



Al Roker and Deirdre Love

# Al Roker Lends Helping Hand to Local Youths

By Jeff Maisey

Today Show co-host and weatherman Al Roker will be the keynote speaker November 4 at the Westin Virginia Beach Town Center for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fundraiser and Gala benefiting Teens With a Purpose: The Movement.

Teens With a Purpose originated in 1996 with the mission of providing HIV & STD prevention services to teens considered at risk for contracting HIV/AIDS. It began as a ministry funded through the faith initiative grants awarded to The Basilica Of St. Mary of The Immaculate Conception's HIV/AIDS Ministry from 1996 – 2006 by Virginia Department of Health.

Founding and current executive director Deirdre A. Love has since expanded the organization's mission "to provide young people with a platform to empower their peers to use their voices, their energy, and their abilities to demonstrate the power to effect personal change, improve the lives of others, and foster a more knowledgeable community that is more invested in both themselves and each other using the arts and through peer-led programs and events. Emphasize education on and prevent of the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Provide a nonjudgmental, safe, environment for self expression for all young people

For Al Roker, there were several reasons to lend his celebrity status as a means to bring greater awareness to the cause.

"I've know Deirdre Love since high school and she's always been involved with great causes," said Roker. "She asked if I would be a part. Anything involving kids and trying to keep them safe to me is an investment. There's something about teens

talking to teens that I think makes a big difference."

Beyond Aides awareness, Teens With a Cause puts young men and women in a position of mentoring their peers on a broad range of issue such as bullying.


"I think these are things, especially bullying and peer pressure, that are issues we're seeing in the news," Roker said. "It is really important to address and get a handle on it. We can preach to our kids, but kids who have been there and can talk about it...that is probably just as powerful."

Roker believes the technological savvy youths are facing a much more difficult circumstance that when he was growing up.

"It's a different world today," he said. "When you were bullied 30 or 40 years ago it was by a small click and you have to avoid one kid. Now it can be a whole school or whole town via social media. To be perfectly honest, I wouldn't want to be growing up today. It's tough being a pre-teen and a teenager."

The impact of teens counseling other teens has a positive ripple effect in the community, and brought the organization's message of encouragement and hope into the lives of inner city youths. And that's a topic Al Roker is happy to focus on.

"This organization has grown pretty quickly in a relatively short period of time, and that speaks to its mission and its effectiveness. Everybody has to pick their passion. You just try to give back."

To attend the November 4 Gala and the "Imagine Me" theatrical performance November 5 at the Crispus Attucks Cultural Center, call 503-3509. 

## In other news...

### MOCA with Your Art

The Contemporary Art Center of Virginia (CACV) officially changed its name to Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). As a branding tool this makes sense considering the similarity to other such modern art museums like MOMA (Museum of Modern Art in New York City) and GOMA (Glasgow Modern Art in Scotland). We like it. MOCA will continue to present exceptional ex-

hibitions, programming and events. The upcoming Self-Portraits of Andy Warhol will undoubtedly be a reason to celebrate. Visit [www.VirginiaMOCA.org](http://www.VirginiaMOCA.org) to learn more.

### Local Arts Winners

Statewide organization Virginians for the Arts has announced its 2011 Dominion Arts Stars winners: Chrysler Museum of Art and Crispus Attucks Cultural Center won in the Hampton Roads region. Note of disclosure: Veer publisher Jeff Maisey was on the 4-member judging panel.

f

th

am

f