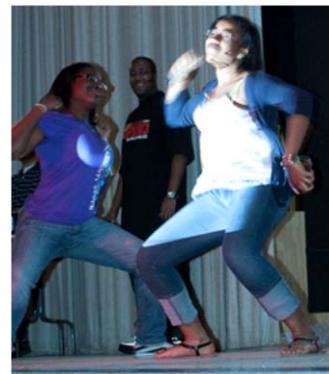


For the past five years, SUNY Downstate Medical Center has been organizing a yearly youth conference, under the Offices of Program Development and Physician Outreach. Our partners for this year's conference included the Parent Association of Midwood High School, Advocates for Youth and LIFEbeat. On Friday, May 7, over 500 youth attended the symposium that provided health talks, health information, health screenings, safer sex packs, gift cards/incentives and a healthy meal.

Upon entry, each youth received a knap sack with a free copy of *The Life Saver: A Healthy Youth Resource Guide*, a tool that will provide them with access to physicians, programs and resources in their community, a STOP Domestic Violence red hand fan with a description of healthy and unhealthy relationship, as well as a Certificate of Attendance.



The program opened with a popular DJ and MC who engages the youth by using elements from the latest Hip Hop music to present on the dangers of unprotected sex and other health concerns addressed that evening. This helped us to connect with the youth, allowing them to be receptive to the upcoming presentations and HIV testing. For example, the MC encouraged the young men in the audience to stand and make a pledge to never abuse a woman. He also asked 2 young men to do push-ups and 2 young ladies did dance movements to a popular song, showing them other ways to exercise.



Max Fleurival, CFT, SPN, HHP, MaxLife, presented on **Obesity and Diabetes**. His presentation stressed the importance of youth reducing their sugar intake and showed how sugar converts to fat. He focused on sugary drinks and foods they should avoid. Emblem Health provided the speaker. Ms. Tamar Harraway, Emblem Health, helped the student volunteer to see what it feels like to carry around 5 pounds.



The first session involved leading physicians from SUNY Downstate Medical Center and other experts presenting health talks on obesity and diabetes, STD/HIV prevention, as well as facilitating panel discussions on teen pregnancy and teen dating violence. Dr Dawn Morton-Rias, Professor and Dean College of Health Related Professions, SUNY Downstate and Phyllis White-Throne, the Public Information Manager, at Con Edison, also honored a youth for community service in the area of "Going Green". The Deputy Borough President, Yvonne Graham, also presented a proclamation to Adriana Bertini for her creative work in the fight against HIV and her efforts to make Brooklyn a safer place to live, work and raise a family.



The young attendees were asked to raise their STOP Domestic red hand fans if they felt that the different situations described by the **presenters from the NYC Healthy Relationship Training Academy, NYC Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence**, represented a warning sign/red flag.

Teen Dating Violence presentation involved the attendees raising their STOP Domestic Violence red hand fans (created specifically for the event) to help young people recognize pattern of behaviors that are used to gain power and control over a dating partner. These behaviors/red flags are not easily recognized by most teens and therefore are dismissed. sign/red flag.



Carlos A Walton, founder/CEO of APEX (African People Exalting, Inc.), facilitated the discussion on teen pregnancy with young men who were teen dads or elected to wait until marriage.



We also played post trivia-like game after each presentation to test the audience's listening skills. Gift cards and other prizes totaling \$200 and more were distributed to the young person who could answer their questions correctly. Many of the attendees stood and raised their hands to show they knew the answers and their eagerness to win these gifts/prizes.



Serious Talks about STDs: The Truth, The Myths and The Best Protection were conducted by:

Ray R. Ortiz, Public Health Advisor, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, School STD Testing and Education program for Urban Populations, S.T.E.P.U.P.

Kim Forrester-Dumont, MD, Assistant Professor in Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, SUNY Downstate

This outreach initiative is crucial to the community since many of our attendees live in neighborhoods (Bedford Stuyvesant, East New York, Crown Heights, Bushwick, Flatbush, and Brownsville) with the highest HIV seroprevalence rates. In addition to high rates of HIV, Central Brooklyn has elevated rates of other sexually transmitted diseases, such as chlamydia and gonorrhea. Upon entry, attendees were given “Cool” and “Got It” cards to illustrate the national statistics that 1 out of 4 teenagers will have an STI. Those with “Got It” cards represented those numbers.



