



JOHNSON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

dedicated to the prevention of disease and promotion of wellness for our community.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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WORLD AIDS DAY, DECEMBER 1, 2007

(OLATHE, KS – **NOVEMBER 30, 2007**) World AIDS Day, observed on December 1st each year, is dedicated to raising awareness of the AIDS pandemic caused by the spread of HIV infection. The concept of a World AIDS Day originated at the 1988 World Summit of Ministers of Health on Programmes for AIDS Prevention. Since then, it has been taken up by governments, international organizations and charities around the world.

The aim of World AIDS Day is to bring to people's attention the worldwide challenges and consequences of the epidemic - ultimately, preventing the spread of HIV and improving the lives of people living with the virus. The 2007 theme, "Leadership", highlights the need for innovation, vision and perseverance in the face of the AIDS challenge.

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is not a single disease. It is a spectrum of conditions that occur when a person's immune system is seriously damaged after years of attack by HIV. HIV damages the body's immune system and renders the body vulnerable to other diseases and infections. During advanced stages of HIV infection, a person may develop any of a number of opportunistic infections considered to be AIDS defining illnesses.

In 2007, the estimated number of persons living with HIV worldwide was 33.2 million and there were 2.1 million AIDS deaths. To date, AIDS has killed more than 25 million people, with an estimated 38.6 million people living with HIV, making it one of the most destructive epidemics in recorded history.

"To defeat HIV and AIDS, we need to reduce the number of people who become infected," states Dr. Leon Vinci, Health Director, Johnson County Public Health Department, "Prevention has remained the most effective defense against HIV/AIDS. A comprehensive approach must be used to prevent the further spread of HIV infection." In the United States, the rate of new HIV infections has slowed from more than 150,000 in the mid-1980s to around 40,000 per year now. The most reliable ways to avoid becoming infected with or transmitting HIV are:

- Abstain from sexual intercourse (i.e., oral, vaginal, or anal sex)
- Be in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner
- Abstain from sharing needles and/or syringes for nonprescription drugs

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