

## ***"Celebrate Health"* anchors successful 13<sup>th</sup> HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaign at Polytechnic**

*"Guard against poor recreational and lifestyle choices" - Dr. Tjama Tjivikua*

*By Pedro Teca\**



*Celebrate Health* was the theme for this year's HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaign at the Polytechnic of Namibia, the 13<sup>th</sup> to be organized by the Office of the Dean of Students.

The Polytechnic Choir added a special sense of occasion to the official opening ceremony of the two-day event on Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2009 with their increasingly popular brand of gospel and traditional singing.

Commenting on the high risk profile young Namibians have been found to have in HIV/AIDS prevalence, the Rector of the Polytechnic, Dr. Tjama Tjivikua, in his welcoming address remarked that: "It is a sad reality that much of this risk is due to poor recreational or lifestyle choices."

Fortunately, Dr. Tjivikua added, the prevalence of the disease amongst Polytechnic students had been found to be very low. However, he said, "Without the effective, ongoing awareness campaign that we have at the Polytechnic, and the excellent

cooperation of our students, we could easily have had two thousand or more cases of HIV/AIDS infections at our institution."

Citing WHO figures for Namibia, Dr. Tjivikua pointed out that most Polytechnic students and staff belong to the high-risk age groups, those most likely to contract HIV/AIDS.

"It is a sad reality that much of this risk is due to poor recreational or lifestyle choices," he said, adding that: "The things we do - or fail to do - in our leisure time are all too often the root cause of HIV/AIDS infection ... it is equally important that each of us adopts, or recommits to, behavioural patterns and recreational and lifestyle choices that minimise our risk of contracting the deadly virus."

"We have to become more supportive of those living with HIV/AIDS in our community. These are the surest ways of preventing the disease from sowing more destruction than it already has, and preventing it from gaining a foothold on our campus," Dr. Tjivikua concluded.

Guest speaker Mr. Sam Ntelamo, Country Director of the Namibia Planned Parenthood Association (NAPPA) remarked that: "HIV/AIDS can only be tackled (effectively) once everyone takes their health and its maintenance seriously."

Mr. Ntelamo added that health was a broad concept and that students needed to be sensitized to how precious their health was. He praised the Polytechnic and the organisers of the event for the innovative thinking to this end that was evident in the organisation of this year's campaign.

The vote of thanks was delivered by Moses Haimbodi, President of the Student Representative Council (SRC), after which the crowd of students, staff members,

lecturers and many other guests set off on a health awareness walk around the Polytechnic campus, escorted by the City Police.

The Awareness Campaign continued with two days of health-related exhibitions and demonstrations at several colourful stalls erected by several corporate and non-governmental organizations in front of the old Lecture Building. Exhibitors included Namibia Medical Care (NMC), Cancer Association of Namibia, Namibia Planned Parenthood Association (NAPPA), Penduka TB, Positive Vibes, Nawa Life Trust, Virgin Active, BEN Namibia, Lirongo Eparu, and the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS.

The first day's campaign activities ended with a lively debate on HIV/AIDS and health by members of the Polytechnic Debating Society. The event was held at Auditorium One, and students and guests were treated to refreshments and free transport afterwards for students who did not live on campus.

The Awareness Campaign concluded with a gala evening of entertainment at the National Theatre of Namibia (NTN). The event was opened with Scripture Reading and prayer by Imelda Hoebes from *Campus Crusade for Christ*. The evening entertainment included a poem by Vanessa Sibanda, a Housing Committee Member responsible for Gender matters, a drama performance by Penduka TB, a cultural performance by Ondunga Cultural Group, a motivational address by the Director of Positive Vibes, Mr. David Lush, and a few musical delights by the Polytechnic Choir.

*\*Pedro Teca is a second-year Journalism and Communication Technology student at the Polytechnic. He is currently an intern in the Polytechnic's Department of Institutional Development and Fundraising.*

