

Name: Ashil Shah
Age: 18
Country : UK
Profession : Student

Ashil attended the 2007 Dance4Life Tour at his school, and has been inspired ever since to take action for Dance4Life. He organised the making of a film about HIV with his peers, in order to spread the message about the Dance4Life workshop to younger students at his school.



This year he is part of his school's Youth Action Team and he'll perform at the Dance4Life Event on 29th November.

"When Dance4Life came to my school I knew straight away that I wanted to be part of it. You can see where your energy can go. That's where I found my place. I wanted to be a part of Dance4Life. From the moment I saw the banner- Start Dancing Stop AIDS. Four words can have so much meaning, it's something you can't express but from inside you feel this is something that you should be doing now.

What works about Dance4Life are the people (from the Dance4Life School Tour). The energy from the female HIV positive speaker in the Tour was unbelievable. When she spoke about herself the whole school was in tears, which was truth through emotions. I can't believe she spoke in that way, it really shocked me. She really opened herself up, that was something that had a heartbeat in it. That was life. It was honest, nice.

My friends and I were thinking of a way to teach Dance4Life to young people, not just for 6th formers. We decided to do a video where people in school say what they think about HIV and how they can change the world to make this place a better place to live.

The idea is that pupils like us who take part in the Tour will be the teachers for the younger students.

We haven't showed the film to the whole school yet, but I think they are going to like it. Our teachers think the film idea is great. We are lucky to have very supportive teachers at my school and they give us the chance to be like adults and spread the Dance4Life message to the younger years.

I think peer education is the best way. Just like babies have their baby talk, teens have their own way of communicating with other teens. You don't need to grow up to make a difference; you can make a difference as a teen"



Brian's story

Name : Brian van Rooyen

Age : 17

Country : Zimbabwe

Profession : Student

Brian is 17 years old, lives in Zimbabwe, and is doing lower six at a boy's high school. He is a third born in family of five. He is currently not aware of his HIV status. However, he has had first hand experience with HIV. Brian's aunt had HIV which developed into AIDS and unfortunately later took her life.

Brian speaks about his experiences,

"Dance4Life made me realize that HIV is not only for the poor and the under privileged in society. HIV and AIDS affects all of us, no matter who you are or where you live. Dance4life helped me realize that as an individual there is something I can do to stop the spread of HIV. I am not powerless. An HIV free generation is possible if we all work together in this fight".



Name : Kiki Focke

Age : 20

Country : Netherlands

Profession : Student

Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Kiki Focke and I am 20 years old. I live in Arnhem and I am currently in my second year of studies at college.

I am particularly interested in travelling the world - discovering all of its hidden beauty, meeting new people and learning about new cultures – amazing! That's where I get my energy and inspiration from.

Two years ago, still at school, I was asked by a teacher if I would be interested in being a part of the Dance4Life Organization Team at our school. On hearing what Dance4Life did and what they stood for, I was immediately enthusiastic. Since then, I actively helped with warming the school up for Dance4Life – an easy task! Dance4Life came to the school with an inspiring and

educational show, giving us the knowledge and tools that we needed to take action ourselves. Because of this, we were able to raise substantial amounts of money for AIDS projects of STOP AIDS NOW! and we learnt how to inform the people around us about the serious issues of HIV and AIDS.

Since October 2007, Dance4Life has begun to play a much larger role in my life. My school was approached by Dance4Life with the question whether there were students who would be interested in taking part in the television programme "TeenSwap XL" (Puberruil XL). In this programme, you swap lives for a week with someone from another country. The theme of the swap was to be AIDS, so you had to have, either directly or indirectly, a connection with AIDS issues. Because of my efforts for Dance4Life, I was eligible to be considered.

Following a selection procedure that lasted a few weeks, I was chosen from a few hundred applicants to set off to an (as yet) unknown country. This was soon revealed to be CapeTown, South Africa. What I saw and experienced there has changed my outlook on life forever. I visited the townships, where I was able to talk with infected people with only a few weeks left to live. I spent a day with girls of my age who had been raped and were forced to live the rest of their lives with this terrible disease. I also visited an orphanage where abandoned, infected children ran towards me, open armed, crying "Mummy, Mummy". I witnessed with my own eyes why our help is so important. All of this affected me deeply, and I will remain a supporter of Dance4Life for as long as I can. Can I say the same for you ?

