

# HIV NEWS

Volume 4 Issue 12

The University of Texas at San Antonio

## Upcoming Events

**December 1st- WORLD AIDS DAY**

**FREE TESTING: UC Denman 9:00am-2:00pm**

**EXPO: UC Paseo 10:00am-1:00pm**

**HIV Presentation: 2:30pm-3:30pm Mesquite Room**

## In This Issue

- World AIDS Day Around the World
- US Commitment to AIDS Pandemic
- HIV Trivia
- Zero Discrimination

WORLD  
AIDS  
DAY

2011

GETTING  
TO ZERO

## World AIDS Day and the Global response against HIV/AIDS

World AIDS Day was started in 1988 by James W. Bunn and Thomas Netter of the World Health Organization. Since its inception, it has become one of the most recognized international health days and a major opportunity to raise

awareness, remember those who died of AIDS related diseases, and celebrate victories such as increased access to treatment and prevention services.

Currently, the World AIDS Campaign organization is the leading international organization that plans and implements the yearly observance. Currently, over 190 countries around the globe participate in the observance. This year the theme of "Getting to Zero", Zero AIDS related deaths, Zero new infections, and Zero Discrimination will remain until 2015. Countries and organizations are recommended to choose a single theme or to incorporate all three themes.

China, for example, is choosing to focus their observance this year on "Zero AIDS related deaths" and have a more concentrated focus on scaling up coverage of treatment for people living with HIV and prevention measures for underserved areas.

Ukraine has chosen to focus on "Zero Discrimination" by beginning the 'Give AIDS the Red Card' campaign, which uses the uniting power of soccer to eliminate discrimination and the stigma of people with HIV. Soccer was chosen because it was a way to reach people regardless of age, social status, gender, religion or ethnicity. According to game regulations, if a player receives a red card they are dismissed from the game and are not able to play in the next game as well.

UTSA's Health Education Department of Student Health Services will be hosting events on November 30<sup>th</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup> that will observe all three themes but will have a special focus on "Zero Discrimination". **FREE mass HIV testing** will also be available on Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, at the UC Denman Room from 9:00am-2:00pm. Call 210-458-6428 for more information and for volunteer opportunities.

Source: UNAIDS.org

Written by: Amanda Graves, BS Ed, CHES

## US Commitment to AIDS Pandemic



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke at the National Institute of Health (NIH), regarding the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) on November 8th. Clinton addressed the US Government's commitment to usher in an "AIDS Free Generation" by vamping up efforts around the world.

An "AIDS Free Generation" would mean that no child would be born HIV positive. As this generation grows, they would be far less likely to contract the virus than the current generation. Secretary Clinton called on governments around the world to join forces to reach this goal and to strengthen the Global Fund to Fight AIDS.

In her speech Secretary Clinton outlined 3 main strategies to focus on in order to achieve an "AIDS Free Generation":

- **Prevent mother-to-child transmission**
  - Currently 1 in 7 new infections are from mother to child transmission.
- **Voluntary medical male circumcision**
  - Reduces the risk of female-to-male transmission by more than 60%.
- **Treatment as prevention**
  - Effective antiretroviral treatment (ART) of a person with HIV can lower the risk of transmission by 96%.

Since the speech the US had been praised for their commitment to fighting the AIDS pandemic and many public health officials are excited to work towards this goal.

Source: [pepfar.gov](http://pepfar.gov)

Written by: Amanda Graves, BS Ed, CHES



## HIV Trivia: Did you know?

In 1991 the first red ribbons emerged as a symbol for AIDS awareness, support, and remembrance. A group called the Visual AIDS Artists Caucus came together to design a visual symbol to demonstrate compassion for people living with HIV.

According to UNAIDS.org, "The artists chose to create a red ribbon to symbolize support and solidarity for people living with HIV and to remember those who have died from AIDS-related illnesses. The color red was chosen for its, "connection to blood and the idea of passion -- not only anger, but love, like a valentine," the Project founders say. The project was to become known as the Red Ribbon Project."

The 1991 Tony Awards in New York were the first time the Red Ribbons were seen by the media. Many actors supported the campaign on national TV by pinning a red ribbon on their lapels.

The symbol came to Europe on a mass scale in the spring of 1992, when more than 100,000 red ribbons were distributed during the Freddie Mercury AIDS Awareness Tribute Concert at Wembley stadium. More than one billion people in more than 70 countries worldwide watched the show on television. Throughout the nineties many celebrities wore red ribbons at public events, spreading the message further. Today the Red Ribbon has become an international symbol of support for people living with HIV and a call to end the stigma and prejudice surrounding AIDS. Wear yours with pride this World AIDS Day!

