

May 25, 2010

Media contact: Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852; cell: 941-302-1058;
dianne_shipley@doh.state.fl.us

MEDIA NOTE: Local health departments and other community-based organizations that are part of the HIV/AIDS Network of Southwest Florida (HANS) will offer free educational and HIV testing events as part of the first local observance of National Caribbean American HIV and AIDS Awareness Day. A schedule of those offerings is at the end of this release.

Free local health events planned for Caribbean Americans

Local organizations working year-round to reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS in Southwest Florida will be sponsoring many free events during the week of June 9-16 in observance of the first annual National Caribbean American HIV and AIDS Awareness Day.

There will be a free event outside the Columbia Restaurant at 411 St. Armands Circle on Friday, June 11, from 10 a.m.- 3 p.m. The event will feature live entertainment provided by a drummer. In addition, the Sarasota County Health Department's Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit will be on-site for HIV rapid testing (with preliminary test results available in 20 minutes) as well as syphilis and gonorrhea screenings, cholesterol and blood sugar testing and educational information. In addition, a Wings of Faith Health and Education Expo will take place on Saturday, June 12, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Koinonia Missionary Baptist Church, 409 N. Lime Ave., Sarasota. The Manatee County Health Department's HIV Prevention Van will be on hand for free HIV screening, testing and education. Diabetes (blood sugar) and prostate screening also will be available.

Dr. Garth Graham, the Jamaican-born head of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health, said "it is time to call all Caribbean communities in the U.S. to step up the fight against HIV/AIDS." This nationwide observance encourages Caribbean Americans to talk about HIV/AIDS, get tested and get into care if they have HIV, according to Dr. Graham. "For my family in Jamaica and my fellow Caribbean natives living in the U.S., no matter what your origin, this is an opportunity to take action against HIV," he added.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people of color now account for a greater proportion of HIV and AIDS cases reported. AIDS is the leading cause of death among adults under the age of 44.

Poor health, premature death, and HIV and AIDS have challenged the extended Caribbean-American family in the United States. The Caribbean region, which can include Latin America, Bahamas, Trinidad, Tobago, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Haiti, Barbados and the Dominican Republic, is second only to sub-Saharan Africa in its rate of HIV infection. These countries have a high rate of migration so the availability of HIV and AIDS data makes it difficult to gain a clear picture of each country's situation. However, in 2008, the United

Nations estimated over 260,000 persons are living with HIV and AIDS in the Caribbean, making it one of the leading causes of death in some of these countries, with Haiti being the worst affected.

An estimated 7,500 lives are lost each year to AIDS in Haiti with thousands of children orphaned by the epidemic. Prior to Haiti's earthquake, there were signs that HIV infection was decreasing partially as a result of changes in sexual behavior and increased condom use. Since the earthquake in Haiti, medication used in HIV prevention, treatment and care has been in short supply.

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," says Dr. Lisa Merritt, executive director of the Multicultural Health Institute which serves Manatee and Sarasota counties. "We urge Caribbean Americans to take time to learn more about HIV and AIDS, get tested and treated, and get involved in the events planned at one of the sites listed below."

Locally, the HIV/AIDS Network of Southwest Florida works to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS at the grass-roots community level. The group meets monthly to coordinate HIV and AIDS prevention and outreach services throughout the region. For more information on HIV testing opportunities, call 941-861-5000 or visit the HANS website at www.hivsarasota.org.

Free, locally sponsored HIV testing opportunities are listed below:

HIV/AIDS Network of Southwest Florida 2010 Caribbean American HIV AIDS Awareness Day events

SARASOTA

Free HIV testing and educational Information

Wednesday, June 9, 9 a.m.-noon

Genesis Health Clinic

3333 N. Washington Blvd.

Contact: William Carter, 941-256-6620 or
941-957-1970

Sponsoring Agency: Genesis Health Services

Free HIV testing and educational Information

Wednesday, June 9, and Friday, June 11, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Resurrection House

507 Kumquat Ct.

Contact: Carroll Hunter, 941-320-6030

Sponsoring Agency: Multicultural Health Institute

Free HIV testing and educational information

Wednesday, June 9, 5- 7 p.m.

