference chair Dr. Mark Weinberg “How does AIDS enter the body?” he got a tad flustered. “Well,” he said, “AIDS gets into your body in ways that can be complicated to explain to little girls.” The girls’ parents—global health advocates Brian Hennessey (who directed the film) and Radia Daoussi—say that discussing AIDS with young minds unclouded by misconceptions is key to curbing an epidemic that has thrived on silence. Says Hennessey: “A lot of people have died because we couldn’t talk about this.”

Order the film and learn more at vineeta.org.

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