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Celebrate World AIDS Day on December 1st

World AIDS Day 35: Remember and Commit

“The 35th commemoration of World AIDS Day is an opportunity to reflect on our journey, acknowledge and celebrate the progress we’ve made, and recognize the challenges remaining,” said Admiral Rachel L. Levine, MD, Assistant Secretary for Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “However, many people with HIV still lack access to essential healthcare and support services. We must strive to increase equitable access and outcomes for HIV testing, prevention, treatment, and care services. The battle is far from over.”

This year’s theme, “World AIDS Day 35: Remember and Commit,” pays tribute to those we have lost to HIV/AIDS. The impact of this epidemic has been profound, affecting individuals, families, and entire communities across the globe. Remembering the lives lost not only honors their memory but also emphasizes the urgency of our commitment to end the HIV epidemic.

The other aspect of this year’s theme, “Commit,” emphasizes our collective responsibility to act. Each one of us can make a difference, whether through working to improve health equity and ending the disparities in access to prevention, care, and treatment; promoting scientific education and awareness; or supporting organizations that work tirelessly to serve those at risk and living with HIV—we need a whole of society response to win.

Approximately 1.1 million people in the United States are living with HIV, and approximately 15 percent (or 1 in 7) of them are not aware they are infected. Finding out your status early, can help you live a longer and healthier life! World AIDS Day is an opportunity to show support by increasing HIV awareness, encouraging prevention and linkage to care, and speaking out against stigma.

People who are HIV+ can live a longer and healthier life by obtaining viral suppression. Viral suppression is achieved by medication adherence to reduce the amount of virus in one’s body. Viral suppression leads to an overall healthier life and reduces the chance of HIV transmission to others. Nationally, about 66% of people living with HIV are virally suppressed. In southern Illinois, 96% of clients who are enrolled in Southern Illinois HIV Care Connect are virally suppressed. With the support of case managers, clients are better equipped to navigate their healthcare needs.

Jackson County Health Department (JCHD) provides risk reduction options such as comprehensive STD/HIV testing for a low cost of $20. JCHD also provides PrEP, a one-a-day pill to help prevent the transmission of HIV

What can you do to observe World AIDS Day?

- The symbol for World AIDS Day is the red ribbon. Wear a red ribbon and/or offer red ribbons to others on December 1, to raise awareness. Many people also wear the color red to show their support.
- Use your social media accounts to encourage people to get an HIV test.
- Share information on how to access HIV Care and Treatment by visiting www.HIVcareconnect.com.
- Share information about Southern Illinois HIV Care Connect, located at Jackson County Health Department, which provides HIV primary medical care, medication, and support services. Visit us at www.jchdonline.org.
- Visit a virtual or in-person display of the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

Jackson County Health Department is dedicated to improving health outcomes and achieving health equity.

For more information visit our website at www.jchdonline.org or call (618) 684-3143 Ext. 155 for an appointment.