Dr. Forrester-Dumont showed photos depicting STDs in the mouth, vagina, penis, anus, throat, fingers and other parts of the body. Many of the young attendees turned their face in horror and disgust. A few left the auditorium in fear and others held onto each other in amazement.

During the event, the young people were encouraged to take advantage of the free health screenings for HIV and other STDs. They were given a moderate incentive (metro card and free download for one of their favorite songs) for getting an HIV test. We were able to provide rapid HIV testing for almost 80 young people, while 160 young people were screened for chlamydia and gonorrhea.

Dr. Monica Sweeney, Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, set the tone for the Condom Couture HIV/AIDS Awareness/ Prevention Fashion Show by discussing the increasing HIV rates for young people 13-24 in Brooklyn and NYC as a whole. She encouraged them to delay sexual activities and stressed the importance of practicing safer sex. She also told them about the new NYC Condoms.

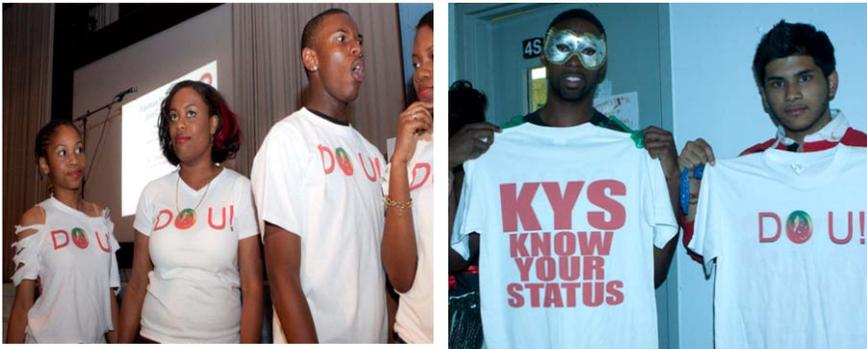


As part of the health presentation, we featured a method of educating youth about HIV/AIDS through fashion and music. With the collaboration of the Dr. Karen L. Gould, President of Brooklyn College, CUNY and Sameen Farooq, President of Brooklyn College AMSA, CUNY who mobilized other student organizations on campus to provide financial support for the “Artmaking with Condoms” project, we were able to extend an invitation to Brazilian artist Adriana Bertini since she is the pioneer in this type of artwork with condoms. She conducts her workshop with the help of Lara VainerSchucman who works alongside her in the field of prevention. Together they have developed a range of complimentary techniques in their work with at risk groups to enable creative environments through which participants can address their own behaviors and attitudes to issues including sexuality, sexual health, HIV and AIDS.

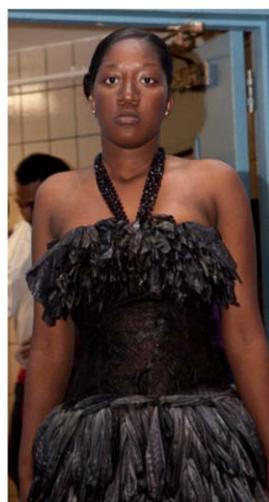
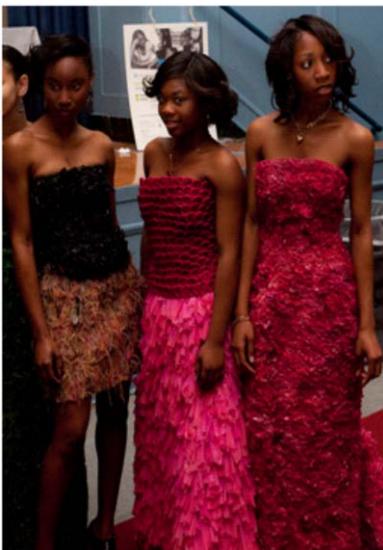
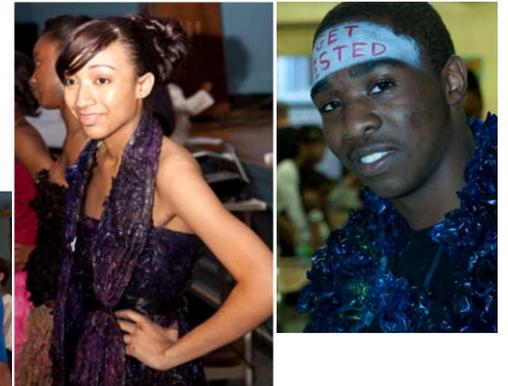




They arrived two weeks prior to the event to conduct an “Art Making with Condoms” workshop to young people from Brooklyn College and Midwood High School. Ms. Bertini also brought some of her garments and helped the young people to create their own masterpieces. The workshop helped the young student designers to raise awareness and inspired reflection about condom use. The students took their designs home and it stimulated conversation with their parents in the area of safer sex and HIV/STD. Ms. Bertini hopes that, by using the very material at the center of effort to prevent HIV/AIDS to create something new, she can foster discussion and challenge taboos.



