



Helping Our Teen Girls In Real Life Situations, Inc. [HOTGIRLS]®
Improving the health and lives of black young women and girls

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HOTGIRLS, Inc. Press Release

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**HOTGIRLS, INC. LAUNCHES YOUNG WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP COUNCIL FOR
BLACK COLLEGE STUDENTS IN ATLANTA**

ATLANTA, Dec. 22, 2006 / --- Helping Our Teen Girls in Real Life Situations, Inc. (HOTGIRLS) (www.helpingourteengirls.org), a volunteer-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health of black young women and girls, announced today that it has been awarded a seed grant from Advocates for Youth's Young Women of Color Initiative to establish the HOTGIRLS Young Women's Leadership Council (YWLC) in Atlanta, Georgia. HOTGIRLS hopes to strengthen its efforts to prevent HIV infection and combat racial/ethnic health disparities among black young women and girls by training and partnering with black female college students to create culturally relevant and youth-friendly HIV prevention initiatives. The YWLC is a nine-month training and peer health education program for black female undergraduate students (freshmen, sophomores, and juniors) enrolled at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in Atlanta. The program will provide a unique opportunity for students to gain leadership experience and learn more about HIV/AIDS, women's and girls' health, racial/ethnic health disparities, and peer health education. According to Dr. Carla Stokes, HOTGIRLS' Executive Director and Founder, the goal of the YWLC is to train and support young black women in their efforts to take action to prevent HIV transmission and increase awareness about HIV/AIDS and related health issues. Throughout the program, YWLC members will receive support and direction from an advisory committee comprised of black female HIV prevention researchers, health educators, activists, and health providers.

Today, AIDS is the #1 cause of death for black women ages 25-34 in the United States; and half of all new infections in this country occur in young people under age 25. HIV and AIDS disproportionately affect black women—especially young black women and adolescent girls residing in the Southern region of the United States. Moreover, black women comprise the majority of AIDS cases among women in Atlanta; and 85% of reported AIDS cases from 1983-2001 among black heterosexual youth ages 13-19 years old in Georgia occurred among black girls. In addition, rates of HIV/AIDS are increasing at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the southeastern United States. To help stop the spread of HIV/AIDS in Atlanta, the YWLC will create an action plan and organize a week of educational activities in recognition of the second annual National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day in March 2007. Participants will also partner with teen girls participating in HOTGIRLS programs to organize an HIV/AIDS summit and develop an HIV prevention campaign designed to reach black young women and girls in the Atlanta metropolitan area and via the Web. "I started educating black youth about HIV/AIDS while volunteering as a peer educator during my freshman year at Spelman College—at a time when there were few opportunities for students to participate in public health training opportunities focusing on HIV/AIDS. I was inspired to create the YWLC to expand opportunities for black undergraduate students to receive hands-on training in HIV prevention and peer health education that will support their efforts to take action

to curtail the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the black community and to pursue careers in public health and HIV prevention,” said Stokes.

YWLC participants will be selected on a competitive basis. A program description and application materials are available on the HOTGIRLS web site: www.helpingourteengirls.org/ywlc.htm. The application deadline is 11:59 p.m. on **January 26, 2007**. Questions about the program should be directed to YWLCapp@helpingourteengirls.org.

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About HOTGIRLS

Based in Atlanta, GA, HOTGIRLS has designed and implemented innovative initiatives to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and educate black women and youth since its inception in 2001. HOTGIRLS launched Internet-based HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns in 2001 and 2002 in observance of *World AIDS Day*, *National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day*, and *National HIV Testing Day*. On *World AIDS Day* in 2003, the organization launched FIREGRL.com, a web site that educates and informs black teen girls and other youth about HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, street harassment, and other health issues (FIREGRL.com is under construction). Since 2004, the HOTGIRLS Girls’ Advisory Board has organized annual summits that provide an opportunity for youth of color to learn about HIV prevention, representations in the media and hip hop culture, and health and social justice issues. HOTGIRLS recently launched the FIREGRL Club, a unique program that trains teen girls (ages 13-18) in health education, technology, media literacy and production, and leadership through activism, at the John H. Harland Boys & Girls Club in Southwest Atlanta. In addition to securing seed funding for the Young Women’s Leadership Council, November 2006 marks HOTGIRLS’ 5-year anniversary. HOTGIRLS is an affiliate partner of the Black Women’s Health Imperative, a leading African American health education, research, advocacy and leadership development institution.

