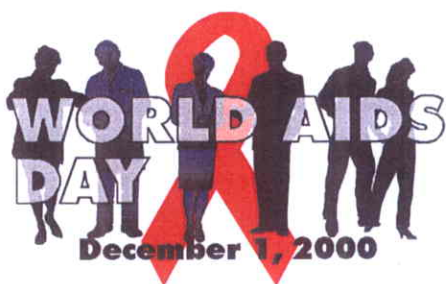




## **Positive Living with HIV:**



## **You Can Make a Difference**



## **HIV infection and AIDS affect us all**

We may have family or friends with HIV, or know someone at our office or in our community with the disease. We may even be living with HIV. We all live in a nation and world where HIV/AIDS is having a significant impact.

There are many things we as individuals can do to help stop this epidemic.

World AIDS Day is a good time to stop and take stock of what each of us can do to deal with HIV infection and AIDS.

### **You can...**

#### ***Make Sure You Know the Facts***

Every individual needs to know the facts about HIV infection and AIDS, including what it is (HIV is a virus that causes AIDS, an immune deficiency disease), how it can be transmitted (through blood-to-blood contact such as needle-sharing; through vaginal, anal, or oral sex with an infected person; and from an infected mother to her newborn), and what can be done to prevent infection (refraining from sex unless with a mutually faithful, uninfected partner; using a condom when your partner is infected or you are not sure of their infection status; not injecting drugs or making sure you use a new sterile syringe if you do). It is important



to know the facts about HIV since there are still many misconceptions and “myths” about how it is transmitted and not transmitted, which can affect how people with HIV are perceived and treated.

### ***Make Sure You Know Your HIV Status***

If you have any reason to believe you may be infected (for example, if you have engaged in a high-risk behavior, even once), you should consider voluntary HIV counseling and testing. If you are infected, early diagnosis and medical treatment are essential to controlling the virus and its symptoms and can help you not to transmit the infection to others. Information about testing sites is available from your local health department or CDC’s National AIDS and STD Hotline (1-800-342-2437).

### ***Help Prevent Discrimination and Stigma***

People with HIV infection and AIDS may experience discrimination in employment, housing, schools, or obtaining health care. In addition, they can encounter negative attitudes or hostility from fellow members of our society. Treating HIV-infected persons with the same respect you would want can actually help prevent further spread of the epidemic. If people feel they will be treated badly if others know about their infection, they may try to keep it a secret or even avoid finding out if they are infected. These actions may increase the spread of HIV.



However, if people feel they will be treated with respect and understanding, they will be more willing to be tested, seek medical care, and practice prevention measures themselves, which will help slow the spread of infection.

### ***Talk to Family and Friends About HIV***

Families can play an important role in stopping HIV. Spouses should talk with each other about HIV infection and AIDS. Parents should teach their children about this disease and how to protect themselves against it as soon as their children are able to understand. Parents also can stop discrimination before it starts by teaching their children to treat people with HIV as they would any others. If you have relatives, friends, or co-workers who may be at risk, talk to them about HIV infection and AIDS. They may be more willing to accept important information about this topic from you than from a health care provider or agency. Again, there are many misconceptions about HIV infection and AIDS that we can all play a role in dispelling.

### ***Support Community Efforts***

There are many things you as an individual can do to support community efforts for persons with or at risk for HIV infection and AIDS. You can make time to talk with people about HIV infection, either individually or through a club, organization, or religious group. You



can invite an HIV-infected person to talk with your club or group about his or her experiences living with HIV. You can volunteer through an AIDS service organization to help someone with AIDS by preparing or serving meals, running errands, caring for their pets, cuddling an HIV-infected baby, or even just visiting an individual with AIDS who is in the hospital or house-bound. Or you or your organization can work on fundraising for one of these services. Even if all you do is improve the way you think about people living with HIV, you are taking a step in the right direction.

### ***You Can Make a Difference***

Please take time today to think about how you might help. You may wish to contact one of the Atlanta-based organizations for information about volunteer opportunities. Or you may contact the CDC National AIDS and STD Hotline at 1-800-342-2437 for more information about this important subject and names of other HIV/AIDS service organizations in your area.





## ***Some HIV/AIDS Organizations in Atlanta\****

### ***AID Atlanta***

**(404) 870-7741**

You can help agency clients living with HIV/AIDS or help educate the public about HIV/AIDS through one of AID Atlanta's programs.

### ***Project Open Hand***

**(404) 872-2707**

Project Open Hand prepares and delivers freshly cooked, nutritious meals each day to people living with AIDS or HIV-related illnesses.

### ***AIDS Survival Project***

**(404) 874-7926**

AIDS Survival Project provides persons affected by HIV disease with the information and the support they need to make well-informed choices about their lives.

### ***SisterLove Inc.***

**(404) 753-7733**

SisterLove, Inc. is a non-profit organization established to provide education, prevention, housing and support services with women by women who are at risk for or already infected with HIV or have AIDS.

**\*Not a complete list of Atlanta AIDS Service Organizations**