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PARTNERS TEAM UP FOR CANDLELIGHT VIGIL AND FREE HIV TESTING

Department of Health, Munroe Regional Medical Center, YMCA and Black Nurses Rock remember victims, offer free testing

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Ocala, Fla.—A predawn candlelight vigil at the Frank DeLuca YMCA will kick off a day of AIDS awareness and education, as well as free HIV tests, marking World AIDS Day Dec. 1.

“We want to we raise awareness in the community and unite in the fight against HIV,” said Florida Department of Health in Marion County Health Officer Erin Hess. “One of the most important ways to prevent the spread of HIV is to get tested and know your status. New treatments, medications and support mean longer, healthier lives for people with HIV.”

“Munroe is proud to partner with the Florida Department of Health, the YMCA and the local Black Nurses Rock chapter and support this important event,” said Bob Moore, Munroe Regional Medical Center chief executive officer. “We encourage the community to take advantage of the HIV screening and valuable education being offered.”

“At the Y, health education is priority for us,” said Tracie Mosley, executive director of the Frank DeLuca YMCA Family Center. “We are happy to help spread awareness about community health issues in hopes of building a stronger community.”

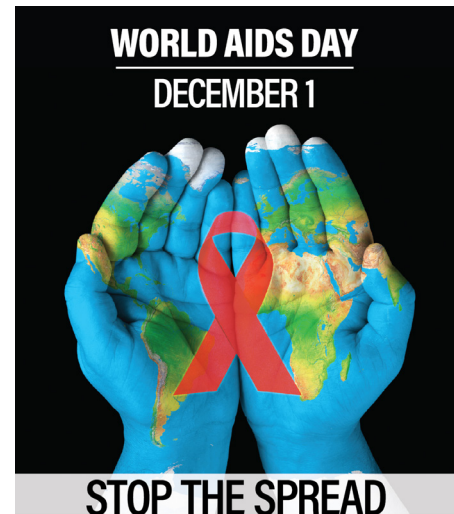
“We are excited to collaborate with community partners for this event and to help bring awareness to HIV/AIDS through education,” said Drumeka Rollerson, president of the Black Nurses Rock Ocala Chapter. “We want to help break down stigmas, get more people tested and educate them on prevention and treatment options.”

Marion County has already recorded 29 HIV infection cases in the first half of 2016, up from 20 during the same period in 2015. And while there were five reported AIDS cases in the first half of 2015, the first half of 2016 saw nine cases.

The Department of Health, Munroe Regional Medical Center, Frank DeLuca YMCA and Black Nurses Rock Ocala Chapter have partnered to remember victims and offer free testing.

Candlelight Vigil. At 6 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 1, a public candlelight vigil will give the community an opportunity to unite in the fight against HIV, show support for people living with HIV and to commemorate people who have died. The vigil will take place on the fields of the **Frank DeLuca YMCA**, 3200 SE 17th Street in Ocala.

Free Testing at the Y. Free rapid HIV testing will be available from **7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 1 at the Frank DeLuca YMCA**, 3200 SE 17th Street in Ocala. The rapid HIV test uses a



small blood **sample** from a finger prick and provides results in 15 minutes. All tests are free and results are confidential. Free lunch will be available for people who take the HIV test.

Education, Screening, and services. Workers will be available to check eligibility for the Florida HIV/AIDS Ryan White eligibility. The program can provide health care services to people living with HIV/AIDS. Education on HIV and AIDS will be offered, and lipid testing and other services will be available for a fee.

Other free testing locations available. Other community partners are offering free testing to mark World AIDS Day:

- **Nov. 29:** Walgreens Pharmacy, 807 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **Nov. 30:** Ramah Missionary Baptist Church, 10545 SE 58th Ave., Belleview, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- **Dec. 2:** Walgreens Pharmacy, 260 Marion Oaks Blvd., Ocala, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Department of Health Ocala facility, 1801 SE 32nd Ave., Ocala, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays. Other HIV testing is also available free of charge, using a mouth swab or larger blood samples.

World AIDS Day was the first ever global health day, held for the first time in 1988. We are grateful for the community partners who are joining us for this event, including Munroe Regional Medical Center, the Frank DeLuca YMCA, and the Black Nurses Rock Ocala Chapter.

For information on HIV testing and the World AIDS Day candlelight vigil call the department at 352-629-0137, ext. 2061.

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