Name: Leo
Age: 21 years old
Country: Mexico
Profession: Educator

Leo's story

Leo is currently 21 years old and lives in Mexico City. He became interested in HIV and AIDS around the age of 15 while learning the basics about sexual health. He then realized that HIV was a threat to young people. About the same time, through dance activities, he realized the power dance had to break down barriers and unite people in one cause. He got tested for HIV after a risk situation and at the testing heard about Dance4Life and fell in love with the project: It gave him the chance to prevent other people from taking unnecessary risks.

Leo says about Dance4Life: "Dance4Life gave me the opportunity to get to know myself, to learn that in HIV there are no "bad actions", just life experiences. Participating in the Heart Connection Tour team that visits the schools has given me confidence in myself: now I know I have the power to make a change, both in my future and the future of those around me. Also, being a facilitator has taught me communications skills and increased my ability to communicate with the whole diversity of youth. I believe I am well prepared and preparing those around me to make the right decisions and push back HIV. That fills me with energy!"

Even though Leo is not HIV positive, he's very HIV sensitive: his partner lives with HIV and Leo has seen a new dimension on being careful and on appreciating life. As a facilitator, he knows he is making a difference because he has seen students touched and inspired by Dance4Life, eager to learn the Drill, and inviting their friends to listen to what he has to say. He feels his work is important to others while being fun, and he is still learning: To love life, to love his life and to love Dance4Life.



Name: Fatiha Rkhaoui
Age: 18 years old
Country: The Netherlands
Profession: student



Fatiha Rkhaoui is 18 years old and lives in Weert, a small town in the south of the Netherlands, the youngest of a family of eight. Her parents are originally from Morocco so Fatiha has the privilege of being raised in two cultures.

In 2006, Fatiha's school joined Dance4Life for the second time. This time, Fatiha decided to go all the way! She applied for a position in the team responsible for organizing Dance4Life within her school and soon became one of the driving forces! But this wasn't enough for Fatiha and after a successful closure of the school project she took part in a Dance4Life competition. The winner could go on a trip and visit HIV/AIDS projects somewhere on the globe. And guess what: Fatiha won, and left for Vietnam in the early spring of 2007!

During this trip she experienced both highs and lows. She was wowed by the extreme excitement and dedication of the Vietnamese youth, yet shocked by the ignorance and stigmatization she discovered as part of Vietnamese society. She met with social workers, peers, HIV positive Vietnamese people, former drug abusers and sex workers and got to hear their stories. It was a life changing experience, also because it made her realize just how important it is to have access to information, to strive for equality and to be non-judgmental.

Last, but certainly not least, Fatiha discovered that she's always taken the love and support of her family for granted but realized that this isn't so self-evident for lots of (young) people all over the world. She's a lot more aware of that since her involvement with Dance4Life, the people she met and the places she went. In short, Dance4Life made Fatiha's world a lot bigger!

Age: 14

Country: South Africa

Profession: Student

I live with grandparents and cousins. My mother lives in Clermont and my father passed away in 2004, shot at home during a robbery. I was very sad when my father passed away because he was the only one providing for all of us. My mother is not working; my grandfather is now taking care of me.

Since the beginning of this year when Dance4Life came to my school I have come to learn that **"I AM ME"**. When people say bad things I no longer compare myself with others because I now believe that there is no other one like me.

Early this year, I sat at home reading my Dance4Life Diary which contains useful information. This inspired me to join the local youth centre called "Siyanqoba" which means "We will conquer". Being more active has taught me that 'the life going forward is much quicker than the life going backwards'.

Being part of the Dance4Life program in my school has helped me deal with major challenges and problems in life. My aunt was HIV positive and eventually passed away of AIDS and my mother was taking care of her for a long time. Now my mother is HIV positive and this is something I don't like talking about because I always get emotional. My mother talks to me about her status and how I must make sure I don't get infected. I know that I have a short time with my mother. I wish she can also be part of the things and workshops that I am learning because they teach me about how to take life seriously and still have fun along the way. I really love the "VALUES Workshop" because it reassures me that wherever I go I should remain true, that "I AM A SOUTH AFRICAN" therefore I should never forget who I am, what I stand for and where I come from. My values keep me grounded, but most importantly they keep me away from HIV/AIDS.