To: Local Newspaper

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RE: National HIV Testing Day

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<National HIV Testing Day>

National HIV Testing Day is an annual event meant to raise awareness of the importance of knowing one’s HIV status and encourage at-risk individuals to receive an HIV test. The Central Michigan District Health Department is offering HIV testing at no charge. Please participate in HIV testing day and know your status. We can’t do it alone. You may test confidentially or anonymously. Call the Isabella County office at 989-773-5921 ext. 8409, Clare County Office at 989-539-6731 ext 8211, and the Osceola County office at 231-832-5532 ext. 8511 to schedule a test.

Testing dates are as follows:
Clare County-Monday, June 28th, Isabella County-Tuesday, June 29th, Osceola County –Monday, June 28th, Arenac County-Tuesday, June 29th, and Gladwin County-June 29th.

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. This is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). HIV is different from most other viruses because it attacks the immune system. The immune system gives our bodies the ability to fight infections. HIV finds and destroys a type of white blood cell (T cells or CD4 cells) that the immune system must have to fight diseases.

Scientists identified a type of chimpanzee in West Africa as the source of HIV infection in humans. The virus most likely jumped to humans when humans hunted these chimpanzees for
meat and came into contact with their infected blood. Over several years, the virus slowly spread across Africa, and later into other parts of the world. HIV was first identified in the United States in 1981, after a number of men started getting sick with a rare type of cancer. It took several years for scientists to develop a test for the virus, to understand how HIV was transmitted between humans, and to determine what people could do to protect themselves.

HIV is spread through any sexual contact with an infected individual, through sharing needles with someone who has the virus, or through an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, during the birth process, or while breastfeeding.

After an exposure to the virus, it may take up to three to six months for the virus to be detected on an HIV test. It’s important for individuals to know whether or not they are HIV-infected so that they can protect the health of others as well as take steps to stay healthy themselves. Our goal is to help stop the spread of HIV through testing and counseling, and to help those who are infected to receive appropriate medical care and information on how to prevent the spread to others. When a person knows their status he/she will not be putting others at risk of infection, and we can then decrease the number of new HIV infections throughout the world.

The ways a person can protect him or herself from becoming infected is: to know their own HIV status, use appropriate methods of prevention when engaging in activities that may expose them (correct condom use for example), and to help educate others and encourage them to be tested.

Every 9 ½ minutes (on average), someone in the United States is infected with HIV. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states more than 1 million people in the United States are living with HIV, and of those 1 million people, 1 out of 5 do not know they are infected. By testing, people can find out if they are infected or not, and take control of their health. There are benefits to finding out if you are infected, one being the sooner you receive medical care, the greater your chances of staying healthier, longer. Medications are available today to slow down the
progression of the disease and enhance the quality of life, but despite these therapies, people with HIV still develop AIDS. More than 14,000 people with AIDS die each year in the United States.

HIV infection crosses into every age, nationality, race, etc. From 2003 through 2006, the estimated number of newly diagnosed HIV/AIDS cases decreased among children less than 14 years of age and increased in the 15 through 65 year age group. In 2006, the largest number of HIV/AIDS cases occurred among persons age 40-44 years.

This article has been brought to you by the Central Michigan District Health Department serving the residents of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon counties.

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Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov

Michigan HIV News

www.mihivnews.com