

Sept 11, 2009

Media contact: Crystal Bruce 941-861-2876; cell 941-806-8452;
crystal_bruce@doh.state.fl.us

MEDIA NOTE: The health department and other community-based organizations that are part of the HIV/AIDS Network of Sarasota County (HANS) will offer free HIV testing as part of the local observance of National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. A schedule of those events is at the end of this release.

National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day scheduled Sept. 27

HIV/AIDS Network of Sarasota County (HANS) joins with the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) in launching the first annual National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day on Sept. 27. Free HIV testing will be offered to the public at numerous locations as part of this national observance.

National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is a call to action that comes at time of heightened complacency, leading to a resurgence of new HIV infections among gay men.

"We are lucky to have such committed community organizations working on HIV prevention," said Stephen Warne, program coordinator. "These agencies are dedicated to reaching out to a population that has been largely underserved throughout the state."

- From 2001- 2006, men who have sex with men (MSM) across all racial and ethnic groups were the only transmission category with significant increases in HIV diagnoses.
- HIV incidence has been increasing steadily among gay and bisexual men since the early 1990s, consistent with increases in risk behavior, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV diagnoses among MSM.
- Gay men comprise over half of the total number of total HIV/AIDS cases in the United States.
- More than 500,000 gay men of all colors have died in the United States.

HANS has been working diligently on addressing the needs of gay, bisexual and questioning/curious men who are at risk for HIV. Last year in response to the "OUT IN THE OPEN" report, HANS created a survey to gauge Sarasota's safe-sex behaviors and are continuing to engage the MSM community with events such as Gay Men's HIV awareness day, World AIDS day and ongoing monthly meetings where all are welcome.

David White from the HANS Speakers' Bureau noted that "there are men in every community affected by HIV/AIDS.

“Guesswork won’t keep someone safe,” he added. “It’s important to protect yourself, get tested and take control of your own life.”

HIV testing is fast and easy. People have a choice of getting the OraSure® HIV test or the Rapid Ora Quick. OraSure® testing consists of placing a treated cotton pad resembling a toothbrush between a person’s cheek and gums for two minutes. It is easier than brushing your teeth. The Rapid Ora Quick HIV Test, a finger stick, provides preliminary results in only 20 minutes. Test results are always kept private and are not shared with anyone.

The Sarasota County Health Department offers additional recommendations to reduce risk for HIV infection:

- **Be safe:** The best way to prevent HIV is to abstain from having sex. If you do have sex, use a new condom every time. Do not share needles or syringes for any reason, whether to inject drugs (recreational or medical) or for tattoos and body piercing.
- **Talk about it:** Talk about sex and HIV with your partners. Find out when they were last tested for HIV and what their status was.
- **Talk to your doctors:** If you are sexually active, you should get tested for HIV at least once. Do not assume your doctor will ask you to be tested for HIV.

For more information on local HIV testing opportunities, call Serena Miller at 941-366-0461 or visit the HANS Web site, www.hivsarastoa.org.

Sarasota County National HIV Testing Day Activities offered Sept. 21-27

MONDAY, SEPT. 21

Free Rapid Ora Quick HIV Testing – Get results in 20 minutes

9:30 a.m.-noon

Orange Ave. Housing Authority Property – Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit
1912 N. Orange Ave., Sarasota

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

Sponsoring organization: Sarasota County Health Department

Free Rapid Ora Quick HIV Testing – Get results in 20 minutes

1-3 p.m.

La Canasta Market– Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit
2268 Fruitville Road, Sarasota

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

Sponsoring organization: Sarasota County Health Department

Payne Park - HIV testing available

7:30-11 p.m.

2100 East Laurel St., Sarasota

“MEN FROM THE MINDSHAFT” (theatrical play)

Contact: Serena Miller, 941-366-0461; serena@cccsrq.org

Sponsoring organization: Community AIDS Network

TUESDAY, SEPT. 22

Kirby's - HIV testing available

8 - 11 p.m.

2460 Stickney Point Road, Sarasota

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

Free Rapid Ora Quick HIV Testing – Get results in 20 minutes

9:30 a.m.-noon

Venice Goodwill Center Rialto– Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit

676 S. Tamiami Trail, Venice

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

Sponsoring organization: Sarasota County Health Department

Free Rapid Ora Quick HIV Testing – Get results in 20 minutes

1- 3 p.m.

Habitat for Humanity Retail Store– Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit

1757 280 Alligator Dr., Venice

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

Sponsoring organization: Sarasota County Health Department

Free Rapid Ora Quick HIV Testing – Get results in 20 minutes

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 23

Free Rapid Ora Quick HIV Testing – Get results in 20 minutes

9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Wal-Mart Super Center– Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit

17000 Tamiami Trail, North Port

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

Sponsoring organization: Sarasota County Health Department

Free Rapid Ora Quick HIV Testing – Get results in 20 minutes

1-3 p.m.

Riley Chase Apartments– Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit

1015 Panacea Blvd., North Port

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

Sponsoring organization: Sarasota County Health Department

ALSO Out Youth – Open House - HIV testing available

3-7 p.m.

1470 Blvd. of the Arts, Sarasota

Contact: Stephen Warne at 941-951-2576

Sponsoring organization: ALSO Out Youth

THURSDAY, SEPT. 24

Free Rapid HIV Testing (preliminary test results available in 20 minutes)

9:30 a.m.-noon

Salvation Army – Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit

1400 Tenth St., Sarasota

Contact: Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000
Sponsoring organization: Sarasota County Health Department

The Alley - HIV testing available

8-11 p.m.

2831 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota

Contact: Serena Miller; 941-366-0461; serena@cccsrq.org

Sponsoring organization: Community AIDS Network

FRIDAY, SEPT. 25

Selby Goodwill GoodNeighbor Center - HIV testing available

3-6 p.m.

1781 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Sarasota

Contact: Serena Miller; 941-366-0461; serena@cccsrq.org

Sponsoring organization: Community AIDS Network

SATURDAY, SEPT. 26

Polo Grill - HIV testing available

A Night of Red - \$25 at the door

8-11 p.m.

10670 Boardwalk Loop, Lakewood Ranch, Bradenton

Contact: Serena Miller; 941-366-0461; serena@cccsrq.org

Sponsoring organization: Community AIDS Network

SUNDAY, SEPT. 27

Cabana Inn – Tea Dance - HIV testing available

3-6 p.m.

2625 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota

Contact: Serena Miller; 941-366-0461; serena@cccsrq.org

Sponsoring organization: Community AIDS Network

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