SUPERBLOG: World AIDS Week PT 1

December 10, 2007 By Shawn Decker

Very few blogs I write about are annointed with SUPERBLOG status. This is one of them...

Every year World AIDS Week takes me and Gwenn on a fabulous journey. If you've been reading my blog for a year, you'll remember that we visited some schools and then spent World AIDS Day 2006 staging a bed in at the Kenneth Cole store. (He tried to get us to dry hump.)

This year, there was no media stunt planned for World AIDS Day, but we did hit 7 colleges and universities in 10 days. Starting on Tuesday, November 27.

Brookdale Community College

We opted to drive to New Jersey for this noon program, since we'd be speaking again in Jersey later that night. Plus, we'd avoid the post-Thanksgiving delay flights that trudge up things on the Monday following Turkey Day.

Also, the boys in Bella Morte let us borrow their GPS system, which they named Becky and Gwenn quickly renamed Melissa. GPS is awesome, and it's particularly effective if you type in the right address.

But more on that later.

I was lame and forgot to get out my camera at Brookdale, but the response and turnout was a great way to kick off the 10-day jaunt. The student bookstore was there, and I signed some copies of My Pet Virus. Then people asked me, "Hey, where are the Don't Come bracelets?" I made a joke about having them available, which was a joke on top of joke that happened when I was talking about my bumbling foray into safe sex in high school. (Think Sting and tantric sex. No, don't think that, I'm sorry.)

The talk was at 11:30 AM, which is a strange time to speak but not entirely uncommon. We took advantage of waking up early and we got my niece a Hannah Montana-related Christmas gift. Gwenn realized that we had way too much time to kill after the talk, and wisely got our hotel room for another day, so we could sleep some more in the afternoon.

William Patterson University

There was no madman, and we made it out of the hotel safely, and on to the second talk of the day at William Patterson University. This is where I screwed up with Melissa. I put in the wrong street address,

and we ended up driving down what appeared to be a bike trail. The only thing missing, as we drove by houses wrapped in trees, was a machete hacking into my upper torso.
We got turned around, and made it to the venue at exactly start time. Which in college speaking terms is 15 minutes before go time. (Nothing ever starts on time, which is really nice in these situations.)

We'd been to WPU a few years before, and were informed that we were voted the educational session of the semester. Pretty cool! I wanted to show that we still had it, and that I wasn't past my educational and irreverant prime.

After dropping a dated American Pie reference, I struggled to regain the trust of the audience. Just kidding, a funny thing that did happen was when a male student asked how I'd inform the next girl that I was positive. I must really look like I'm young and in my prime, which made me happy. But, of course, Gwenn didn't really like that one so much. I'm laughing as I type this, because really, you get every question under the sun four times after speaking for a few years, but this one?

An Instant Classic!

The student bookstore rocked it again, and one girl ran to her room to get money to buy a book. I didn't know this until she returned, out of breath, and said, "Thank God you're still here!" I rewarded her tenacity by signing her name wrongly in the book. And I never do that! I'm so obnoxious about that, too. "L.... I.... S.....A?"
But on this night, I was having trouble with accuracy with the GPS and the spelling of names. But I did alright with the speaking. :O)

Virginia Tech

We left NJ and drove most of the way towards Virginia Tech, where we'd be speaking the next evening. Along the way, we stopped in Middlesex, PA at the Middlesex Diner. We've been there 5 or 6 times, and it rules. What's funny is that we're always there at 2 AM-ish, and someone is *always* vacuuming.

The next day, we tooled around Christiansburg and found a carrying case for Melissa, so she'd be safe when she was returned to the roughshod crew of Bella Morte. I gotta say, we really were starting to bond with the GPS, even after my directions screw up.

Then we spoke at Tech, which was nice because we'd never been there even though it's two hours from our house! Everyone was really nice, and afterwards I totally geeked out and was talking about Star Wars Monopoly. "Really! With my rules the game lasts less than two hours!" I also got a recommendation on Apples to Apples.

Emory & Henry
The day of the E&H talk we had a lot of time to kill, since it was only about 30 miles away from Tech. So we roamed around a bit and then ended up at another diner, The Master Chef. I expected one of the Iron Chefs to pop out of nowhere and slice me about the upper torso with a machete, but instead a nice guy (the Master Chef, perhaps?) instead sliced a grilled cheese in half and

served it to me.

Yum-tastic.

Sign in bathroom: “Our aim is to keep this bathroom clean: your aim would help.”
What was great about Emory & Henry was how many students turned out. 20% of the school’s 950-1000 students came to hear us speak! Here’s a photo of Gwenn before the talk, which is less impressive but you get the picture...

There were so many people crowded in that it got pretty warm. Near the beginning of the talk, I noticed a spider crawling around and made a little bit of a scene. I just imagined someone freaking out over it, so I carted the little guy off to safety. Karma points? Not sure.

After Emory & Henry we drove home, and arrived around 1 AM. One night at home before starting the second leg of our journey, flying out to speak in Minnesota and Arizona, then off to NYIT in Old Westbury, New York.

The bed felt good, but I knew there was more work to be done. Which is good, I like speaking about HIV/AIDS and I just so happen to think that Gwenn and I make a good team!

Plus, I knew that the next day, on the way to the airport, Gwenn and I were going to look for the ultimate Christmas sweater vest for me. I’d gotten one two years ago, and realized that I was ready to change things up. Plus, I’d spoken with a couple of students along the way who encouraged me to not give up and continue the search.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

no, the SUPERBLOG is not over!
Part 2 coming soon!... will Shawn and Gwenn survive World AIDS Day in a snowstorm in Minnesota? Will Shawn find the perfect holiday sweater vest in time for Christmas? Stay tuned to find out!

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