Source: UNAIDS.org

Written by: Amanda Graves, BS Ed, CHES

# HIV NEWS

Volume 4 Issue 12

The University of Texas at San Antonio



## World AIDS Day Events!

**Wednesday November 30th**

**UCPC Coffee House In Honor of World AIDS Day**  
8pm– 9pm Ski Lodge

**Thursday December 1st**

**World AIDS Day Expo: 10am-1pm UC Paseo**

**FREE Mass HIV Testing: 9am-2pm UC Denman**

**Getting to Zero: An interactive presentation about**

**HIV/AIDS in young America: 2:30pm-3:30pm Mesquite Room**

## HIV Stigma and Discrimination: Let's get to Zero!

Written by: Tonantzin Juarez Vazquez, B.A.



The Zero Discrimination theme plays a pivotal role as part of the Getting to Zero World AIDS Day campaign.

Unfortunately HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination exists worldwide. It manifests itself in many different ways across countries, cultures, communities, religious entities and individuals. It may also occur together with other forms of discrimination such as racism and homophobia or directed

towards groups of people who have been stigmatized for what many consider socially unacceptable practices such as prostitution and drug use.

The problem is that stigma makes it not only difficult for HIV positive individuals to come to terms with their status and manage their illness on a personal level; but it interferes with the worldwide actions to fight the AIDS pandemic. For example, at a national level, stigma associated with HIV may deter government offices from taking effective and necessary steps to fight the epidemic at their entity. On the personal level, it makes individuals reluctant and even embarrassed to get information regarding HIV/AIDS, get HIV tested and seek treatment or care. People don't get tested because they are afraid of a positive diagnosis and the negative consequences they predict will happen. Examples of these may include rejection from loved ones and being ostracized from their community. The misinformation that exists regarding HIV and how it is contracted is one of the reasons why stigma and discrimination exists. The AIDS epidemic will never end if we do not fight the stigma, silence and fear associated with it. Community mobilization, education and advocacy are three necessary steps and actions that must be taken in order to begin reducing stigmatizing attitudes and discriminatory actions

As a society, we have to realize that AIDS is no longer the disease that affects "others" and not us. Let's face it, today it can be him, tomorrow it could be you, or me, your classmate, your sister, the person that sits next to you in history class, the one handing you change at a store, or your best friend living with HIV/AIDS. How would you feel if a loved one was bullied and denied entrance at their school because someone felt it was necessary to disclose their status for the protection of others? Unfortunately this story happens throughout the world in first world and third world countries equally. We all as global citizens have a role to play in ending HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination. It is now the time and our duty as college students to protect the rights of young people living with HIV/AIDS. We can start by speaking out and beginning the conversation with our classmates, friends and coworkers at our campus. Within our conversations we can teach respect and understanding. By fighting the misinformation we are helping those living in fear feel accepted and human like they deserve.

We can show UTSA does stand **United To Stop AIDS**.

"Stigma remains the single most important barrier to public action. It is a main reason why too many people are afraid to see a doctor to determine whether they have the disease, or to seek treatment if so. It helps make AIDS the silent killer, because people fear the social disgrace of speaking about it, or taking easily available precautions. Stigma is a chief reason why the AIDS epidemic continues to devastate societies around the world."

- Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations

## Bexar County and HIV/AIDS

Written by: Amanda Graves, BS Ed, CHES

When most people think of HIV/AIDS, they think of it as a disease that happens "somewhere else" and "to other people". People rarely imagine it as something that could effect someone they know. However, when you look at the infection rates of Bexar County, it is very hard to argue that HIV/AIDS does not have the potential to effect people you may know and love.

- According to 2009 Health Profiles by Metro Health, there were a total of 312 new HIV infections in 2009.
- 45% of those HIV infections were in people **29 years old and younger**.
- Of the 200 newly diagnosed AIDS cases in Bexar County in 2009, almost **28% were of individuals 29 years old and younger**.

In Bexar County, HIV and AIDS diagnoses were higher in 2009 than they were in 2008. In fact, Bexar County had a incidence rate (rate of people newly diagnosed) of 18.9; higher than the Texas rate (17.6) and the national rate (16.0).

Sounds scary doesn't it? Well HIV/AIDS is a serious disease and we need to think about ways we can collaborate to end our high rates of infection.