The conference provided the platform to showcase the designs created from the two-week workshop and her couture collection to symposium attendees. Thus, the Condom Couture HIV/AIDS Awareness/Prevention Fashion Show was a special feature of this year's youth symposium. We used symbolism to raise HIV/AIDS awareness/prevention by encouraging youth through unique clothing designs and music with voice over messages: to promote abstinence, to delay sexual activities, to practice safer sex, to know their status, regardless of whether they think they are at risk, to not discriminate against those who are positive and to stop the spread of HIV. Models wore clothes made of condoms and t-shirts that stated “Do U! Know Your Status”.

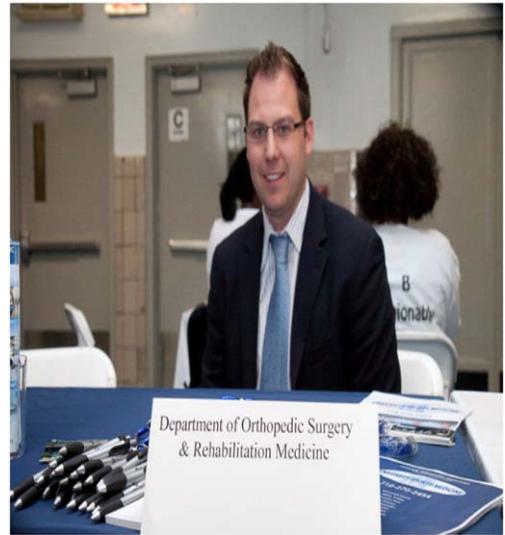




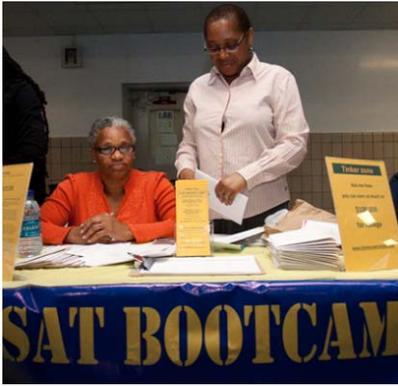
The second session allowed the youth the opportunity to network. During this period, federal, state and local agencies were available provide young people with the opportunity to ask their reproductive health questions/concerns, talk to other peers from these organizations, seek additional educational literature and obtain condoms and other premium items. Over 50 community-based organizations were on-hand to serve the multifaceted needs of today's youth in the areas of education/career development, fitness/weight loss, nutrition, environmental health, finance, mental health, STD/HIV prevention, substance abuse, domestic violence, managed care, skin, hair and dental care, and youth empowerment.

All attendees were also able to enjoy a complimentary healthy meal during the tabling session.









Prior to their departure, young people were exposed to the arts with performances by: Prince Michael opened with a rap song he wrote about safer sex. Sesame Flyers youth performers paid tribute to Michael Jackson, Steppers from Midwood High School and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity stomp out AIDS.

The Astronomical Kid showed that he is a rising young rapper who has a long future ahead of him.

The finale ended with a face-off between two marching bands; Brooklyn Express Program of Performing Arts and Yonkers Marching Cobras.



Attendees were also asked to complete an evaluation form in which they expressed their appreciation for the event and their support for the fashion show. Many of their responses revealed that the youth found the fashion show helpful in changing their perception of condoms and they now see condoms as clothing, making dressing for safer sex a natural part of their life. The fashion show helped many of them to see condoms as fashion for life.



As they exited the event, attendees received gift bags loaded with premium items donated by many generous sponsors. No teen left without feeling appreciated—which was reflected in almost 300 exit surveys we received.



Sponsors of the event included:

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Emblem Health

The Department of Health and Human Services' HIV/AIDS Regional Resource Network Program (RRNP)

Bronze Sponsorship

AstraZeneca

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DELBAC, Inc.

Gilead Sciences

Healthfirst

NYCDOHMH, Bureau of HIV/AIDS Prevention & Control

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