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DHEC News Release: DHEC encourages testing on World Aids Day

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 27, 2013

DHEC encourages testing on World Aids Day

COLUMBIA, S.C. - World AIDS Day is Dec. 1 and the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Controls is encouraging South Carolinians to get tested, the agency announced today.

More than 15,000 people are known to be living with HIV/AIDS in South Carolina, said Janet Tapp, director of DHEC's STD/HIV Division. 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.

The 2013 World AIDS Day theme is *Shared Responsibility: Strengthening Results for an AIDS-Free Generation*, emphasizing the efforts of public health and private partners to maximize resources available for prevention, treatment and care. According to Tapp, DHEC encourages partnerships across the private sector to efficiently identify, treat, and care for those living with the disease.

We continue to partner closely with community health centers, hospital emergency departments and other health care settings to promote routine HIV testing for early diagnosis, Tapp said. We also are continuing our partnerships with community-based organizations to deliver targeted services to those most in need.

We target our testing program to men and women in our community who are most at risk of having HIV, said Carmen Julious, executive director of PALSS, a Midlands-based AIDS services organization that partners with DHEC for HIV prevention. Through nontraditional service hours and sites, we give access to HIV testing to persons who might not otherwise get a test.

Most people in the early stages of HIV infection have no symptoms, Tapp 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, as well as 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 website at: <http://www.scdhec.gov/stdhiv>

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