Greater Hurst AME Chapel

2730 North Links Ave.

Contact: Carroll Hunter, 941-320-6030

Sponsoring Agency: Multicultural Health Institute

Free rapid HIV testing and educational information (preliminary test results available in 20 minutes) – other health screenings also available

Thursday, June 10, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Salvation Army

1400 Tenth St.

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

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

Free HIV testing and educational information

Thursday, June 10, 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

First Step of Sarasota

1750 – 17th Street, Suite K-2

Contact: 941-552-2078

Sponsoring Agency: First Step of Sarasota

Free HIV rapid Testing, syphilis and gonorrhea screenings; cholesterol and blood sugar testing, and educational information (preliminary HIV testing results available in 20 minutes)

Friday, June 11, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Columbia Restaurant

411 St. Armands Circle

Contact: Serena Miller, 941-366-0461

Sponsoring Agencies: Sarasota County Health Department, Community AIDS Network

Free HIV testing and blood sugar and prostate screening

Saturday, June 12, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Wings of Faith Health and Education Expo

Koinonia Missionary Baptist Church

409 N. Lime Ave.

Contact: Amy Lovejoy, 941-360-8660 or visit <http://faith2010.eventbrite.com>

Sponsoring Agencies: Newtown Community Health Action Team (CHAT),
Second Chance Last Opportunity and Manatee County Health Department

Free rapid HIV testing and educational information (preliminary test results available in 20 minutes) – other health screenings also available

Monday, June 14, 9:30 a.m.-noon

Orange Avenue Housing Authority property

1912 N. Orange Ave.

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

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

Free HIV testing and educational information

Tuesday, June 15, noon-3 p.m.

ALSO Out Youth

1470 Blvd. of the Arts

Contact: Sue Westcott, 941-951-2576

SPONSORING AGENCY: ALSO Out Youth

Free rapid HIV testing and educational information (preliminary test results available in 20 minutes)

Wednesday, June 16, 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Community AIDS Network
1231 North Tuttle Ave.
Contact: Serena Miller, 941-366-0461
Sponsoring Agency: Community AIDS Network

VENICE

Free HIV testing and educational information (walk-in persons; no appointments)

Thursday, June 10, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
South County Family Health Center
7820 S. Tamiami Trail, Building B-2
Contact: Joni DeMerse, 941-861-3301
Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

Free rapid HIV testing and educational information (preliminary test results available in 20 minutes) – other health screenings also available

Tuesday, June 15, 9:30 a.m.-noon
Rialto Goodwill Center
650 S. Tamiami Trail
Contact: Sarasota County Call Center, 941-861-5000
Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

LAUREL

Free rapid HIV testing and Educational information (preliminary test results available in 20 minutes) – other health screenings also available

Wednesday, June 16, 2-5 p.m.
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) food distribution program
Sandra Sims Terry Community Center
509 Collins Road
Contact: Sarasota County Call Center, 941-861-5000
Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

NOKOMIS

Free rapid HIV testing and educational information (preliminary test results available in 20 minutes) – other health screenings also available

Wednesday, June 16, 9:30 a.m.-noon
The Community Pharmacy of Sarasota County
225 Tamiami Trail S.
Contact: Sarasota County Call Center, 941-861-5000
Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

NORTH PORT

Free rapid HIV testing and educational information (preliminary test results available in 20 minutes) – other health screenings also available

Wednesday, June 9, 9:30 a.m.-noon

Walmart Supercenter

17000 Tamiami Trail

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

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

Free rapid HIV testing and educational information (preliminary test results available in 20 minutes) – other health screenings also available

Wednesday, June 9, 1-3 p.m.

Grande Court Apartments of North Port

5203 Greenwood Ave.

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

Sponsoring Agency: Sarasota County Health Department

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