

# HIV is More than 10 Minutes in Biology Class



This summer while many students spent their school break on family vacations, one student chose to spend some of her time volunteering at the Children's AIDS Fund International (CAFI). This incoming sophomore decided she wanted to learn more about HIV and

its worldwide impact .

After just a few days at CAFI she quickly realized that most of what she thought she knew about HIV was wrong.

*She explained, "This year in biology class, our teacher spoke about HIV for about 10 minutes. That was it."*

By working with CAFI staff and discussing the issues she learned that— contrary to her belief— **there is no pill or vaccine that can cure HIV.** She explained that like most of her classmates she believed, "Since HIV has been around forever and people are not dying anymore (in the US), it must not be a big deal."

Her thinking was that "HIV/AIDS is only a big deal in Africa. We don't need to worry about it here in the U.S." She also felt that way about malaria and other diseases she learned about in biology class. As she worked on different tasks and began reading about CAFI's work to help HIV impacted children

and families her opinion began to change.

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Reading about CAFI program clients, seeing their pictures and learning about their struggles to live with HIV/AIDS brought a different perspective and understanding. "I think the human interest stories are better than reading statistics" she said. "It makes the issue more real, because statistics are not people."

Her advice on motivating and mobilizing youth to get engaged in HIV/AIDS: If students and young adults are given the opportunity to help—especially if given a specific task to accomplish—they can make a difference by getting others to learn about the current state of global HIV/AIDS and join the effort to work toward a truly AIDS Free Generation.