

For information contact:
Scott Piro, Scott@mkpr.com
Patrick Kowalczyk, Patrick@mkpr.com
MKPR, 212.627.8098

CAN A WEB VIDEO INCREASE SAFER SEX AMONG GAY MEN?

GROUNDBREAKING ONLINE VIDEO SERIES REINVENTS

HIV PREVENTION FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

Grounded in Research, Dramatic Series Debuts Today at HIVBigDeal.org

www.hivbigdeal.org

New York (JUNE 11, 2008) – Josh is a young gay man living in Manhattan who had unprotected sex – and according to research, his story is startlingly effective in motivating other gay men to have safer sex and to get tested for HIV.

Josh is the fictional star of “HIV Is Still a Big Deal,” a groundbreaking online video series launching today at www.hivbigdeal.org. Reinventing HIV prevention for the digital age, the series combines the popularity and interactivity of online video with the power of research-based education methods designed to challenge misconceptions and prompt critical thinking

The first episode, “The Morning After,” was evaluated for its effectiveness in changing behavior using baseline and follow-up surveys with a group of 500 men. The results showed that the men were three times more likely to disclose their HIV status and about 1.5 times more likely to get tested for HIV three months after seeing the video.

Realistic and riveting, the first two episodes follow Josh as he deals with the social and health-related dilemmas gay men face – from online hookups and unprotected sex to disclosing HIV status and getting tested. New episodes will launch later this year.

The series is a unique collaboration between two project directors from the very different fields of epidemiology and learning theory. Dr. Mary Ann Chiasson is an epidemiologist and Vice President for Research and Evaluation with Public Health Solutions, one of the largest nonprofit organizations in New York City that merges research and action to prevent disease and improve community health. Dr. Francine Shuchat Shaw is a faculty member of the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development at New York University and a veteran researcher in learning theory and educational media.

“We’ve found that online video can be a powerful new intervention tool in the fight against HIV,” said Chiasson, who leads the Public Health Solutions Internet Research Group. “We are seeing that it can be as effective as one-on-one outreach, but with the Internet’s scope, it has the potential to reach and influence thousands of men.”

The website includes tools that allow viewers to easily share the videos with friends, as well as links to additional resources on HIV prevention, talking about HIV with partners, testing, and care. Chiasson said that as subsequent episodes are produced and broadcast online, Public Health Solutions will continue to study the effectiveness of the program.

The series was directed by documentary filmmaker Todd Ahlberg (“Meth,” “Hooked”), who has been creating innovative video content for the Internet since 1997. “Talking About HIV,” a short documentary on HIV by Ahlberg, will also be featured on the site.

In order to ensure widespread viewing of the series, the first episode of "HIV Is Still a Big Deal" is also available on YouTube, MySpace, and other popular sites that host online video.

About Public Health Solutions

Public Health Solutions is a nonprofit organization that develops, implements and advocates dynamic solutions to prevent disease and improve community health. Public Health Solutions conducts comprehensive research providing insight on public health issues, creates and manages community health programs, and provides services to other organizations to address public health challenges. Public Health Solutions was formerly known as Medical and Health Research Association of New York City, Inc. For more information, go to www.healthsolutions.org.

About Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development at New York University

Founded in 1890 as the School of Pedagogy, the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development was the first school of its kind in the United States. Today, NYU Steinhardt advances knowledge, creativity, and innovation at the crucial crossroads of human learning, culture, development, and well-being. Through rigorous research and education, the school’s faculty and students evaluate and redefine processes, practices, and policies in their respective fields and lead in an ever-changing world. For more information, go to steinhardt.nyu.edu.

###