



Stuarts Draft High's Cool

April 3, 2010 By [Shawn Decker](#)

Last fall I had the privilege of speaking at Stuarts Draft High School, [which I lovingly blogged about](#) in August. It was a rare opportunity to speak to high school students, and was facilitated thanks to one of my friends, Allison, who now teaches English there.

Well, a very cool thing happened afterward. The Leadership class I spoke to, roughly 25 students, didn't want the education to end with them. For the next few months, they discussed the need for the rest of the student body to hear what I had to say. And they all wanted to meet Gwenn, too! So an assembly was arranged and I headed over the mountain again, this time with my life partner at my side.

Before going, I asked my contact whether there were any restrictions as to what we could speak about. No sex and no condoms. On the ride over, Gwenn and I discussed our strategy- I'm not into getting people with good intentions in trouble, but at the same time part of my job description is doing the best I can to prevent anyone else from having to deal with the pet virus I've lived with for most of my life.

When we arrived, we were asked whether we were going to do question and answer. I gave a preview of the questions we normally get asked. "Oh, you can talk about anything if a student initiates with a question..." "Then yes, we're doing question and answer!" I had faith we'd get a sex question, and about four questions in, a student in the middle of the 700-plus students raised his hand.

"Uh, yeah, do you guys... like, engage in sexual intercourse?"

The auditorium broke out in an initial good-spirited laugh- which turned into applause. Students clapped because, I assume, it was probably the question at the top of everyone's mind. I joined in the applause, too, then Gwenn and I answered: yes, we have sex, and we explained how we do it safely by using protection correctly. From there, the hands kept going up until we ran out of time, and afterward teachers and students thanked us for coming, and the principal gave me a hug.

By the end of the week I had a ton of new Facebook friends from Stuarts Draft High School, just several miles down the road from where I got the news at age 11- that I was HIV positive- news that would alter the rest of my life. The whole experience at Stuarts Draft, from last fall to last week, is the manifestation of my greatest hope: that when I speak, the word will pass on from friend to friend, and the information will be applied by those who receive it, and that needless infections, risk-taking and ignorance about those who are living with HIV will slowly erode.

Thank you for this experience, Stuarts Draft High School. Thank you to the Leadership class, especially, for living up to that class' ideals, and for looking after your student body. It was an honor to come speak to your school- and for someone with a spotty memory, this is a visit that I will never forget.

Positively Yours,
Shawn



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