

MEDIA RELEASE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



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HIV/AIDS Awareness Walk to be held on May 21

Erie, PA — The Erie County HIV Task Force and Erie County Department of Health will host its annual **Erie County HIV/AIDS Awareness Walk** on May 21, Saturday starting at 12 noon. Now on its fifth year, the walk's aim is to call attention to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), a condition that interferes with the body's ability to fight infections.

The walk will begin in front of Adagio Health Erie, 3530 Peach St., Erie. "We invite everyone to join us for the approximately 1.5-mile walk. Everyone has power over their health. We can all help prevent the spread of HIV," said Gary Snyder, HIV disease intervention specialist at Erie County Department of Health. It is free to participate.

Health education about HIV and free HIV testing will be provided by Central Outreach Wellness Center of Erie. Other supporters and participants of this year's walk include Community Health Net, Erie Gay News, Nicotine Free Northwest Pennsylvania, Northwest Pennsylvania Pride Alliance, Pennsylvania Thrive Partnership and SafeNet.

In 2019, an estimated 1,189,700 people in the United States 13 years 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 in the community who is sexually active or shares needles for intravenous (IV) drugs to get tested for HIV," said Snyder. "Talk to your healthcare provider on ways to reduce your risk to HIV and about annual HIV testing as part of your medical care. Testing results can help determine appropriate care and treatment if needed."

Visit Echiv.org for sites in Erie County that offer free and private HIV testing and free prevention methods such as condoms and medication. "If we work together, we can make a positive difference in the fight against HIV in Erie County," he said.

The Erie County HIV Task Force is a collaboration of local organizations and individuals dedicated to education, preventing the spread of infection, as well as supporting and advocating for people living with HIV/AIDS. For questions about the walk, contact 814-451-6700 or gsnyder@eriecountypa.gov.

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