So what can we do to turn this around? First we need to stop HIV/AIDS as a taboo topic. Open and honest discussion about the disease is the first step in reversing Bexar County's trends.

The next step would be to get tested and Know Your Status! How can you expect other people to get tested when you haven't been tested? We need to all take proactive steps and knowing your HIV status is the first step you can take. Getting tested is easy, quick and on World AIDS Day is completely FREE!

To find our more information about getting tested call 210-458-6428

Source: [sanantonio.gov/health/pdf/healthprofiles](http://sanantonio.gov/health/pdf/healthprofiles)

# HIV NEWS

Volume 4 Issue 12

The University of Texas at San Antonio

## Why do you support World AIDS Day?

With all this information about World AIDS Day and the global effort to end the AIDS pandemic; we thought it might be interesting to see what some UTSA students have to say about World AIDS Day.

### Why do you support World AIDS Day?

- “ Personally, I support World AIDS Day because it is a really pressing issue that needs to be addressed and I personally believe that HIV/AIDS is really bad for anyone that experiences it.” **Robert Wager, Senior from San Antonio.**
- “World AIDS Day is important because it is vital for individuals to become educated about the HIV virus. Taking the 20 minutes to get tested could save lives.” **Jasmine Rivera, Freshman from Fredericksburg, TX**
- “I support World AIDS Day because AIDS awareness makes the world a better place by educating people about the worst disease known to man.”  
**Keri X. Rogers, Junior from Houston, TX**

## Six Years of the HIV/AIDS Response at UTSA

Written by: Howaida Werfelli, MPH, CHES

As the world marks the 30th anniversary of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Health Education marks the 6th anniversary of our efforts to address HIV/AIDS among college students. In October 2005, Student Health Services was the recipient of federal funding from the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. This was the start of the ever-growing flame of effort and has led to six years of response on our campus.

When Health Education and the SHADES (Sexual Health Alcohol and Drug Education for Students) Peer Educators began our response, the resistance encountered was mind blowing. Having the perspective of a college-aged student, it was amazing to me that students in their early to mid twenties could not comprehend the importance of the message we were trying to transmit. Statements like “you are contributing to the moral decline of our youth” and fear at the mention of the subject matter was not an uncommon occurrence.

Throughout the years, there were moments when we questioned the effectiveness of our efforts. We still came across individuals who truly felt that HIV/AIDS was a “gay man’s disease” and continued on with the “it won’t happen to me” mentality. The resistance we experienced was demoralizing at times. I remember holding my head one day and asking what more could be done to get the message across. The Peer Educators and I would often sit around the conference table in the Health Education office and engage in deep, lengthy discussions about the point of our efforts and what would happen if we just gave up. In the end, our understanding of the situation, our desire to educate, and our passion for the subject would not allow us to choose that path.

See REFLECTIONS: Page 4

## Get Involved!

Looking for volunteer opportunities?  
Want a way to get involved on campus?  
Interested in Health Promotion?

### Become a Health Advocate!

Health Advocates are made up of five different student organizations, each with a different health subject focus.

### HEALTH ADVOCATES



My health. My voice. My campus.

**CAMBassadors:** Cancer Advocacy

**The C.U.R.E.:** Violence Prevention

**SHADES:** Sexual Health Alcohol and Drugs

**Baby STEPS:** Education for parenting students

**SHO:** General wellness & nutrition

**For More information call: 210-458-6428**

## Viral Loads



## HIV Viral Load: What is it?

Written by: Howaida Werfelli, MPH, CHES

One of the least understood aspects of HIV infection is viral load. Mention viral load and the reaction is often a blank stare.

Viral load is a measure of the amount of active HIV in the blood of someone who is HIV positive. The larger the value of the viral load test the more HIV is present in the system. HIV positive individuals undergo HIV treatment in order to suppress HIV reproduction so that the viral load measure remains low. A higher viral load usually equates to an increased risk for opportunistic infections.



