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Free HIV and STI Screening Event Planned for National African American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

ST. LOUIS, MO – (February 6, 2019) In recognition of National African American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, the Saint Louis County Department of Public Health is hosting a free “Get Tested STL” sexual health screening event on Thursday, February 7, 2019:

NORTH CENTRAL COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER
4000 Jennings Station Road
Pine Lawn, MO 63121
8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

“Saint Louis County wants to create a favorable environment for both residents and visitors who need access to HIV education, prevention, care, and treatment services,” said Steve Stenger, County Executive for Saint Louis County.

National African American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day occurs every year on February 7th. It is a national observance dedicated to remembering lost loved ones, empowering communities, and protecting our future by calling on all African Americans to get educated, tested, treated, and involved with local HIV/AIDS community efforts.

“When the HIV epidemic first started in the ‘80s, it was considered a death sentence,” said Dr. Emily Doucette, co-director of the Saint Louis County Department of Public Health, “but with the biomedical advancements made since then, it can now be treated much more like a chronic disease. However, before treatment can begin, people need to know they have it. The sooner treatment is started, the better the prognosis. Testing is the key.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), AIDS affects 1.2 million people in the United States, and 1 in 8 of those people do not know they have it. To stop the spread of the virus, it is recommended that anyone who is sexually active get tested regularly.

Compared with other races and ethnicities, African Americans account for a higher proportion of new HIV diagnoses, those living with HIV, and those ever diagnosed with AIDS. Furthermore, African American communities continue to experience higher rates of other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) than other racial/ethnic communities in the United States, which significantly increase a person’s chance of getting and transmitting HIV.

National African American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day has four specific focal points: educate, test, involve, and treat. Both the City of St. Louis Department of Health and the Saint Louis County Department of Public Health are committed to all four points – educating African Americans about the basics of HIV/AIDS; offering free HIV and STI screening opportunities; involving African American communities in prevention efforts (especially those individuals who are sexually active or at a high risk of contracting HIV); and helping those living with HIV and those newly diagnosed with the virus get and stay connected to treatment and patient-centered care services.

Added Dr. Fredrick Echols, director of the Communicable Disease Control Services Division of the Saint Louis County Department of Public Health: “People from all walks of life can play an important role in the prevention and education efforts for HIV and other STIs. Regardless of sexual orientation, religious beliefs, age, income, or any other distinctions, lives are worth saving.”

Anyone unable to attend the free HIV screening events, but who is interested in obtaining free HIV testing and screening for other sexually transmitted infections should visit **www.STLCondoms.com**. It is a comprehensive resource for finding free educational materials, safer sex resources, and local resources for sexual health testing, treatment, and support.

For more information about National African American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/features/blackhivaidawareness/>

If you think you may have a sexually transmitted infection, it is recommended that you contact your health care provider.

Know Your Status, Get Tested STL!

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