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Project contacts: Candlelight Vigil, Reading of Names, and Spiritual Service:
The Gulfcoast Affirming Inter-faith Network (GAIN), 941-359-3236,
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Health Fair: Serena Miller, 941-366-0461, ext. 1042,
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World AIDS Day – Local events planned

Organizations from Sarasota and Manatee counties are uniting to continue the 22- year World AIDS Day tradition. Several local events will take place from Dec. 1-9 to include the World AIDS Day Ceremony and Candlelight Vigil, World AIDS Day Health Fair, and free HIV testing in the community.

The World AIDS Day Ceremony, an evening of reflection, music, inspiration and hope, which includes the reading of the names of those who lost their lives to AIDS, a candlelight vigil and spiritual service will take place on Wednesday, Dec. 1 beginning at 6:30 p.m. at St. Boniface Episcopal Church, 5615 Midnight Pass Road, in Sarasota (Siesta Key). The event will include guest speakers and performances by Diversity: The Voices of Sarasota and The Interfaith Festival Choir. The event is sponsored by The Gulfcoast Affirming Interfaith Network (GAIN).

The World AIDS Day Health Fair will take place on Saturday, Dec. 4 from 11a.m.-4 p.m. at Children's First, 1723 N. Orange Ave. in Sarasota. The event will feature a variety of health screenings as well as incentives for those who participate in the free HIV testing opportunities at the event. These include \$10 gift cards, and 30 minute phone cards. There will also be children's activities, free refreshments, music and other entertainment.

The sponsors of this event include Community AIDS Network, (CAN), Children's First, Hedges Pharmacy, Manatee County Health Department and the Sarasota County Health Department.

The day's events incorporate the theme, Universal Access and Human Rights. According to the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 5 people who are HIV positive do not know their HIV status. Health officials say that when people know their HIV status, they can make informed decisions about their health. "Our purpose in holding this health fair is to reduce the barriers to testing and screening by making these

services free and readily available,” said Serena Miller of Community AIDS Network who also serves as the HIV/AIDS Network of Southwest Florida (HANS) chair.

In addition, HANS member organizations will provide **free HIV testing** opportunities:

Wednesday, Dec. 1, 9 a.m.-noon

Genesis Health Services, Inc.

3333 N. Washington Blvd. (U.S. Highway 301), Sarasota

Contact: Bill Carter, 941-256-6620

Sponsoring Organization: Genesis Health Services

Wednesday, Dec. 1, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

The Salvation Army Family Store

1160 U.S. 41 Bypass South, Venice

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

Sponsoring Organization: Sarasota County Health Department (Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit)

Thursday, Dec. 2 and 9, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Salvation Army

1400 Tenth St., Sarasota

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

Sponsoring Organization: Sarasota County Health Department (Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit)

Friday, Dec. 3, 9:30 a.m.-noon

St. Nathaniel’s Episcopal Church

4200 S. Biscayne Drive, North Port

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

Sponsoring Organization: Sarasota County Health Department (Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit)

Thursday, Dec. 9, 3-6 p.m.

Selby Goodwill Jobs Center

1781 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Sarasota

Contact: Bill Carter, 941-256-6620

Sponsoring Organization: Multicultural Health Institute

For more information, visit the HIV/AIDS Network of Southwest Florida (HANS) website at www.hivsarasota.org, or call 941-359-3236 about the World AIDS Day Ceremony, or 941-366-0461, ext. 1042 about the health fair at Children’s First.