Friendly Faces at AFLV

February 21, 2010 By Shawn Decker

This semester has been busy for me and Gwenn, and thus far we've had a great response to our program, A Boy, A Girl, A Virus, which is all about safe, sexual decision-making and how we keep Gwenn safe in our relationship.

Here we are at the Association of Fraternal Leaders & Values (AFLV) conference in St. Louis, where we spoke to over 300 students, a portion of which raided us after the program to get a Screw Smarter t-shirt. Our good speaking buddies, Kelly and Becca, were also at the conference talking about sexual assault awareness, and kindly helped us get this photo op together as did our friends at The College Agency.

One of the highlights of AFLV was getting to see Kelly and Becca speak. They talk about what it was like for Kelly in college, when she was drugged and raped by someone she was seeing at the time. Becca, her longtime friend, was her rock as they attempted to figure out what happened. Together, they use a nightmare of an experience to educate and enlighten students on what they can do to minimize the risks of sexual assault. Basically, these girls rock it. When the four of us hang out, Kelly and I joke about being "the victim half" of our respective speaking duos.

It's all in good fun, of course. Lots of winks and nudges. The best thing about being a speaker is that you meet other speakers- and it's very cool to have friends that are also inspiring and- dare I say it- heroes.

Before AFLV, Gwenn and I were able to spend a couple of days in Los Angeles, where I got to say a temporary goodbye to another one of my favorite speaker friends, Ross Szabo. He speaks about mental health and what he went through as a teenager and young adult. His mission is to get people to recognize the glitches in their mental armor the same way they'd respond to a flesh wound; he's very effective. When we met through public speaking several years ago, Ross and I respected each others work but quickly developed a bowling feud...

I'd never met someone who'd challenged my lane supremacy the way Ross has. For five years, we traded victories and defeats on lanes that stretch symbolically from California to Virginia. So when I was in LA, I went to Venice to say goodbye as Ross and his wife head, Heidi, were prepping to head to Botswana for the Peace Corps for two years. We decided it was best to set our sporting feud aside, live our lives, then get back to it upon his return.

As you can see, the competitive spirits were still burning, each athlete trying to get a psychological edge, the way boxers do by going nose-to-nose at the pre-fight weigh-in. I'll miss ya, Ross.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

What happens when Shawn and Gwenn get to Boston? Wait- they had more adventures in Los Angeles, met more cool people? Holy smokes! Stay tuned for pt. 2 of this two-part blog entry!

Shawn on: **Shawn's Sick Days in 2010: 6** Shawn's book Decker's Daily Coffee

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