HIV Positive Student Denied by Private Boarding School

December 5, 2011 By Shawn Decker

The Milton Hershey School, a private boarding school that provides an educational opportunity for disadvantaged teenagers, has denied a potential student based solely on his HIV status. A lawsuit has been filed, and the story was given legs due to the lawsuit's timing- which was filed last week the day before World AIDS Day.

CNN picked up the story and interviewed the boy's lawyer.

The school released a statement explaining that they have to be concerned with the health of the rest of their students, explaining that sexual activity does occur on their premises and that 1,800 students would be put at risk. On Twitter and on Facebook, former students of Milton Hershey are coming to the school's defense. It's much like home team sports fans, who's only loyalty to a team is the fact they were born in the city the team plays out of. Some of the former students responses are so short-sighted: that the school can't be wrong because they learned there. The most laughable thing I saw on Twitter was someone posting that everyone is stupid to be up in arms about the school's decision, to the effect of, "It's not just a school- students have to LIVE there!"

It's not risky. This student is not a threat. The school's concern speaks volumes about their lack of sexual education on the premises. There is a fear of teenage behavior that is quite revealing, it's almost as if they are saying that teens are out of control and it's just too risky to have someone with HIV around. It's very sad. Of course I can relate to the boy because of my own experience of being denied schooling because of my HIV status. Even though his identity is anonymous at this point, the story is out there and I hope it's not too traumatizing for him.

My hope is that the Milton Hershey School accepts the science of the situation and changes their position. It would be a great learning experience for an institution that has provided such for so many. It's not too late- they could not only educate their current students about sexual health in the process, but also educate their former students on the virtues of compassion and the reality that we are all capable of making errors in judgement.

And correcting them.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/hiv-positive-student