

TEXT:

As nasty Nellie Oleson on Little House on the Prairie, Alison Arngrim was the biggest bitch in the Midwest.

But she's really a woman with a heart as big as all outdoors, and a large part of it is reserved for people with AIDS.

Arngrim's on-screen husband, Steve Tracy, died of AIDS in 1986. He'd played the role of Percival for two years.

But she's really a woman with a heart as big as all outdoors, and a large part of it is reserved for people with AIDS.

Arngrim, 27, is now a volunteer counsellor with the AIDS Project Los Angeles. She admitted that when Tracy told her his diagnosis, she knew little about the virus.

``Eventually I think I would have gotten involved in AIDS, but not as soon," she said. ``When the Enquirer and the other press got a hold of the news Steve had AIDS, they were all calling me to find out if I had it because we kissed on TV. I didn't know."

But she learned quickly.

Today, Arngrim does regular education and information talks around L.A. Earlier this year she won the Friend Indeed Award for her volunteer work.

SHERIDAN STUDENTS

Yesterday, she spoke to a group of Sheridan College students.

Arngrim was in town after attending the Fifth International Conference on AIDS in Montreal.

She's extremely knowledgeable about AIDS and talks about the complicated side of the virus in easy-to-understand language.

She explained to the class how AIDS is transmitted and how to protect yourself, demonstrating how to use a condom by rolling it onto a banana.

With the help of Paul Maingot of the Toronto People with AIDS Foundation, Arngrim fielded questions and got rid of myths and fears.

``As time goes on, we're all going to know somebody with AIDS," Arngrim said.

And she warned the class to take a look at the U.S., where 54,000 people have already died of AIDS, and make sure we don't let it go that far.

``We have thousands of people in L.A. alone with AIDS," said Arngrim. ``Don't let that happen here."