

Local Promoter Brings HIV Awareness to a New Level

'We're All Not Infected, But We're All Affected.'

By Mary Damiano

Like the Blues Brothers, Angie Lee is on a mission from God.

The enthusiastic and energetic 30-year old, who works full time promoting the *Gettin' Busy Campaign*, is using her experience in music promotion to bring kids another message: Practice prevention.

Gettin' Busy is part of the Adolescent AIDS Program in New York. The local arm of *Gettin' Busy Social Marketing* comes under the umbrella of the University of Miami, in collaboration with the Department of Health. It has been in operation for about 18 months. The aim of *Gettin' Busy* is to educate and to promote what's available in the community so that people can make use of these services and live a healthier life.

Lee's background in promotion and public relations has helped bring the message of HIV awareness to a new level, a cool level that kids can relate to.

"When I went to the health department I started bringing different techniques," Lee says. "I started taking the artists I was promoting, and promoting their posters with the Department of Health logo HIV ribbon, trying to take HIV awareness to another level, doing it in an entertainment form."

Knowing that kids' attention spans are notoriously low, Lee wanted to make the program exciting and interesting for them so the message would get through. She was instrumental in bringing in celebrities, including actresses Cherry Johnson and Mari Morrow, who appeared at a Teen Summit Peer Education Training event at Gusman Hall. The celebrities interacted with the kids, and talked about HIV.

Some of the performers that Lee promotes with her company, Angie B. Promotions, also performed, including rap and hip-hop singer, *Midnite*, and soulful diva Silhouette. "We had entertainment so it wouldn't be boring for the kids," Lee says.

Feeling that the best way to reach kids is through music, Lee used the *Gettin' Busy* name as the title of a rap song. *Midnite* then came up with the concept. Lee got a local studio, Granda Entertainment, to donate the facilities and tracks to cut the song.

The *Gettin' Busy Campaign* then went global, attending the 13th International World AIDS Conference in Africa. Lee decided to bring another song to Africa, came up with the title, *Break the Silence*, and gave it to her artist Silhouette. Another song was born, and ever-resourceful Lee got that production donated as well. Silhouette performed the song at the conference.

"We went to Africa, I burned some CDs, gave them to a bunch of DJs, and went to some of the radio stations. I got on the radio, I had Silhouette sing live on the radio and talk about HIV. We did outreach, went out into the streets of South Africa and we showed them how we do outreach in the United States. We really made a big impact in South Africa," Lee says. "When we got back they sent us an e-mail that they had a DJ contest, and our *Gettin' Busy* song won the DJ contest. I felt really proud that we actually went there, and we left such a strong message that our song won a DJ contest in South Africa."

Then Lee turned her attention to a more local website. She made arrangements with New York to get her songs on the national website and then got to work locally. "I got a graphic designer here in Miami," Lee says. "And I directed him as to exactly what I wanted, how I wanted the website to be structured."

Lee's vision and meticulous direction paid off. The website, located at

www.gettinbusymiami.com, is easy to use, full of information in three languages, photos, and a schedule of activities. The songs, which are available on various CDs, are for sale through the website. All songs are donated and all the money goes back into the campaign. Lee has a dream about how to spend the proceeds from the CDs.

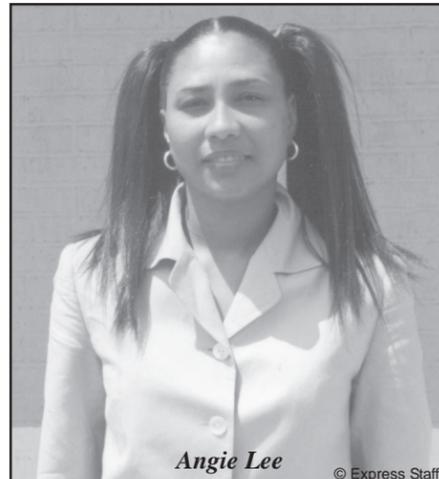
"My dream would be to sell enough CDs where I can build a home for kids who are living with HIV," says Lee. "That's what I would like to see."

Lee is constantly working to get *Gettin' Busy's* message out, adding more alliances, more places to get tested, going out into more neighborhoods, anything to spread the word.

"I'm trying to create awareness for everyone, whether you're white, black, Hispanic, gay, or lesbian. We have very little funding," Lee says. "When we first got started it was only three women doing it, Lorraine Pall, Crystal McDonald, and myself. It was just three women, and you'd be surprised what we got done with such a little bit of money, and such little time."

She went on to say, "We've got a website, peer education training, we got connected now with the Dade County School Board, so we're approved with them, we're

Gettin'
busy?



hooked up with juvenile justice judges. The program is working tremendously."

Lee is a 24/7 kind of woman. She talks fast because she has so much to say. Her enthusiasm and excitement for what she does

spills out in her voice. It's easy to believe that even when she sleeps her brain is still coming up with new ideas to get the message out.

"I'm always thinking how can I market *Gettin' Busy* and take it to another level," she says.

Lee believes her faith in God has enabled her to accomplish what she has with the *Gettin' Busy* campaign. "I can't do this by myself," she says. "I pray all the time and ask Him to give me help and strength and walk with me and talk with me. I'm here because He has a mission and a plan for me."

Many churches have asked *Gettin' Busy* to come in and work with their ministry. The idea of combining entertainment and HIV awareness in a package that is cool and easy to relate too is spreading.

Different cities such as Tampa have shown an interest in using Miami's concept. Lee would like to see the songs and message of *Gettin' Busy* go nationwide.

"We're going to keep going until there's a cure," Lee says. "Education is the key to anything and everything. If you're going to have sex, let's wrap it up. Safe sex or no sex."

"We're all not infected," Lee says. "But we're all effected."



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