



## **GOLD Peer Education Development Agency**

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# **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Community service isn't a drag for bright young leaders**

Eleven bright and enthusiastic school leavers from across the Western Cape will be going back to school in 2009 to spread the message of HIV prevention and living positively. During the year they will be trained and mentored as young development practitioners, being skilled to become more employable and effective as young leaders.

The group is the first intake of the innovative Lead Peer Education school-leaving programme being piloted by GOLD Peer Education Development Agency. The group will now become Lead Peer Educators, having already spent 3 years as GOLD Peer Educators while at school, being trained in life skills and sharing key information around HIV and other youth issues with peers and younger children.

As Lead Peer Educators in the GOLD Peer Education Programme, they will be working with teenagers and younger learners to build resilience to HIV/AIDS and other youth risk factors in their communities. The GOLD peer education model uses the methodology of peer education which harnesses the influence that young people have with their peers to encourage youth to make informed choices and develop health-enhancing social norms.

The impact of the GOLD peer education programme on the lives of the 11 Lead Peer Educators is the main motivator for them choosing to continue with the programme. "I have grown so much because of peer education and want to share what I have learned with other youth," says Lindnkosi Ricardo Yoku from YFC in George. Tamlyn Meissenheimer from Ukuthasa in Somerset West says that before joining the GOLD programme in her school she was shy and would never speak in front of people, but as a peer educator she came out of her shell and is now comfortable addressing crowds. She feels she is part of something important and feels privileged to be able to help build her community this year.

"Peer education uses peer pressure as a positive force," explains GOLD Peer Education Development Agency (GOLD) CEO Susannah Farr. "Young opinion leaders are elected by their peers to become peer educators. The peer educators are mentored and trained in a range of subjects from self-development to sexual and reproductive health, gender and rights, communication, leadership and community development and they then share what they have learned with their peers."

“It’s a holistic approach to HIV prevention,” Susannah continues. “We believe that by investing in key individuals, we can multiply impact. To put it simply, individual change leads to group change which then leads to community change,”

GOLD works with and supports community organisations to roll out its peer education model in South Africa, Botswana and Zambia. 2009 will see 9000 peer educators being trained by 36 organisations.

The Lead Peer Educators will spend the year with the community organisations which trained them as peer educators: Youth for Christ in George and Knysna, Ukuthasa and Institute for Social Concerns in Somerset West and CAWO in Kraaifontein. They will receive training from GOLD and external partners over the course of the year and receive a modest stipend.

“The Lead Peer Educators will be part of a facilitator team delivering GOLD skills training sessions in the schools,” explains Susannah. “They will also help organise community upliftment activities and most importantly, help peer educators reach their peers – the ultimate beneficiaries of the peer education programme – with correct information and support.”

## **About GOLD**

GOLD Peer Education Development Agency (GOLD) is a dynamic non-profit organisation playing a key role in the transformation of under-served communities in Sub-Saharan Africa through the roll out of a long term adolescent peer education model.

GOLD is currently working with 36 community organisations to roll out the GOLD peer education model in 175 schools and community sites to over 9000 peer educators in the Western Cape, KZN and Mpumalanga provinces of South Africa and in Botswana and Zambia.

GOLD Peer Education Development Agency was awarded the 2007 Commonwealth Best Practice Award in the category Supporting Education in Difficult Circumstances.

<http://www.goldpe.org.za/>

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