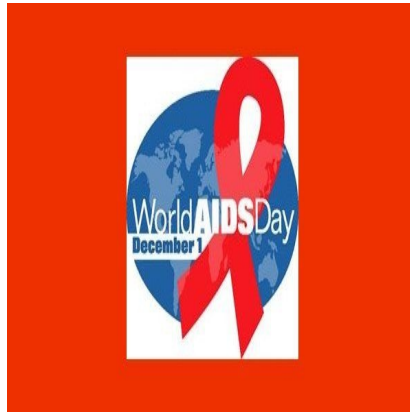




December 1st Is World AIDS Day



If you see someone wearing a red ribbon on the first day of December, it will be a reminder of World AIDS Day, an annual opportunity for the global community to come together to support the estimated 34 million individuals living with HIV, and to remember the millions who have died from the virus. The pandemic claimed more than 25 million lives between 1981 and 2007. The red ribbon is an international symbol of HIV awareness and support.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) established World AIDS Day 26 years ago, in 1988, the first global health day. Since then, scientific breakthroughs have provided treatments for those affected by HIV. There are also legal protections in place for HIV-positive people, as discrimination is met with education about the condition.

Despite medical and legal changes, AIDS continues to spread, and there is an urgent need for awareness and fundraising. World AIDS Day is a chance to initiate conversations about these needs, to inform people about how the virus is transmitted, how to protect one another, and how to treat infected individuals with respect and compassion.

The initiative is led by international organisations such as World AIDS Campaign, which provides resources for communities around the world to plan their own events. Of course, the hope is that awareness will be raised beyond the first of December, and many groups facilitate year-round participation. In the UK, for example, the National AIDS Trust (NAT) launched an interactive website called HIVaware.

In Washington, DC (USA), the White House will host an event at noon on 1 December to recognise World AIDS Day. The US government's theme for this year's observance is "Focus, Partner, Achieve: An AIDS-free Generation". In recognition of the subsets of the population involved in the HIV/AIDS community, AIDS.gov lists resources targeted to three groups: young adults; clinicians and service providers; and individuals at risk.

Young adults are urged to participate in the Facing AIDS photo-sharing initiative (#FacingAIDS), which is a way to promote discussion among younger generations. Social media figures prominently, with AIDS.gov pages on Facebook and Instagram, as well as Twitter tweets using #WAD2014.

Clinicians and social service providers are offered customisable posters to use in their work settings, and are encouraged to share the latest policy and research updates. At-risk individuals are targeted through awareness and outreach programs by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other agencies. The World AIDS Campaign website is also organised to inform and assist specific populations.

References: AIDS.gov, World AIDS Campaign

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