

# Student expects trip to Kenya to be an 'eye-opener'

By **EMILYYATES**  
Special to the IFP

A Georgetown woman is headed overseas in August to raise awareness on an epidemic that killed 2 million people last year— HIV/AIDS.

"(HIV/AIDS) is still here, it's still a big issue," says 22-year-old Sarah Johnson, a health science student at University of Waterloo.

Johnson was one of five girls chosen from 150 interviewees at the university to make a trip to Kenya for the month of August in order to raise awareness to Kenyan communities about the severity and prevention of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).

The girls are trying to raise \$10,000 for their trip to cover airfare and accommodations. Aside from seeking local support, Johnson and the rest of the team have been putting together various fundraisers. They did a bottle drive after St. Patrick's Day and have held a bake sale. Johnson also intends to put together a garage sale, a silent auction and a barbecue.

Johnson not only wants to raise her share— \$2,500— but also additional dollars for items like toothbrushes and toys to distribute once she gets to Kenya.

"I know that at this time Haiti is on a lot of people's minds," she said. "I need



Georgetown's Sarah Johnson, right, and friend Kasi Shamukanathan, are among five university students selected to go to Kenya in August to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS.

*Submitted photo*

the word of HIV to be heard once again. The problem is not going away, but because we hear so much about it we tend to forget. I would like to remind people that HIV kills two million people in Africa each year, and 2.8 million worldwide. This epidemic affects 60 per cent of Africans, most of whom are women. The only way to end this epidemic is to educate the people to make good, healthy decisions."

The trip is organized through the University of Waterloo International Health Development Association (UWIHDA) in

co-ordination with International Volunteer HQ (IVHQ), an organization that provides cost-efficient volunteer opportunities internationally.

Johnson got involved with UWIHDA in her second year at university.

"I joined because I have a lot of passion for health issues," says Johnson, who will be graduating this year.

Any students interested in going on the trip were put through an extensive interview process and asked to fill out a number of questionnaires to gauge their interest and general preparedness for the trip.

"We're doing our research ourselves. We learn and then teach each other," says Johnson. The girls are preparing for this trip by holding meetings every two weeks at the University of Waterloo campus to educate themselves and each other on politics, HIV and customs of the Kenyan region. A guest speaker from Kenya is scheduled and they will hear from someone who went on a trip to Ghana through the same organization last year.

"For myself, I think it's going to be a big eye-opener," says Johnson. "We don't realize how lucky we are...I don't expect to change the country in four weeks, I hope to make a small impact on a couple of people, and hopefully then it can multiply."

If you want to donate money or items for the silent auction, you can contact Johnson at johnson\_sarah@live.ca.



## Good luck horse

Thousands turned out Sunday night to Mohawk Racetrack for their annual Family Night, featuring family-oriented activities including face-painting, pony rides, costumed characters, musical entertainment and special kids' meals. The evening culminated with a night of live racing and then fireworks. Here, Nicole Rothney, 10, of Georgetown is all smiles as she gives her stuffed animal (a horse, what else?) a good luck hug, as live racing began.

Graham Paine/Metroland West Media Group

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