

Vancouver Public Library Staff Dare to Be Cool and Wild, Hot and Sexy (or Just Goofy and Silly)

By Janet Tomkins.

On October 14, 2009, Vancouver Public Library staff exploded the common myth that people who work in libraries wear thick glasses, tweed skirts and hair-in-a-bun. Or in the case of men, dull suits. To prove that it isn't so, VPLers spent a day daring to be cool and wild, hot and sexy (or just goofy and silly) while raising money to support to small community-based initiatives in Africa that are working to address the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

National campaign

The effort was part of a national campaign by The Stephen Lewis Foundation. Noted Canadian politician, diplomat and humanitarian Stephen Lewis was the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa from June 2001 until the end of 2006. During that time he established a foundation to support community-based HIV/AIDS-related initiatives in Africa. The Foundation currently funds projects in 15 African countries, focusing on work with women, orphans, grandmothers caring for orphaned children, and associations of people living with HIV/AIDS.

In October 2009, the Stephen Lewis Foundation challenged Canadians to choose a dare and ask others to sponsor it in support of their work in Africa. Dares could be funny, sporty, healthy, bold, kind or any other of an almost limitless range of possibilities. Canadians dared to bungee jump, dye their hair, do stand-up comedy, give up television for a month and host dinner parties.

Daring staff

On October 14, as part of the national "dare" campaign, Vancouver Public Library staff dared to be cool and wild, hot and sexy (or just goofy and silly). Library people came to work dressed in an unfamiliar ways – some were flamboyant, others took leaps such as daring NOT to wear a tie to work for one day.

Colleagues, friends and family members responded by generously donating funds to The Stephen Lewis Foundation in support of the dare. Individual contributions ranged from \$5.00 to \$1000. Ultimately, the VPL effort succeeded in raising \$4023, exceeding its goal of \$3910.



Fernando Este, a librarian at the Vancouver Public Library, dares to wear leather!
Picture: Janet Tomkins

Students participate

Elsewhere in the Canadian library world, first-year Faculty of Information students at the University of Toronto raised money for the Stephen Lewis Foundation, similarly debunking the myth of horn-rimmed frumpy librarians by holding a get-down-and-boogie party for students, faculty, staff and friends. Student teams also took reference to the streets on



campus and at Nathan Phillips Square and ran a Winter Clothes Campaign along with designing an information package for homeless people.

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