



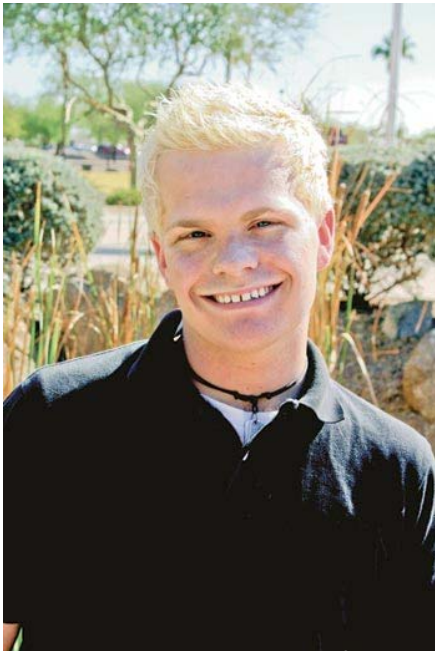
West Valley VIEW

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'What it means to be infected' EMCC recognizes World AIDS Day

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COREY BOYETTE, an Estrella Mountain Community College student, will speak about living with HIV at the Avondale campus today, in recognition of World AIDS Day.

At 20 years old, Corey Boyette speaks with a maturity and sense of purpose well beyond his years.

Acts of irresponsibility and some very dark hours in his young life are what brought him to this point, he said.

Boyette has allowed himself to be the face of HIV in his community, to show his peers that living recklessly comes with potentially fatal consequences.

"I was being stupid and didn't use protection," he said. "I was infected at the very young age of 16. I want people to realize what it means to be infected."

The Avondale resident will share his experience with the community today during World AIDS Day events at Estrella Mountain Community College, where he is a political science student.

"I'm going to be sharing statistics and my personal story," he said. "A lot of people have good questions and don't have a good resource to go to."

Jeanie Pierce, a music humanities instructor, helped organize the events at the college this week. Boyette is one of her students and the perfect speaker for the event, she said.

"Students can come and learn about the issue and how to protect themselves," she said. "Our campus has been great about addressing social issues."

Pierce has taught at the college for nine years and as a music teacher she likes to see the arts incorporated into social issues, she said.

"Sadly, the arts community has been devastated by the AIDS epidemic," Pierce said.

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is caused by human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). By killing cells in the immune system, HIV destroys the body's ability to fight infections and certain cancers. The most common ways the disease is known to spread is through the transmission of bodily fluids, typically during intercourse, or through the exchange of blood when sharing needles.

Information will be available free to the public at EMCC from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. today on the campus at Dysart and Thomas roads in Avondale. Boyette will speak at 11:30 a.m. Displays and information will be available again Wednesday and Thursday this week. A speaker from the Arizona Department of Health will talk at 11:30 a.m. Thursday and the musical film *Rent* will be screened at 1 p.m.

No magic pill

Boyette has spent a lot of time providing peer education and trying to help others understand the gravity of HIV and AIDS.

"A lot of youths are of the mindset that I can take a pill and take care of it. It's unfortunate," he said. "Infection rates are going back up. It's sad. I don't think youths see the death rate."

Boyette is acutely aware of the death rate. Even with the best medical care, most people who are infected do not live longer than 30 years with the disease.

More than 1 million Americans are living with HIV/AIDS today. Worldwide, the figure exceeds 33 million. The Centers for Disease Control reports 14,561 people in the United States died of the disease in 2007.

"HIV attacks so many portions of your body. In the beginning stages, I was quite sick," he said. "Right now I feel fine, just without the energy level I used to have. No one knows what the future holds."

No cure exists for HIV or AIDS. Boyette takes a daily medication that costs \$1,800 a month, he said. No one knows how much time they have left in life, Boyette said, adding he wants to make the most of his.

He is studying political science to hopefully get involved in policy writing for AIDS research and education.

"I want to make a difference,' he said. "I don't want to see more young people in my position."

Not many HIV/AIDS resources exist in the West Valley, Boyette said. He is happy his college makes an effort to recognize World AIDS Day, he said.

"It's all about education. We have to be realistic. We have to tell people if they are going to have sex to use protection," he said.

A reckless choice as a teenager changed the course of Boyette's life. Now, he does all he can to spread the word so other teens don't have their opportunities limited and lives cut short.

"He's a wonderful student and we're hoping to have a wonderful turnout to hear him speak," Pierce said.

For additional information on the disease, go to www.AIDS.gov.

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