

Cupcakes and STDs

How did Amber Hudson get students to ask for HIV testing?



Amber Hudson, Avita Community Partners

Amber Hudson, HIV Coordinator for Avita Community Partners, collaborated with Sarah Davis, Nurse Practitioner for the Women’s College of Brenau University in Gainesville to engage students in a creative HIV testing and education event they called “Cupcakes and STDs.”

The pair used games to engage students. One of the most popular - a combination of musical chairs and hot potato - was called Bugs. Each player chose a sealed bag and was told not to peek. As soon as the music started, participants began to pass their bags, trade with others, or keep their own. As soon as the music stopped they opened the bag in their hands. Some bags were empty. Others held one or more bugs - stuffed animals shaped like microbes, each representing a sexually transmitted disease. A lively discussion about transmission, prevention, and treatment followed the game.

A nearby cupcake station was stocked with different colored frosting and a variety of sprinkles. After decorating their cupcakes, students learned that each sprinkle and frosting represented a different STD. This also prompted conversations about transmission and prevention, including how to put on a condom.

Testing took place in a private area that included a waiting room which became a kind of hang-out for the students. Although they were welcome to go back to the games until their results were ready, most of the 27 who requested an HIV test stayed in the waiting room talking about the games saying things like, “I got herpes! I knew I should have traded!” and “I thought you could get HIV from kissing.” ■



Bugs: “stuffed animals” in the form of microbes for numerous sexually transmitted diseases.