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NEWS RELEASE

**Free HIV/AIDS Testing December 1st
in Celebration of World AIDS Day**

Port Charlotte (FL) – The Florida Department of Health, Charlotte County Health Department is offering free HIV/AIDS testing Wednesday December 1, 2010 in celebration of World AIDS Day. World AIDS Day is dedicated to raising awareness of the AIDS epidemic and honoring those who have died from HIV/AIDS. One of the most important steps in preventing HIV is to get tested and know your status as well as the status of your partner.

Approximately 125,000 Floridians are currently infected with HIV/AIDS, with 20 percent unaware they are infected. People who look completely healthy can still have HIV and can pass it on to others even if they have no symptoms of AIDS. People infected with HIV may not show symptoms for five to ten years. HIV/AIDS affects people of every age, race and sexual orientation.

In recognition of World AIDS Day, the Florida Department of Health created the *We Make The Change Virtual Quilt Memorial* — a digital AIDS memorial that serves as a remembrance for those who died of the AIDS. You can add a loved one to the virtual quilt memorial by visiting www.WeMakeTheChange.com/worldaidsday and submitting an electronic quilt square. A panel with your loved one's name, birth year, year of death, and a short 100-character message will be added to the virtual quilt.

Charlotte County Health Department encourages all residents to take advantage of free HIV/AIDS testing on December 1st and to get treatment if you have it. "Everyday 15 Floridians become infected with HIV. It is important to know your status so that you can take action to prevent the spread of this deadly disease," said Mary Kay Burns, Charlotte County Health Department Interim Director.

Free HIV testing on December 1st is available at three health department locations in Charlotte County from 8:00AM – 11:00 AM and 1:00 – 4:00PM and no appointment is necessary. Results of your HIV test are confidential. For additional information about HIV/AIDS and the clinic locations where you can get tested please visit the Charlotte County Health Department Web site at www.charlottechd.com.

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