



Mark J. Hendrickson
Director of Governmental Affairs

2222 "M" Street
Merced, CA 95340
(209) 385-7636
(209) 385-7673 Fax
www.co.merced.ca.us

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Katie Albertson, 209.385.7334

PUBLIC INVITED TO LOCAL WORLD AIDS DAY OBSERVANCES
World AIDS Day: A Day of Remembrance and a Call to Action

MERCED – The Merced County Department of Public Health (MCDPH), in collaboration with other service agencies and volunteer individuals, will be hosting a commemoration event on Monday, December 1, 2008 at Bob Hart Square, in Merced at 12:00 noon. The public is invited to this 20th annual World AIDS Day commemoration. Local statistics and information on available HIV/AIDS services will be available at this event. The theme of World AIDS Day 2008 is “Stop AIDS: Keep the Promise,” urging the world community and governments to stay true to the promises and commitments they have made to ending the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Merced County Health Officer Dr. Tim Livermore, urges Merced County residents to take some time on World AIDS Day to educate themselves about HIV/AIDS. “*While we have come a long ways since 1988, there is still much more to be done. The key to preventing the spread of HIV is to consistently follow the prevention guidelines and to help more individuals at high risk to become aware of their status,*” says Dr. Livermore. “*The Merced County Department of Public Health is committed to fighting the spread of infection by providing free HIV antibody testing and counseling. For those who test negative, knowing their HIV status can help them get the information they need to remain uninfected. For those who test positive, knowing their status can help them take steps to protect their health and that of their partners*”.

Since its inception in 1988, World AIDS Day has played an important role in raising awareness of HIV/AIDS and spurring collective action. World AIDS Day is sponsored by the World Health Organization each December 1st as a day of international observance of the global impact of HIV/AIDS, including remembering the more than 20 million people who have died of AIDS and the nearly 40 million people infected with HIV. It is estimated that more than 130 people in our local area are currently living with HIV/AIDS.

For more information on the upcoming World AIDS Day event, HIV antibody testing and other HIV/AIDS services in Merced County, call (209) 381-1023. For other helpful resources, please visit the California Department of Public Health, Office of AIDS website at www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/aids.

– 30 –

For more information regarding Merced County, please visit our website at www.co.merced.ca.us