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## World AIDS Day

Stanton- World AIDS Day, which takes place each December 1<sup>st</sup>, draws attention to the worldwide human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic.

Started in 1988, World AIDS Day is an opportunity for public and private partners to join together to raise awareness about the status of the epidemic, fight prejudice, improve education, and encourage progress in HIV/AIDS prevention.

This year's theme, "Getting to Zero," aims for zero HIV infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS related deaths.

Since the first case of AIDS was reported 30 years ago, it has claimed the lives of nearly 30 million people worldwide, including 594,000 Americans. Approximately 50,000 new HIV infections are reported each year, with an estimated 19,500 Michigan residents currently living with the disease.

HIV, the virus that can lead to AIDS, damages a person's body by destroying specific cells, called T Cells, which are crucial in helping the body fight off diseases. AIDS is the late stage of HIV infection, when a person's immune system is severely damaged and has difficulty fighting diseases and certain cancers. While great strides have been made since the devastating disease was first discovered in 1981, much work remains.

So what can you do on December 1 to participate in World AIDS Day? You can wear a red ribbon to support AIDS awareness and to remind others to show their support and commitment. And, most importantly, if you think you may have been exposed to HIV, get tested. You may contact the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) regarding testing at:

Clinton County: 989-224-2195

Gratiot County: 989-875-3681

Montcalm County: 989-831-5237

For more information, including how HIV is spread, how it can be prevented, myths, and more, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

*Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.*

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