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NATIONAL HIV TESTING DAY

Statement by Dr. Kevin Fenton

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I encourage Americans to join the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and its partners on June 27 in our nationwide effort to reduce the number of people in this country who don't know their HIV status. The CDC estimates that about one-fourth of the more than one million people living with HIV in the United States don't know they are infected. HIV testing is a critical step in reducing HIV infections.

CDC once again strongly supports National HIV Testing Day, an annual campaign organized by the National Association of People with AIDS. The theme of the campaign is significant – “Take the Test. Take Control.”

Knowing your HIV status empowers you to help prevent the spread of the disease. If you are infected, you can take steps to protect your health and that of your partners as well as seek life-extending medical treatment. People who learn they are not infected can take steps to help ensure they remain uninfected.

HIV remains a major public health threat. The impact in the African-American community, the Latino community and among gay and bisexual men of all races is severe. Blacks and Hispanics each represent about 13 percent of the population (in the 33 states where there is long-standing, name-based HIV reporting), but bear a disproportionate burden of the U.S. HIV epidemic. Blacks account for almost half of new HIV diagnoses and Hispanics account for about 18 percent (in the same 33 states). And across all races and ethnic groups, men who have sex with men account for nearly half of all people living with HIV in the United States. It is critical that we reach these and other at-risk populations with HIV counseling and testing services.

Each year we strive to test as many people as possible. This year we are engaging new partners and taking advantage of innovative technologies to increase participation in testing events. Also, CDC has created new text messaging and social networking Web site campaigns (<http://www.cdc.gov/features/hivtesting/>) to increase awareness of the importance of knowing your status and what you can do to help stop the spread of HIV. CDC has collaborated with partners to promote the KnowIt texting campaign that allows you to text your zip code to 566948 (KnowIt) and receive a location for a local testing site

CDC and its partners are committed to preventing HIV infection; however, we cannot do it alone. We need your commitment as well. I encourage you to take the test, and take control.

To find out more about HIV/AIDS and where you can receive a confidential HIV test, visit www.hivtest.org or call 800-CDC-INFO.

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