

Feb. 1, 2010

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Media note: The Sarasota County Health Department and other community based organizations that are part of the HIV/AIDS Network of Southwest Florida will offer free HIV testing as part of the local observance of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. A schedule of those offerings is at the end of this release.

Local organizations mobilize to reduce HIV/AIDS in the black community

Local organizations working year-round to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS in the black community will offer free HIV education and testing at various locations in mid-February, as part of the 10th annual National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day observance. This year's theme, "HIV/AIDS—A Choice and a Lifestyle," focuses on educating, empowering and mobilizing the local black community in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

SISTAs, a group of women dedicated to reducing the risk of HIV/AIDS, will also perform a play about life in the black community from 6-8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Feb. 12-13, at the Robert L. Taylor Community Center, 1845 34th St., Sarasota. The play emphasizes the importance of healthy lifestyle choices and screening for HIV/AIDS. The grass-roots organization Second Chance-Last Opportunity is sponsoring the event.

"We are urging everyone to get educated about the way HIV/AIDS is spread, know your HIV status by getting tested, get involved in local community prevention efforts, and get treated if you are currently living with HIV or are newly diagnosed," said Dr. Lisa Merritt, executive director of the Multicultural Health Institute, which developed the Gatekeepers of Community Health Project. Through this effort, community volunteers are trained and equipped to provide HIV testing and education at community events and existing testing sites in the community.

"Working together with the HIV/AIDS Network of Southwest Florida, Second Chance-Last Opportunity, and other organizations in the community at a grass roots level, we can reduce the stigma and help folks to see that HIV infection and AIDS are now viewed by the medical community as a chronic disease, like Diabetes or high blood pressure," said Merritt.

AIDS can be treated with drugs to slow the progression of the disease; however, too often HIV status is diagnosed after the infection has progressed to the point of needing emergency room care. "Knowing your HIV status can help you get into medical treatment earlier, take steps to stay healthy, and keep from spreading the virus to others," said Sarasota County Health Department Medical Director Dr. William Heymann.

"HIV testing is fast and easy. If you have never been tested, or have had unprotected sex or shared a needle since your last test, now is the time to get an HIV test – it's the only way to be sure," said Merritt.

For more information on HIV testing opportunities, call the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 or visit the HANS Web site www.hivсарasota.org.

Free HIV testing/screening opportunities Feb. 7-17

SARASOTA

HIV/AIDS Healing Service* (HIV testing will not be available)

Sunday, Feb. 7; 11 a.m.-noon

True Vine Missionary Baptist Church
1947 31st St.

Contact: Bill Carter, 941-256-6620

Sponsoring Agency: Genesis Health Services

Wednesday, Feb. 10; 9 a.m.-noon

Genesis Health Services
3333 N. Washington Blvd.

Contact: Bill Carter, 941-256-6620

Sponsoring Agency: Genesis Health Services

Wednesday, Feb. 10; 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Sarasota County Health Department
2200 Ringling Blvd.

Contact: Gary Ervin, 941-861-2919

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

Wednesday, Feb. 10; 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Community AIDS Network (CAN)
1231 N. Tuttle Ave.

Contact: Serena Miller, 941-366-0461

Sponsoring Agency: Community AIDS Network

Wednesday, Feb. 10; 2–6 p.m.

ALSO Out Youth (ALSO)
1470 Boulevard of the Arts

Contact: Phillip Brooks, 941-951-2576

Sponsoring Agency: ALSO Out Youth (ALSO)

HIV educational information and focus groups with youth and parents* (HIV testing will not be available)

Wednesday, Feb. 10; 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Greater Hurst Chapel AME Church
2730 N. Links Ave.

Contact: Bill Carter, 941-256-6620

Sponsoring Agency: Genesis Health Services

Thursday, Feb. 11; 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Salvation Army (Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit)
1400 10th St.

Contact: Sarasota County Call Center, 941-861-5000

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

Thursday, Feb. 11; 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

First Step of Sarasota
1750 17th St., Building J2

Contact: Phillip Brooks, 941-552-2078

Sponsoring Agency: First Step of Sarasota

SARASOTA

Thursday, Feb. 11; 3-6 p.m.

Selby Goodwill

1781 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way

Contact: Bill Carter, 941-256-6620

Sponsoring Agency: Genesis Health Services and Multicultural Health Institute

Play Performance by SISTAs (reflecting life in the community and importance of health awareness and screening)* (HIV testing will not be available)

Friday and Saturday, Feb. 12 and 13; 6-8 p.m.

Robert L. Taylor Community Center

1845 34th St.

Contact: April Glasco, 941-360-8660

Sponsoring Agency: Second Chance Last Opportunity

Friday, Feb. 12; 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Ringling School of Art and Design

1133 Greensboro Lane

Contact: Serena Miller, 941-366-0461

Sponsoring Organization: Community AIDS Network, Project Unity Members with Ringling School of Art and Design

Monday, Feb. 15; 9:30 a.m.-noon

Sarasota Housing Authority (Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit)

1912 N. Orange Ave.

Contact: Sarasota County Call Center, 941-861-5000

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

Monday, Feb. 15; 1-3 p.m.

La Canasta Market (Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit)

2268 Fruitville Road

Contact: Sarasota County Call Center, 941-861-5000

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

LAUREL

Wednesday, Feb. 17; 1-5 p.m.

Sandra Sims Terry Community Center (Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit)

509 Collins Road

Contact: Sarasota County Call Center, 941-861-5000

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

NOKOMIS

Wednesday, Feb. 17; 9:30 a.m.-noon

The Community Pharmacy (Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit)

225 Tamiami Trail South

Contact: Sarasota County Call Center, 941-861-5000

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

VENICE

Wednesday, Feb. 10; 8 a.m.-noon and 1-4 p.m.

South County Family Health Center

19501 West Villages Parkway (formerly 8720 S. Tamiami Trail, Building B)

Contact: Terry Merrill, 941-861-3301

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

VENICE

Tuesday, Feb. 16; 9:30 a.m.-noon

Rialto Goodwill Center (Health in Motion Mobile Medical Unit)

650 S. Tamiami Trail

Contact: Sarasota County Call Center, 941-861-5000

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

Tuesday, Feb. 16; 1-3 p.m.

Habitat for Humanity Retail Store (Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit)

1400 Ogden Road

Contact: Sarasota County Call Center, 941-861-5000

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

NORTH PORT

Wednesday, Feb. 10; 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Wal-Mart Super Center (Health in Motion Mobile Medical Unit)

17000 Tamiami Trail

Contact: Sarasota County Call Center, 941-861-5000

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

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