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AIDS WALK PHILLY & AIDS RUN PHILLY TO RAISE FUNDS, AWARENESS October 18 Continues the Fight for HIV/AIDS in Greater Philadelphia Region

PHILADELPHIA – August 18, 2009 – Every 9½ minutes someone becomes infected with HIV in the U.S. Every 15 minutes, someone dies. Philadelphians can make a difference in the fight against HIV and AIDS by participating on **Sunday, October 18, 2009, at the 23rd Annual AIDS Walk Philly & AIDS Run Philly** presented by Merck. **AIDS Walk Philly will bring together nearly 15,000 people to raise money for HIV prevention education, public awareness, and HIV care services here in the Greater Philadelphia region.**

Walk or run beginning at the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Run along the certified 5K route on Martin Luther King Drive at 8am. Walk along the 12K route, beginning along Kelly Drive at 9am and returning on Martin Luther King Drive. Right in our own backyard, thirty thousand of our friends, family, and neighbors live with HIV, and one out of five people don't know they are infected.



One of many important organizations in Philadelphia helping those on the front lines dealing with HIV/AIDS is the **AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania**. A recent case emphasizes the importance that this organization still holds in 2009, as those living with HIV and AIDS continue to face discrimination and misconceptions related to their disease. The case involved "Nicki," an 18-year-old woman born with HIV and a neuro-muscular condition, who enrolled in a vocational school to become a medical assistant. Her dream was to help others by becoming a comforting face and reassuring hand to guide patients through their medical challenges. She met with the school's advisor, who told her that because she had HIV, she could not participate in the program, and guided her to a different specialty where she would have no patient contact. She was dumfounded. Having lived her whole life with HIV, she knew she would pose no threat in a medical office, but she accepted the counselor's guidance, not thinking she had options. Full of disappointment, she told her personal doctor what had happened. He guided her to the AIDS Law Project, who negotiated with the school on her behalf, asserting they were in violation of the Americans

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with Disabilities Act. After several months of negotiations, the school forgave Nicki's loans and provided her with additional financial compensation. The AIDS Law Project proudly defends the rights of individuals like Nicki to ensure that their dreams can become a reality.

The funds raised at AIDS Walk Philly & AIDS Run Philly allow 30 AIDS service organizations like the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania to fight on the front lines of Philadelphia's friends, family, and neighbors live with HIV. Today, approximately 1.1 million people in the U.S. are living with HIV/AIDS, and it is estimated another 55,000 will become infected this year — a rate that has not decreased in the past 15 years. Here are some other recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and the City of Philadelphia:

- ◆ People in their 30s have the highest number of new HIV infections;
- ◆ African American and Latino women represent less than one-fourth of all U.S. women, yet they account for more than three fourths of AIDS cases reported to date among women in our country;
- ◆ 80% of the most recent diagnosis of AIDS cases in the Philadelphia region are among African Americans (69.6%) and Latinos (9.9%);
- ◆ AIDS is the second leading cause of death in black men 35-44 in the United States;
- ◆ There are 55,000 new infections annually in the U.S.;
- ◆ On the disease's current course, 1 in 16 black men and 1 in 30 black women in the United States will be diagnosed with HIV infection in his or her lifetime.

AIDS Walk Philly 2009 will again have several panels from the **AIDS Memorial Quilt** on display. A powerful tool for raising awareness about HIV/AIDS, the Quilt is the largest ongoing community arts project in the world. Each of the more than 44,000 colorful panels that make up the Quilt memorializes the life of a person lost to AIDS. The AIDS Memorial Quilt display is sponsored by PECO.

On-line registration for AIDS Walk Philly is easy – and walkers can get their friends to donate right on their personalized page. Registering at www.aidswalkphilly.org provides a link to download a sponsor form. This sponsor form is used to sign up sponsors. **Each walker is requested to make a minimum pledge of \$45, for which they will receive an AIDS Walk Philly**



t-shirt. Sponsors who make a contribution of \$75 or more by check will receive a written acknowledgement per IRS regulations.

Registration begins at 7:30 am on Sunday, October 18, 2009.

Walk or run beginning at the Art Museum Steps. The event begins with a Reading of Names and the Opening of the AIDS Memorial Quilt Display, followed by Opening Ceremonies at 8:30 am. **Walk, 9 am:** The 12K AIDS Walk begins and ends at

Eakins Oval, in front of the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The route goes up Kelly Drive crosses Falls Bridge and back down Martin Luther King Drive (FKA West River Drive) to return back to Eakins Oval.

Run, 8 am: The AIDS Run is a USATF certified 5k route on MLK Drive (FKA West River Drive) and starts at 8 am. There will be an awards ceremony held for winners of the AIDS Run prior to the 9 am kickoff of the AIDS Walk. Runners can choose to either collect sponsorship pledges or pay a \$45 registration fee.

Each walker gets a commemorative AIDS Walk Philly 2009 Button. **A commemorative AIDS Walk Philly 2009 t-shirt will be awarded to those who make the minimum commitment of \$45.** A Limited Edition "500 Club" Hooded Sweatshirt will be given to those who raise \$500. Raise \$1,000 and receive a distinctive AIDS Walk Philly 2009 polar fleece jacket.

Everyone can get involved by organizing and inspiring friends, family, co-workers, or classmates to walk as a team. Team walkers raise the majority of Walk money, have a free team photo taken the morning of the Walk, and have the most fun. If five or more people are walking, register the team online at www.aidswalkphilly.org or call 215-731-WALK.

AIDS Walk Philly 2009 presented by Merck is also sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline, Walgreens, PECO, NBC10, Philadelphia Gay News, and City Paper. In 1987, volunteers from Philadelphia's lesbian and gay community center decided to organize a walk-a-thon to support area AIDS agencies and raise public awareness about the disease. The Delaware Valley's first AIDS Walk had about 300 participants and raised \$33,000. Since then, thousands of fundraising walkers have gathered each year to participate in the region's largest annual HIV/AIDS public awareness and fundraising event. Over \$14.3 million has been raised for HIV/AIDS public awareness, prevention and care services for people living with HIV disease.

Individuals can take action in the fight against AIDS by getting sponsors, making a donation, and joining with thousands of others on October 18 for AIDS Walk Philly & AIDS Run Philly. These efforts will support direct care services, prevention and education, counseling and testing, medical care, and public awareness efforts right here in this community. Please register online and get additional information at www.aidswalkphilly.org, call 215-731-WALK, or stop by a regional Walgreens to pick up additional information.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: High-resolution photos available upon request by emailing cari@reliefcomm.com.