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HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
NEWS RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 5, 2015

**For additional information contact:**

**Lisa LaPlante at (616) 632-7182 or [Lisa.LaPlante@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:Lisa.LaPlante@kentcountymi.gov)**

**HIV Education, Testing Opportunities in Honor of  
National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**

**GRAND RAPIDS** – Data from the Michigan Department of Community Health estimates that the rate of HIV is six times higher in the African American population than in the white population here in Kent County. Saturday, February 7, 2015 marks the 15<sup>th</sup> annual National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. Following this year's theme, *"I Am My Brother/Sister's Keeper: Fight HIV/AIDS!"* the Kent County Health Department is reminding everyone that we provide free testing by appointment. The quick, painless finger poke test gives you preliminary results in just 20 minutes.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 16 Black men and 1 in 32 Black women will be diagnosed with HIV infection during their lives. Blacks face the most severe burden of HIV and AIDS of any racial or ethnic group in the U.S. Black heterosexual women are more affected by HIV than women of any other race or ethnicity, and young black gay and bisexual men now account for more new infections than any other group in the U.S. In 2010 alone, approximately 16,188 Blacks were diagnosed with AIDS in the United States, this is a number that has slowly declined since 2007. Blacks only represent 12% to 14% of the population, but account for an estimated 44% of all new HIV infections among adults and adolescents (aged 13 years or older).

"HIV is a completely survivable infection when it is caught in time," says Adam London, Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. "Today, we know that early diagnosis and early treatment of HIV can lead to longer, healthier lives. Our Personal Health Services staff members are certified counselors who are friendly, non-judgmental and happy to answer all your questions." While awaiting test results, counselors will discuss your risk for infection and prevention methods.

HIV, Human Immunodeficiency Virus, attacks the cells that make up the body's immune system. HIV makes it difficult to fight off colds and other infections. Left untreated, HIV can develop into Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome – AIDS – which can be deadly. National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is an HIV testing and treatment initiative meant to encourage African Americans to get educated about HIV/AIDS.

Protect yourself from HIV. You can make an appointment for testing by calling 616.632.7171. For more information on Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, go to: [www.cdc.gov/Features/BlackHIVAIDSAwareness/](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/BlackHIVAIDSAwareness/).

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit [www.accesskent.com/health](http://www.accesskent.com/health).

700 FULLER AVE. NE, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503