

Young People Avoid Condoms and Risk AIDS Infection say National AIDS Programme Director Jones



Honourable Gilmo Williams

Young people around the world, including here in the Turks and Caicos Islands, continue to contract HIV at an alarming rate despite being well-informed about how to avoid the deadly disease.

This startling announcement was made by National AIDS Programme Director Cheryl Ann Jones as she addressed the audience at the ground-breaking ceremony for a new youth center off Leeward Highway behind Turks and Caicos First Insurance.

"Around half of all people who become infected with HIV do so before they are 25 and are killed by AIDS before they are 35," Mrs. Jones revealed. "In order to win the war against HIV our young people must take action."

Mrs. Jones applauded the Turks and Caicos AIDS Awareness Foundation for using its resources to construct a youth center.

"This center is going to be pivotal in the fight against AIDS here in Providenciales," she said. "Fact is many of our young people are having unprotected sex and it has a lot to do with fear."

Mrs. Jones explained in small islands such as the Turks and Caicos young people would rather not go into places to buy or obtain free condoms

because they are afraid that the persons working at those places will call their parents or guardians and tell them that their son or daughter is sexually active.

"It has happened," Mrs. Jones said. "So instead of risk[ing] being seen buying or obtaining free condoms from someone who may know them, our young people just don't bother at all. As a result, some of our young people become infected with AIDS."

Mrs. Jones said the youth center will provide young people with condoms, information about sex and confidential counseling in a comfortable environment.

"The center will be a place where they can come and obtain condoms," she said. "Abstinence is a message that will always be preached, but the fact is our young people are having sex and we have a responsibility to ensure that they have access to protection in an environment that they feel comfortable in."

The youth center will include counseling rooms, pool tables, a room where games are played, a basketball court, a meeting room, cafeteria and other venues.

Following Mrs. Jones remarks there was a moment of silence for those person who have died from and are living with AIDS.



The Governor, Richard Tauwhare, Honourable Gilmo Williams and Officials at the ground-breaking ceremony