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## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## LOCAL HIV-POSITIVE YOUTH TRAVELS COAST TO COAST WITH NATIONAL HIV AWARENESS & TESTING CAMPAIGN

STATE COLLEGE, PA – Beginning on October 15, 2006 twenty one year old Christopher ‘Cree’ Gordon, a freshman at the University of Oregon and local Eugene resident will board a 45-foot, twelve person sleeper tour bus to embark on the ride of his life. As part of the groundbreaking nationwide youth driven initiative, ***Operation Get Tested; Infected Affected Real Stories Real People***, Gordon will travel across the U.S through 22 states, stopping 34 times with a team of 5 other HIV positive youth, staff and one reporter to humanize the face of HIV and provide opportunity for his peers to be tested for HIV.

*Operation Get Tested*, the latest outreach effort of the non-profit, national organization, ***Who’s Positive***, is a U.S mission led by youth, performed by youth and driven by youth to prevent and reduce HIV infection rates among their peers. The tour will empower, encourage and provide opportunity for youth to get tested at no cost at each of the stops. The 48-day tour will begin at New York University on October 15, National Latino HIV Awareness Day and end in Los Angeles, CA on December 1, World AIDS Day

As audience participants walk through the venue doors, they will receive a sealed hypothetical HIV test card that will reveal their own fate at the end of the 90-minute program. The audience is challenged to consider their own actions and behaviors while they listen to the HIV-positive youth tell their stories. Once the speakers are through illustrating the challenges of living with HIV/AIDS, the audience is given time to reflect upon the results of their own hypothetical HIV status on the test cards. An open forum will provide the opportunity for youth to discuss HIV/AIDS throughout this 90-minute program.

After learning he was HIV positive eight days before his twentieth birthday, Gordon made the decision to educate himself first and then to educate others. He hopes that sharing his story will help protect people from getting HIV. He said, “I speak out because I can use my youth to my advantage. Young people can put a young face on HIV and realize that it can happen to them too.”

Half of all new HIV infections in the U.S. occur in youth under age 25, and half of those infections occur in people under the age of 21. According to the HIV/AIDS resource, *The Body*, in 2003 an estimated 10,041 young people with AIDS died. It was these statistics and many more that spurred the national non-profit organization *Who’s Positive* to launch *Operation Get Tested*. Twenty-seven year old HIV positive founder and executive director Tom Donohue said, “This fresh, new approach to HIV prevention allows youth to talk to youth -- no statistics, no lectures, just stories. This tour will bring the next movement and discussion about HIV/AIDS towards youth, a place where discussion should have gone many, many years ago”

As a way for their communities to support this endeavor, *Who’s Positive* is providing the opportunity for hometown businesses, individuals and organizations to ‘sponsor’ their hometown speaker. \$2500 sponsorship supports a \$2000 honorarium as they travel nearly two months across the country and \$500 goes towards air travel to and from home. Local sponsorship will be recognized throughout the tour on the *Who’s Positive* website and profiles of each speaker.

-more-

CHRISTOPHER GORDON/2

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Working part-time at Abercrombie and Fitch and volunteering at the local HIV Alliance, Gordon plans get his bachelor's degree in Family and Human Services at the University of Oregon. He feels that the biggest problems facing HIV-positive people are the stigma attached with the disease, lack of education about HIV, and lack of funds allotted to research, treatment and medication. Gordon is grateful to be able to play an important role in changing these problems and hopes *Operation Get Tested* opens the eyes of all Americans.

*Who's Positive* is especially thankful to *OraSure Technologies*, the manufacturer of the OraQuick(R) ADVANCE(TM) Rapid HIV-1/2 Antibody Test and *Roche Pharmaceuticals* for supporting efforts to elevate disease awareness and encourage testing among America's youth through *Operation Get Tested*.

Founded in 2003, *Who's Positive* is a national non-profit organization which foregrounds the reality of living with HIV through first-hand accounts of young adults coping with the disease. In telling the stories of people living with HIV, *Who's Positive* hopes to reduce the transmission of HIV among teens and young adults - a population with one of the fastest growing infection rates.

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