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CARNIVÀLE – A FESTIVAL OF HEALTH

CELEBRATING NATIONAL GAY MEN'S HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY ON SEPTEMBER 26

Santa Clara County, CA: A street festival featuring entertainment, games, health resources and health screenings will be held in support of National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day on Saturday, September 26.

Project MORE Foundation and Santa Clara County Public Health Department are hosting the free event in downtown San Jose. It will be held from 6pm-2am on Saturday along Post Street, between South 1st Street and South Market Street. All community residents are invited to join the outdoor party, which will include games, entertainment, dancing, and giveaways. Most importantly, health related information and resources will be offered. Free HIV rapid testing, general health screening, and flu shots will be available.

"It's critical that members of the LGBTQ community have access to information and resources for their unique health needs," said Santa Clara County Supervisor Ken Yeager, the county's first openly gay elected official. "Carnivàle provides just that, but in a fun, festive setting with a great balance of education and entertainment."

Post Street will be decorated and lit with the spirit of Carnivàle, featuring performances by Ongina from RuPual's Drag Race, recording artist Desi Arnaz, and DJs, including DJ 2.Oh, DJ Cisco, DJ Lady Char, and DJ Jeff Morena, and local drag stars Mahlae Balenciaga and Xenea Malletti will serve as emcees.

"This event is a wonderful way to raise awareness and encourage people to get tested for HIV," commented Dr. Sara Cody, Health Officer for Santa Clara County. "Getting tested is an important first step towards health, both for the person living with HIV as well as their partners. When someone with HIV knows their status, gets linked to care, and stays in care, they benefit as do their partners."

Men who have sex with men (MSM) remain the group most heavily affected by HIV in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Although MSM represent approximately 4% of the male population in the United States, they accounted for 78% of new HIV infections among males and 63% of all new infections in 2010.

“According to the Santa Clara County Public Health Department’s 2013-2014 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, only 39% of adults ages 18 to 64 in the County have ever been tested for HIV,” said Supervisor Cindy Chavez. “This is why events, like Carnivàle, which seek to raise awareness about this important medical issue, are so important.”

The Santa Clara County Public Health Department’s enhanced HIV/AIDS reporting system showed that in 2014, 71% of people living with HIV or AIDS were MSM, including those MSM who were injection drug users. Among males newly diagnosed with HIV infection between 2009 and 2014, nearly 9 in 10 were MSM. In this group (MSM and MSM/injection drug users), most were Whites (36%), Latinos (43%), and between ages 20 to 49 at diagnosis (86%).

Carnivàle is a collaboration of Silicon Valley non-profit/for-profit organizations that offer services or support to the LGBTQ community. In an effort to encourage protection, safety and testing availability, these fun events are possible because of the collaboration of The Health Trust, AZ Dental, Asian Americans for Community Involvement, Planned Parenthood Mar Monte, Walgreens, Gardner Family Health Plan, O’Connor Health Center, The LGBTQ Youth Space, CDIP, and Breathe California.

Local businesses also support this initiative, by offering discounts to those who attend. Just wear your “HIV I’m on it” sticker and receive specials Downtown, like Splash Video Dance Bar, Motif Lounge, Don Pedro Mexican Restaurant, Peking Place, Billy Berk’s, and Original Gravity. “Our goal is to provide awareness and resources to the community by creating a unique and engaging festival experience that inclusive and accessible to everyone,” said Project More Foundation President Nathan Svoboda, who invites all to come out!

Learn more details about Carnivàle on Project More Foundation’s website at DoMoreProject.org, or by calling 408-673-1745.

For information on finding an HIV testing site near you, please visit www.hivtest.org.

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