

## GROLL NETWORK 2

July, 2008

Dear Sir or Madam,

This year, the Groll Empowerment Network of the New York City Department of Education began a pilot program in its high schools, a presentation entitled **HIV and Pride** created by Rick Mueller. The presentation has three parts: a narrative of Mr. Mueller's experiences, a play and finally, an open discussion on health risks. There were twenty-five presentations in our schools representing widely diverse student populations in schools located in The Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens. One of the presentations was to a largely deaf student body.

The emphasis of the presentation is on the connection between self esteem and unwise health choices. Mr. Mueller has an unique style and approach which captures students' attention. As well, each presentation attracted teachers, guidance counselors and, in each school the principal of that school. School staff watched with students and were able to see for themselves the impact of this presentation. Students were impressed by Mr. Mueller's honesty and listened intently. The play is edgy and funny. The students would often crane their necks to see the performers and afterwards, when asked, students uniformly stated that the events in the play represented their reality. To many teachers' and guidance counselors' surprise, the conversation about health risks revealed that students had real questions they wanted answered. Schools used this knowledge for follow-up in classes. Principals were enthusiastic and requested repeat performances to, as one principal put it, "get the information to all my students" As one teacher told NY 1, she had never seen her students so intensely involved. Gary Beidleman, the principal of Foundations, requested **HIV and Pride** to return six times.

The Groll network supported Mr. Mueller by ensuring he received a vendor number and this has allowed **HIV and Pride** to continue presenting in further schools. The Groll network of schools has expanded and we are committed to working with Mr. Mueller to facilitate more performances of **HIV and Pride** for 2008-2009.

With the current increased infection rate among the 13-19 age group, we believe that further funding is critical and imperative as we also believe this will result in better and wiser health choices by our students who are presently at risk.

Sincerely,

**Heather True LaValle**

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Director of Student Services, Children First Network 2