



NEWS

Jean M. Hudson M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner of Health

For Immediate Release
November 30, 2011

Edward A. Diana
Orange County Executive

Press Contact
(845) 291-2332

Orange County Exec and Commissioner of Health Recognize World AIDS Day December 1 *Getting to Zero Focus of Awareness Activities*

Goshen – On December 1 each year, people around the world, and right here in Orange County, unite in the fight against HIV/AIDS with the recognition of World AIDS Day. Observed since 1988 and recognized with an annual Presidential Proclamation since 1995, World AIDS Day raises awareness of the AIDS pandemic caused by the spread of HIV infection, encourages support for those living with HIV, and commemorates the lives of those who have died from HIV/AIDS. Today it is estimated that more than one million people are living with HIV in the United States and more than half a million people have died from this disease. With more than 56,000 new HIV infections each year in the U.S., as reported by the CDC, we must join together and remember everyone who is infected and affected by this disease, encouraged Orange County Executive Edward A. Diana and Commissioner of Health Dr. Jean Hudson.

“This December 1 at noon, I hope everyone will take a moment out of their busy day, regardless of where they are, to remember those who have left us as a result of this awful disease, and to show support for all who are currently living with HIV/AIDS,” said Dr. Hudson. “In addition, we invite you to join AIDS –Related Community Services (ARCS) and Friends as we remember those who have gone before us and those who continue with us in the struggle. There will be a ceremony Thursday, December 1 from 11:30 am to 2:00 pm at the Neighborhood Business & Resource Center Building,” added Dr. Hudson. The program will be held on the street level entrance, next to the Fresh Start Café at 280 Broadway in Newburgh.

This year World AIDS Day activists will focus on the message *Getting to Zero*. By *Getting to Zero* advocates and supporters hope to remind people of the need to have “zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths.” Through a series of goals, resolutions and declarations adopted by Member Nations of the United Nations in order to “get to zero,” the world has a set of commitments, actions and goals to stop and reverse the spread of HIV and scale up towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, and care and support services.

HIV is a virus that attacks the body's immune system - the body's defense against diseases. When someone is described as living with HIV, they have the HIV virus in their body. A person is

-- MORE --

considered to have developed AIDS when the immune system is so weak it can no longer fight off a range of diseases with which it would normally cope. HIV is a fragile virus. It cannot live for very long outside the body. As a result, the virus is not transmitted through day-to-day activities such as shaking hands, hugging, or a casual kiss. One cannot become infected from a toilet seat, drinking fountain, doorknob, dishes, drinking glasses, food, pets, or a mosquito bite. Once HIV enters the body, the body starts to produce antibodies—substances the immune system creates after infection. Most HIV tests look for these antibodies rather than the virus itself. There are many different kinds of HIV tests, including rapid tests and home test kits. All HIV tests approved by the US Food and Drug Administration are very good at finding HIV antibodies. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov

At this point, there is no cure for HIV; however treatment can keep the virus under control and the immune system healthy. People on HIV treatment can live a healthy, active life, although they may experience side effects from the treatment. If HIV is diagnosed late, treatment may be less effective. Many places offer HIV testing: health departments, doctors' offices, hospitals, and sites specifically set up to provide HIV testing. The Orange County Department of Health offers free testing at the clinics listed below:

§ OCDOH at 141 Broadway, Newburgh
Thursdays 3- 5:00 pm

§ OCDOH at Fulton Street, Middletown
Fridays 1 - 3:00 pm

*For more information on free HIV testing call Orange County Department of Health at 568-5353.

Middletown Community Health Center also offers free HIV testing on Wednesdays from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm at their Port Jervis site located at 140 Hammond Avenue.

Information about HIV testing law is available at

http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids/testing/hiv_testing_law.htm

The law states that patients at Primary Care Physicians and Emergency Departments, age 13 – 64 years old, must be offered an HIV test. If the patient agrees to be tested, then they are tested in accordance with the law

For more information, please visit www.cdc.gov and www.worldaidscampaign.org. For more information on Orange County Department of health, please visit www.orangecountygov.com or www.healthyorange.com

####