

Hip Hop Artist Actor Common It's Your Sex Life

Written by Robert ID4184

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Hip hop artist and actor Common, in collaboration with It's Your (Sex) Life, a public information partnership between the Kaiser Family Foundation and MTV, and the Common Ground Foundation, with support from Youth Speaks, is launching "A Minute" – a new lyrics contest to encourage young people to get tested for HIV.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends routine HIV screening for all adults and adolescents (ages 13-64) in the United States. Through this new initiative, Hip Hop artist and actor Common, along with MTV and Kaiser are encouraging young people to take a minute to inform themselves and others about HIV testing.

The competition kicked off on MTV's TRL (Total Request Live) and is intended to engage and inspire not only the hip hop community but young people across the country to learn more about HIV and the importance of knowing your HIV status. The CDC estimates that among the more than one million people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States, approximately 1 in 4 do not know they are infected with the virus. The "A Minute" contest offers young people the opportunity to submit an original poem, lyrics, or writing that addresses why getting tested for HIV is important.

The winning entry will be performed by Common in a special public service announcement (PSA) that will premiere on National HIV Testing Day (June 27, 2008) and air throughout the summer on MTV2 and mtvU, MTV's college network, as well as be available on demand at www.itsyoursexlife.com. To learn more about the contest or apply, visit www.itsyoursexlife.com or www.aminutecontest.com.

"It's important to know your status by getting tested because HIV/AIDS is taking a lot of lives in our community and around the world. I had an uncle succumb to HIV, so I've personally felt the impact of the disease," said Grammy Award winning hip hop artist Common. "Your lyrics can really have an affect on people's lives and I've seen it happen."

"The stigma surrounding HIV remains a barrier to many people getting tested," said Tina Hoff, Vice President and Director of Entertainment Media Partnerships at the Kaiser Family Foundation. "By normalizing HIV testing, this contest seeks to make getting tested a mark of empowerment not shame."

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"This contest offers our audience an amazing way to bring their words to life – through Common's voice – and will serve as a powerful way to drive home the importance of getting tested," said Ian Rowe, VP of Public Affairs and Strategic Partnership, MTV. "Aside from being a groundbreaking artist and notable actor, Common has proven to be a true leader in the fight to break the stigma associated with HIV testing, and we're proud to partner with him on this cause."

Competition details:

* Write original lyrics (can be spoken word, poetry, reggae, indie...any musical voice that best represents your message).

* Entries must be one minute or less when performed.

* Entries must be submitted by March 27, 2008 and can be submitted in text, audio or video form. (Please include text with any audio or video entries.)

* To learn more about the competition, visit www.itsyoursexlife.com or www.aminutecontest.com

"This is a great opportunity for young people to speak directly to their peers about such a critical issue," said James Kass, Founder and Executive Director of Youth Speaks. "By speaking creatively about getting tested, youth can educate each other without preaching. That's what people respond to."