

Subject: HIV is an American crisis

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**Despite major achievements, HIV persists
as major public health crisis in the U.S.**

*July marks first National HIV Awareness Month — an effort to re-engage
Americans in fight to end the disease*

WASHINGTON — This July, a broad cross-section of public, private, nonprofit and government organizations will come together to issue a clear challenge: it's time to end HIV in America. During the first [National HIV Awareness Month](#) (NHAM), these organizations will undertake ongoing efforts to re-engage the American public and reignite focus on the domestic HIV epidemic through an education effort that raises awareness of the impact of HIV on our families and our communities.

Founding organizations of NHAM include AIDS United, amfAR, the Black AIDS Institute, the Latino Commission on AIDS, the Magic Johnson Foundation, the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA), the National Minority AIDS Council, The Well Project and the U.S. Positive Women's Network.

Fashion designer and chairman of amfAR, Kenneth Cole, designed the logo for NHAM. Forming a star from a group of individual red ribbons illustrates the commitment of participating NHAM organizations to a shared goal of reducing the number of people living with HIV in the United States.

"Americans have come to view HIV as a terrible problem for the developing world but forget that it also continues to attack our families, friends and neighbors in every pocket of this country," said Dawn Averitt Bridge, founder of NHAM and founder and chair of the board of The Well Project. "National HIV Awareness Month represents our hope that the U.S. will become a nation where new HIV infections are rare and when they do occur, every person will have access to life-extending care, free from stigma and discrimination."

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 1.2 million people live with HIV in the United States and it remains a leading cause of death in some U.S. communities. Each year, 50,000 Americans are newly infected. Despite public outreach initiatives to advance HIV awareness and encourage testing and treatment, one in five Americans living with HIV does not know it.

“I’m happy to be part of this important cause,” said Kenneth Cole. “We hope the campaign inspires and motivates Americans to play their part and get involved.” NHAM is calling on organizations and individuals from every corner of the private and public sector to engage in new and innovative education, testing and treatment programs to combat HIV stigma and discrimination and eventually eliminate all new HIV infections. These efforts will coincide with the International AIDS Conference, which will take place in the United States for the first time in more than 20 years.

“A lot has changed over the last 30 years; HIV can now be a virus we live with, not one we have to die with,” said Frank Oldham Jr., president and chief executive officer of NAPWA. “But that isn’t enough. We need to significantly expand education and access to affordable care in our communities so that all Americans have the tools necessary to make well-informed choices that can help prevent the transmission of HIV, including getting tested regularly and knowing their HIV status.”

In the decades since it was first identified, HIV has exploded into a health crisis for a number of U.S. communities, and barriers to basic health care exacerbate the problem. African Americans represent approximately 14 percent of the total U.S. population but account for nearly half of all new HIV infections, and HIV is the third-leading cause of death for African Americans aged 35-44. HIV is the fourth-leading cause of death for Latina women of the same age group. Men who have sex with men are still the most vulnerable group, making up only 2 percent of the U.S. population but accounting for 61 percent of all new HIV infections.

“HIV is almost entirely preventable and we have a moral obligation to stop it in our communities,” said Phill Wilson, president and chief executive officer of the Black AIDS Institute. “By joining together with other organizations focused on ending HIV in America, we will amplify our collective voices to the point where everyone will have to listen.” NHAM will launch on June 27, which is also National HIV Testing Day, with representation at the NASDAQ opening bell ceremony, a testing and awareness event at the Newark Bears minor league baseball game, the display of the AIDS Memorial Quilt at the [Smithsonian Folklife Festival](#) in Washington, D.C. and more. For a full listing of events, please follow @HIVmonth and #HIVmonth on Twitter, and to learn more about participating in NHAM, please visit <http://www.nationalhivawarenessmonth.org/>.

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About National HIV Awareness Month

July 2012 has been established as National HIV Awareness Month (NHAM) to elevate the national discourse on the domestic HIV/AIDS epidemic. NHAM will create broad-scale public awareness of the domestic impact of HIV/AIDS, work to combat HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination, and engage new stakeholders in the fight against the disease—with the ultimate vision of ending the epidemic. To learn more about NHAM and its current members—or to join these groups in supporting NHAM—please visit www.nationalhivawarenessmonth.org.