

# PRESS RELEASE



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VANIER COLLEGE

821 Ste-Croix, Montréal QC H4L 3X9 Tel: 514.744.7500 Fax: 514.744.7505 info@vaniercollege.qc.ca www.vaniercollege.qc.ca

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## **Vanier College to involve young people in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa**

Vanier College is pleased to announce that the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is funding Vanier's project, *The Engagement of Youth in Canada's Combat against HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa*. CIDA will fund the project for two years, as part of its Stand Alone Public Engagement Fund (SAPEF.)

Vanier is involving its own students as well as high school students in the project that highlights the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa. The college chose the HIV/AIDS issue because of its devastating effects on Sub-Saharan Africa as well as its dangers for Canadian youth.

Over the next year Vanier College will initiate activities to inform and involve young people in the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa. These activities include the creation of a website to inform students of the issues, a World AIDS Day Conference on November 26, 2007, a mission to Malawi in January, 2008 by students so that they can later report to their fellow Vanier students the extent and effects of HIV/AIDS, training workshops for additional student leaders, and workshops given by these leaders to other Vanier students in the spring.

The following year will see even more action. Vanier students will create display material and train more student leaders to go out and make presentations in local high schools in the fall of 2008. It will also host a second World AIDS Day Conference in December, 2008 and launch an essay contest on Canada's participation in the combat against HIV/AIDS in Africa. Finally in March 2009 Vanier will invite a Canadian leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS to speak at an Awards Ceremony where the college will recognize the efforts of students who were especially active in the project and announce the winners of the essay contest.

"This international project offers many benefits to Vanier College," states Judy Macdonald, Coordinator of Support Services for Programs and International Education, at Vanier College. "Vanier students will not only become engaged in an important international development issue and pass on their knowledge to high school students, but they will also develop leadership and communication skills."



Sonali Srivastava, Vanier College International Projects Officer, is delighted with the reaction so far to the project. “The student and teacher response has been overwhelmingly positive!” says Sonali Srivastava. “The students are especially excited to have the chance to become leaders within the community and are primed to learn how to make a difference in the world. Our information sessions have been well attended and I've received many personal emails telling me why they're excited about the Malawi study trip.”

Macdonald foresees long term benefits as well. “Even once the project ends, we hope students will have been inspired to continue assisting Canada’s efforts in the fight against AIDS. We also hope this will be the first of many opportunities for Vanier to be involved in future international cooperation and training projects.”

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For information please contact:  
Marguerite Corriveau, Vanier Communications Officer  
Telephone: (514) 744-7500, ext. 7596  
Email: [marguerite.corriveau@vaniercollege.qc.ca](mailto:marguerite.corriveau@vaniercollege.qc.ca)