

Abre Los Ojos (Open Your Eyes) Sunday, October 15th 2006.

National Latino AIDS Awareness Day is a day to bring all Latinos together, regardless of country of origin, to unite in confronting the stigmas associated with the disease and in preventing new HIV/AIDS cases from occurring. We must empower our communities by educating ourselves and expressing the importance of knowing your HIV status. Through extensive educational, training, and testing sites set up within Latino communities, as well as through the celebration of our culture and the preservation of life and hope, we are taking a stand against the spread of HIV," said Dennis de Leon, president of the Latino Commission on AIDS.

The National Latino AIDS Awareness Day (NLAAD) Planning Committee announced the theme for the fourth annual NLAAD event: "Knowledge is Power. Get the Facts. Get Tested for HIV." This year's theme, which was voted on via an online poll, is meant to draw attention to the critical role HIV testing and prevention education plays in stemming the spread of AIDS. More than 1,000 institutions in 350 cities across the continental United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are participating in NLAAD, which takes place annually on October 15, the last day of Hispanic Heritage Month.

Latinos continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV, comprising nearly 20 percent of HIV/AIDS cases nationwide. Limited access to prevention and care, cultural barriers, language barriers, and immigration status has contributed to this disparity.

Lillian Rodriguez-Lopez, president of the Hispanic Federation, stated that "National Latino AIDS Awareness Day, above all else, represents a call to action for Latinos to protect their lives and the lives of those they love. The best way of accomplishing this is by getting tested and learning about HIV, and then sharing those facts with your family and friends. We will continue to empower our communities through this campaign until we finally put an end to this horrible disease."

The National Latino AIDS Awareness Day was created in 2003 by the Latino Commission on AIDS and the Hispanic Federation in partnership with community-based organizations, people living with HIV/AIDS, health departments and others, to educate, empower and enable the Latino community to confront AIDS. Organizations participating in NLAAD forge partnerships

## 4th Annual National Latino AIDS Awareness Day Oct 15

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with the media, elected officials, civic and religious leaders, foundations, celebrities and the health care system in order to address this epidemic.

For more information on how you can save a life by getting tested for HIV or to find out how you can participate in one of our many events please visit <http://www.nlaad.org>

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NLAAD is supported by NBC, Telemundo, Cable Positive, the Kaiser Family Foundation, Viacom, Univision, Orasure Technologies, Abbott Laboratories, the Office of Minority Health Observance Days, the CDC National Prevention Information Network (partial list).