



South Carolina Department of Health
and Environmental Control

NEWS RELEASE

Division of Media Relations
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, S.C. 29201
(803) 898-3886
www.scdhec.gov/news

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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World AIDS Day events planned

COLUMBIA, S.C. – World AIDS Day events will be observed throughout South Carolina on Dec. 1, the state Department of Health and Environmental Control announced today.

“Free or low-cost rapid tests for HIV will be offered in many of DHEC’s county public health departments and community-based agencies to mark World AIDS Day,” said Wayne Duffus, M.D., acting division director and medical director of DHEC’s STD/HIV Division. “Many community-based groups will offer events and candlelight vigils to raise awareness of HIV issues and remember those who have died from AIDS.”

Dr. Duffus said the United States’ World AIDS Day theme for 2009, “Working Together,” stresses the importance of joining together to support the individuals, families and communities affected by this disease.

“14,000 people are known to be living with HIV/AIDS in South Carolina and DHEC estimates that one new HIV infection occurs in the state every nine hours,” Dr. Duffus said. “Every county in the state has residents living with HIV, but many South Carolinians remain unaware of their HIV status because they have not received an HIV test.”

According to Dr. Duffus, DHEC encourages public health and private partnerships throughout South Carolina to end the stigma of HIV and promote community support for HIV testing, prevention, care and treatment.

“We continue to partner closely with community-based organizations to deliver testing, prevention and care services to those most in need,” Dr. Duffus said. “We are also working in partnership with hospital emergency departments to promote routine HIV testing for early diagnosis.

“Most people in the early stages of HIV infection have no symptoms,” Dr. Duffus said. “Early diagnosis can link people to services that will help them stay healthy longer, benefit most from treatment, reduce costly hospital visits, and help prevent transmission to others.”

For more information about World AIDS Day events, including local HIV testing sites, call DHEC’s S.C. AIDS/STD Hotline at 1-800-322-AIDS (1-800-322-2437), or visit DHEC’s Web site at: <http://www.scdhec.gov/stdhiv>.

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For more information:

Tony Price – (803) 898-0338
E-mail – priceae@dhec.sc.gov
MNR0346