



Media Advisory
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Contact: Connie Chavez
713-566-6430 or 713-566-4370

HCHD Celebrates World AIDS Day
Patients encourage others to get tested

Joyce Austin was hopeless and scared when she found out she was HIV-positive 13 years ago. But not now. Today, Austin, a patient at the Thomas Street Health Center of the Harris County Hospital District, is happy to be alive and has dedicated her life to educating others about HIV and AIDS.

"I want people to know that this can be prevented," Austin told the crowd gathered for Thomas Street's annual Celebration of Remembrance on World AIDS Day.

HCHD joined millions around the globe to commemorate this year's World AIDS Day on Dec. 1 and bring awareness to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This year's theme was "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise." The event was held in collaboration with the City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services.

About 16,000 Harris County residents live with HIV and AIDS every day. Approximately 60 percent of them are patients at Thomas Street, which opened its doors in 1989 as the nation's first freestanding HIV/AIDS treatment facility.

"HIV/AIDS is our fight," said County Commissioner Sylvia Garcia, keynote speaker. "One day we'll find a cure. And I'd like to thank the doctors, nurses and healthcare workers who are helping us get to that point."

During the event, the Hospital District was presented a proclamation from the Office of Honorable Robert Eckels for its work in caring for our community's HIV/AIDS residents.

Event highlights also included the Tree of Remembrance dedication ceremony, where guests placed decorations on a 12-ft. tree in memory of loved ones who passed away from HIV/AIDS. The decorated tree will be displayed during the holiday season.

Guest speakers also included City Council member Ada Edwards, Modelle Brudner, representing Judge Robert Eckels and Dr. Thomas Giordano, medical director of Thomas Street Health Center.

The Harris County Hospital District (HCHD) is the public healthcare system for the nation's third most populous county. It provides healthcare to more than 300,000 residents of Harris County, Texas. In addition to Thomas Street Clinic, HCHD operates Ben Taub General Hospital, Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital, Quentin Mease Community Hospital, 11 community health centers, a dental center, seven school-based clinics, 13 homeless shelter clinics and four mobile health units.

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