

MEDIA RELEASE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



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Erie County hosts HIV/AIDS Awareness Walk on Sept. 27

Erie, PA — The Erie County HIV Task Force and Erie County Department of Health (ECDH) will host the fourth annual Erie County HIV/AIDS Awareness Walk on Monday, September 27 at 6:00 p.m. The activity aims to increase understanding about human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), a condition that interferes with the body's ability to fight infections.

"We invite everyone join us," said Gary Snyder, HIV disease intervention specialist at the ECDH. "We are excited this year to have several local organizations and healthcare entities participating and sponsoring the HIV/AIDS Awareness Walk."

Walkers will gather at the LEAF Education Center at Frontier Park (1501 West 6th St., Erie) for the approximately 1.5 mile walk. It is free to participate.

Free HIV testing and information will be provided by Central Outreach Wellness Center of Erie (COWCE). The first 50 participants will receive a commemorative t-shirt and gift bag courtesy of COWCE, Erie Gay News and Northwest Pa Pride Alliance. Other sponsors of this year's walk include Adagio Health, Community HealthNet and SafeNet.

The Erie County HIV Task Force is a collaboration of local organizations and individuals dedicated to educating, supporting and advocating for people living with HIV/AIDS and preventing the spread of infection. It works together with the ECDH to combat HIV and AIDS by collaborating on a collective culture of compassionate care for persons living with HIV and those at risk for contracting the virus.

At the end of 2019, an estimated 1,189,700 people in the United States aged 13 and older had HIV; approximately 13% of whose infections had not been diagnosed. An estimated 1 in 8 people are living with HIV, unaware that they have this disease.

"We strongly encourage everyone ages 15 to 65 who are sexually active or use intravenous (IV) or injectable drugs to get tested for HIV. It's important that HIV testing becomes a routine practice in all healthcare settings," said Snyder. "We encourage everyone to help prevent the spread of HIV. Talk to your healthcare provider about HIV testing and discuss ways that you can reduce your risk of HIV. If we work together, we can make a positive difference in the fight against HIV."

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Erie County residents are encouraged to make their personal health a priority and to request annual screening and testing for HIV as part of their medical care. For sites in Erie County offering free, confidential HIV testing and sites offering free condoms, visit Echiv.org/testing-condom-map.

For more information, visit Echiv.org, Facebook.com/eriecountyhivtaskforce or Cdc.gov/hiv. For questions about the walk, contact Erie County Department of Health at 814-451-6700 or ecdhinfo@eriecountypa.gov.

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