

# MEDIA RELEASE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** November 29, 2021

**CONTACT:**

Walter Ang, Communications Specialist  
wang@eriecountypa.gov

## Erie County to hold AIDS awareness and memorial program

### Speakers and Memorial Quilt to be featured

Erie, PA - The Erie County HIV Task Force and Erie County Department of Health (ECDH) will host the 2021 World AIDS Day Memorial Program on Dec. 1. Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), a condition that interferes with the body's ability to fight infections, is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Various topics such as advancements in the treatment of HIV/AIDS, the history of AIDS and reflections from survivors will be discussed by speakers from ECDH, Adagio Health and Northwest Alliance.

"We are recognizing the milestone of 40 years since the first HIV cases were reported here in the United States," said Gary Snyder, HIV disease intervention specialist at ECDH. "As we reflect on how Erie County has been affected and responded to HIV since 1981, this year's event theme of '40 Years of Progress' recognizes four decades of achievements in research, advocacy and ground work."

"The program agenda will also reflect on individuals no longer with us due to HIV/AIDS," Snyder added. Erie County residents are welcome to submit names of loved ones for recognition during the program by emailing [gsnyder@eriecountypa.gov](mailto:gsnyder@eriecountypa.gov). Panels from the AIDS Memorial Quilt sponsored by Northwest Alliance will be on display for attendees to see a portion of the world's largest living memorial that recognizes over 100,000 lives ended prematurely by HIV.

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.

"Everyone can help prevent the spread of HIV. Talk to your healthcare provider on ways to reduce your risk of HIV," Snyder said. Erie County residents are encouraged to request annual testing for HIV as part of their medical care. For sites in Erie County offering free and confidential HIV testing and counselling as well as sites offering free condoms, visit [Echiv.org/testing-condom-map](https://echiv.org/testing-condom-map).

The program is free and open to the public on Dec. 1, beginning shortly after 5 p.m. inside the H.O. Hirt Auditorium at Raymond Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St., Erie. For more information, visit [Echiv.org](https://echiv.org) or [FB.com/eriecountyhivtaskforce](https://fb.com/eriecountyhivtaskforce). For confidential HIV counselling, contact Erie County Department of Health at 814-451-6714 or [ecdhinfo@eriecountypa.gov](mailto:ecdhinfo@eriecountypa.gov).

###