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“Breaking the Silence” – Wrap it Up!

Seattle premiere of HIV-prevention video created by St. Lucian girls

**Dec. 1st, 7pm, @ 911 Media Arts Center
Dec. 4th, 7:30 pm, @ Seattle Art Museum**

This year in celebration of World AIDS Day, 911 Media Arts Center is proud to present the Seattle premiere of *Breaking the Silence*, an HIV-intervention video that is written, shot, directed, and edited by girls from the Caribbean island of St. Lucia. The *Breaking the Silence* video was created under the guidance of youth media instructors from 911 Media Arts Center working in collaboration with the St. Lucia Planned Parenthood Association and the St. Lucia Red Cross Society.

Thirteen teenage girls participated in the inaugural *Breaking the Silence* program in St. Lucia. The 30-minute educational video they created represents six weeks of intensive (free!) training in media literacy, digital video production, self-esteem, peer leadership, and HIV/AIDS prevention.

“I joined the program to help spread knowledge about HIV/AIDS,” says Camilia George of St. Joseph’s Convent Secondary School. “I learned a lot more than I bargained for. I learned how to relate to people, how to express my feelings, and how to deal with people. I also learned how to use a video camera and how to interview people...”

“They are the only group of young persons in St. Lucia to have ever pursued a program like this one,” explains Marva Edward, Youth Officer for the St. Lucia Red Cross. “For the girls to realize, ‘Hey, but I’m one of the very first St. Lucian females to actually handle the camera, to do the videotaping, do the editing, and put a video out in the world’ -- that is another kind of power we can give these girls, a power that boosts up their self-esteem and gives them independence.”

It is a little known fact that the Caribbean is the most AIDS-infected region in the world outside of Africa and that girls are the hardest-hit demographic. A UNICEF study shows that two out of three sexually active girls in the Caribbean think they have no risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. In St. Lucia, the reality is that 92% of the HIV-infected youth population is female (Ministry of Health Statistical Digest).

By providing a range of vocational skills, self-expression skills, and leadership skills, *Breaking the Silence* addresses the spread of HIV at its root causes. The *Breaking the Silence* video is also being used as an awareness-raising tool in classrooms, health centers, television audiences, and video festivals across the globe – drawing attention to the spread of HIV among youth in the Caribbean.

“You’ll find that young people, if they speak about AIDS, they’re just touching the edges of the topic. Now I could go back and teach my peers what I learned. This program gives us the opportunity to make a difference in our society,” says Juane St. Brice of Micoud Secondary Secondary School.

Nearly 5,000 miles separate Seattle and St. Lucia, but distance wasn’t enough to stop these two communities from joining forces in response to the global AIDS pandemic.

Please join us in recognition of World AIDS Day, December 1st, 2003.

More information is available at www.breakingthesilence.info.