# HIV NEWS

Volume 4 Issue 12

The University of Texas at San Antonio

## Reflection of UTSA AIDS Efforts

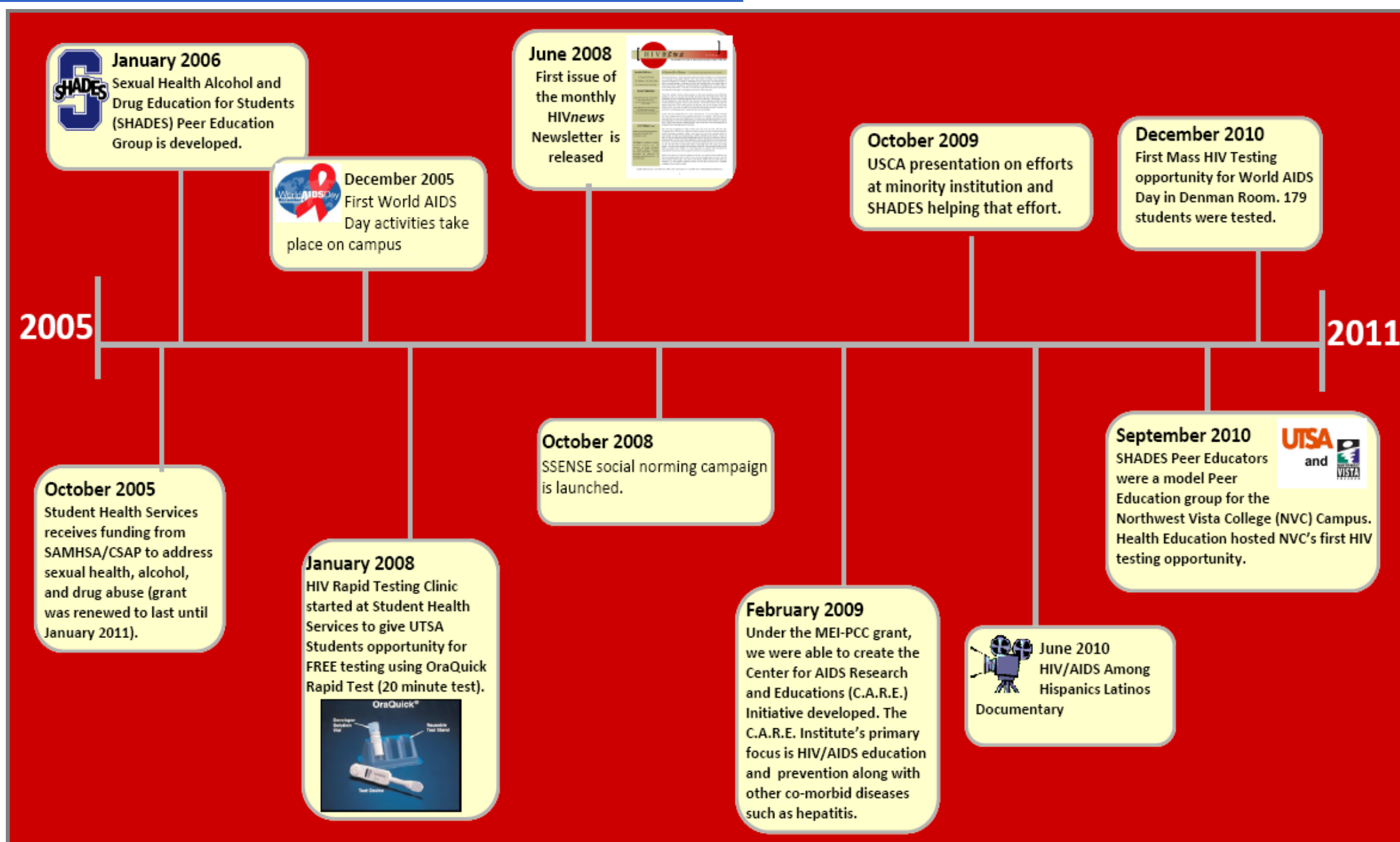
Continued from page 3

It is a great thing we did not give up because six years later the progress is phenomenal. In January 2008, we introduced the HIV Rapid Testing Clinic, a free HIV testing opportunity for UTSA students. This clinic made available the opportunity to get tested at least four times a month. In September 2010, Health Education was invited to Northwest Vista College (NVC) to provide the first ever testing opportunity on their campus. Fifty-five (55) students were tested in two sessions. In 2010, 634 students were tested through this clinic. This was an incredible feat considering that 192 students (134 rapid tests, 58 blood draw) were tested the year before the introduction of the HIV Rapid Testing Clinic.

Those are just a few of the milestones we have experienced. Here is a timeline of our response over the last six years...

## Did You Know...

World AIDS Day is celebrated on December 1st every year because Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was officially recognized on December 1, 1981.



### Contributing Writers:

Howaida Werfelli, MPH, CHES  
Amanda Graves, BS Ed, CHES  
Tonantzin Juarez

### Contributing Editors:

Howaida Werfelli, MPH, CHES  
Amanda Graves, BS Ed, CHES