

# PRESS RELEASE



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## Vanier College Walks for Life and raises money to fight AIDS

Dressed in bright red T-shirts and waving the College banner, a group Vanier participants hit the streets of downtown Montreal on Sunday, September 21, in the annual Fahra Foundation *Walk for Life* aimed at raising awareness and money for HIV and AIDS in Quebec. This year Vanier raised more than \$1000 for the Foundation.

Made up of thirty-five Nursing students and faculty, as well as representatives from the International Education Office and their friends and families, the boisterous and enthusiastic Vanier contingency, marched along chanting, cheering, and urging support for the Foundation and AIDS research. This is the fourteenth year that Nurse Melodie Hicks has spearheaded Vanier participation in the walk and fundraising for the Foundation.

Vanier College is especially committed to raising awareness about AIDS. In 2007, the International Education Office launched *Vanier AIDS Action in Africa*, a CIDA-funded project focusing on HIV/AIDS, that aims to inform and get Vanier students and Montreal high school students involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa. As well, in January 2008, a group of Vanier students, faculty and staff travelled to Malawi in Africa to witness first-hand the devastating effects of this disease on that country. This fall, Vanier students will go into local high schools talk to students about the trip and tell them what they can do to help fight HIV/AIDS.

“Although Canada has more resources for those infected with HIV/AIDS,” indicates Melodie Hicks, “the reality is that living with this disease is not easy for anyone. Loss of one’s health, inability to earn an income, and social isolation caused by the stigma of AIDS, are issues that exist here too.”

“Furthermore,” she elaborates, “recent statistics indicate that people with AIDS who are no longer able to work, receive only \$800 a month in government assistance, to live on. You can imagine that given the cost of rent and food, that money doesn’t go a long way. That’s why the food banks set up by the Farha Foundation are so important. They are absolutely essential for survival.”

“I have been involved with Walk for Life for 14 years,” explains Melodie, “because I believe we must offer hope to the next generation and not stop the fight against HIV/AIDS. We must continue to provide education to prevent the spread of infection and to support research for a cure.”

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