

sonal qualities, they're personal expectations. And the former

manding and intense with the a \$5 million agency today.

The youth council now serves

and lesbian rights advocacy programs on his bicycle. On Friday,

—Michael Lanza



"I live very much for the moment. I enjoy everything."

For Rick Mueller, stopping the upward trend in infections in adolescents and teens is personal.

Mueller has lived with HIV for 25 years. To combat the problem, the writer, artist and playwright formed "HIV and Pride," a citywide education program, including several in Queens, that uses personal accounts and theatrical productions to

teach kids about HIV and how to prevent infection.

GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT

Mueller said his greatest achievement is being able to do what he loves every day. And that's a lot.

"I don't have to compromise too much," he said. "I've gotten to a good point."

But for the prolific artist and adventurer, helping prevent new HIV infections in teens holds a special place in his heart.

He's using his own experiences to prevent kids from making the same mistakes he did. His presentation includes an uncensored 30-minute introduction about his life with HIV and the choices that led him to infection.

The presentation also includes a 30-minute play written by Mueller, titled "A Message from Rhonda," that tells the story of three high-school students who contract HIV over the course of a school year.

Mueller wants to engage kids in ways that traditional lectures cannot.

"I try to get the kids to relate to this," Mueller said of his presentation. "To relate the things in my life to the things in their lives that are causing problems."

He's aiming to perform 200 presentations this school year and he hopes to reach 15,000 New York City teenagers when he's done.

Eventually, Mueller hopes the program will evolve, using art and theater to bring awareness to students about other health and welfare issues. He's forming a new organization called "Pride not Prejudice," which will address a host of issues like equality in addition to HIV awareness.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

When Mueller isn't out educating kids he's traveling the world as a cyclist. The avid adventurer has traveled from Europe to Africa, raising money for HIV and gay

Rick Mueller

OCCUPATION: HIV EDUCATOR, WRITER, PLAYWRIGHT AND CYCLIST/GULATIONS

and 275-mile marathon from Gettysburg, Pa. to Manhattan.

Mueller is also a photographer, poet and playwright. He writes daily poems posted on his Web site and is working on a new play he hopes to produce this year.

MOST OUTRAGEOUS ACT

Mueller relates stories of what some might consider an outrageous life to show kids how bad choices can have terrible consequences. He tells students about his own struggle with drugs and alcohol, his days of homelessness on the streets of San Francisco, and how he hit rock bottom as a male prostitute. By showing kids how irresponsible choices led to being infected with HIV, he hopes he can prevent them from traveling down the same paths he did.

—Michael Lanza