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WORLD AIDS DAY EVENTS ON DEC. 4 IN PINELLAS TO FOCUS ON TESTING AND EDUCATION



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Unlike the 2020 World AIDS Day events that were virtual due to COVID-19 precautions, the 2021 events are returning to an in-person format that will bring educational sessions, testing, entertainment and more on a weekend date.

The Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County (DOH-Pinellas), as part of the Pinellas Planning Partnership (PPP), invites the community to the Access Granted: Ending the HIV Epidemic series of events from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on **Saturday, Dec. 4**, at the Enoch Davis Center, 1111 18th Ave. S., St. Petersburg.

The morning portion of the program will be from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. as the Ujima Men’s Collective Conference that focuses on “opportunities for Black same gender loving men...to develop life skills strategies in a non-threatening environment.” For information about the Ujima Men’s Collective, go to <https://www.ujimamen.net/history>.

The afternoon portion of the World AIDS Day will be a community awareness event from 1 to 4 p.m. There will

opportunities to find resources, get tested and enjoy food and performances. For event information, call (727) 320-3231 or go to the Ending the HIV epidemic’s website, www.pinellasehe.org.

In Pinellas, 2019 figures show a 53.2 percent rate in new diagnoses in the Black population. The rates among Latinx people are also higher at 29.2 percent. The highest rate is in men who have sex with men. Cases are also higher for those who use injectable drugs.

“We encourage anyone older than 13—regardless of risk—to get tested at least once for HIV/AIDS,” said Darius Lightsey, HIV/AIDS Program Coordinator (HAPC). “It will take a community effort to reduce our rates, and it all starts with education and testing.”

The PPP was established in 2011 to facilitate collaboration between HIV/AIDS service organizations in Pinellas County as a united effort.

DOH-Pinellas is also part of the Pinellas County Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) Planning Advisory Council that develops strategies to combat rising rates of HIV/AIDS in the county. The community is invited to take part in the discussions.

For information about DOH-Pinellas, go to www.PinellasHealth.com or call (727) 824-6900. Follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Nextdoor for the latest agency updates.

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