

## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# **WORLD AIDS DAY UNITED IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV**

SAN JOSE, CA – On December 1, San Jose’s City Hall Tower and several other Downtown San Jose landmarks will be illuminated red in recognition of World AIDS Day. The City of San Jose joins the global community and cities across the country to light buildings in red to help raise awareness of the ongoing effects of HIV and AIDS throughout the world. The lighting event will be followed by a short program with community members and leaders from HIV/AIDS service agencies in Santa Clara County.

The work to stop the spread of HIV and improve the health of those living with HIV and AIDS has been ongoing since Santa Clara County saw its first known cases of HIV more than 30 years ago. Since that time, extraordinary progress has been made in the fight against HIV, but HIV/AIDS continues to be a serious public health threat in Santa Clara County today.

As of December 31, 2015, there were more than 3,300 people living with HIV in Santa Clara County; in 2015 there were more than 150 new HIV cases. In addition, more than 2,400 AIDS-related deaths have been reported in Santa Clara County since the beginning of the epidemic.

During its December 15, 2015 meeting, the Board of Supervisors approved a referral from Supervisor Ken Yeager directing the Public Health Department to develop a “Getting to Zero” initiative in Santa Clara County, a strategy which strives for zero new HIV infections, zero AIDS-related deaths and zero HIV stigma.

“On World AIDS Day, it is important to remember those we have lost and celebrate the achievements we have made,” said Dr. Sarah Lewis, HIV Controller for the Santa Clara County Public Health Department. “With the advances achieved in testing, treatment, and prevention and the tremendous work being done by HIV providers and advocates in our community, we have the tools we need to make Getting to Zero a reality.”

HIV affects specific populations disproportionately across Santa Clara County. Certain individuals—including gay and bisexual men, Black women and men, Latinos and Latinas, people who inject drugs, transgender women, and young people -- are at greater risk for HIV. However, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend everyone ages 15 to 65 gets tested for HIV at least once.

“One important way we can prevent the spread of HIV is by making sure everyone knows their HIV status,” Dr. Lewis added. “The only way to know if you have HIV is to get tested. With this knowledge, individuals can take steps to protect themselves and their partners and receive important medical care if they have HIV.”

Everyone can make a difference and help raise awareness by:

- Encouraging people to get tested for HIV by going to [GetTestedSCC.org](http://GetTestedSCC.org) to find local, free, and low-cost HIV testing.
- Wearing a red ribbon, the symbol of HIV awareness and support, and let people know why you are wearing it.
- Joining the event at San Jose City Hall to commemorate World AIDS Day

What: Commemorating World AIDS Day

When: Thursday, December 1, 2016, 5:30 pm.

Where: San Jose City Hall  
200 Santa Clara St, San Jose, CA 95113

Who:

- Maribel Martínez, Director, Office of LGBTQ Affairs, County of Santa Clara
- Sarah Lewis, Assistant Public Health Officer & STD/HIV Controller, County of Santa Clara
- Crystal Haney, HOPE Program Coordinator, Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI)

Why: To remember those who have lost their lives to AIDS and provide support and compassion to those living with HIV.

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