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# NYer of the Week



## Brooklyn Native Turns Troubled Story Into Inspirational Play

February 08, 2008

*A Brooklyn native who has turned his hardship into an honest play about living with HIV and performs it for city kids is the latest New Yorker of the Week. NY1's Roma Torre filed the following report.*

Freshmen at Cyprus Hills Collegiate Prep are getting a different kind of lesson – a life lesson.

The teenagers are learning from Rick Mueller, 53, an HIV-positive Brooklynite who has created a play based on his own experiences. He performs the work with professional actors about once a week at schools across the city.

He begins by telling his own story -- leaving nothing out.

"The way I made my living was to prostitute myself," said Mueller.

Mueller, who is gay, became HIV-positive in the early 1980s after what he calls "bad decisions" in his youth. The play is his way of giving students information so they can make better choices.

Students and educators say Mueller's honesty is what makes the show so different, and effective.

"They gave us more details on how you get HIV and like to be more careful," said student Jennifer Flores. "Usually when we get stuff like this, they don't give us all the details. They just say, 'be careful, use condoms.'"

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