



World AIDS Day campaign targets an AIDS-free generation by 2015

On December 1 – World AIDS Day – more than a dozen countries will participate in an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign by lighting landmark locations in red, the colour used to symbolize the autoimmune disease that has killed millions of people around the globe.

In Canada, Toronto City Hall and the iconic CN Tower will turn red, as nations “light up” according to time zones – beginning in Sydney, Australia and finishing at the Los Angeles International Airport.

As part of an international campaign “Getting to Zero” – led by UNAIDS – HIV/AIDS advocacy groups have set a goal of eliminating mother-to-child HIV transmission by 2015, creating the first HIV-free generation of babies in the past three decades.

Since 1988, HIV/AIDS activists have observed World AIDS Day by raising public awareness through research and education, fundraising initiatives, and anti-prejudice campaigns. The red ribbon became an international symbol of HIV/AIDS support and a commitment to finding a cure for the virus that’s claimed an estimated 39 million people and infected 78 million around the world (amfAR stats).

It’s a day for nations to review international statistics, current issues and trends, rates of infection, innovative treatments, research funding, and prevention.

In 1985, the Public Health Agency of Canada began gathering data on the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). As of 2012, they reported a total of 76,275 HIV diagnoses. Canadian women currently comprise 23.1 per cent of the nation’s HIV-infected individuals.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there were 35 million people in 2013 living with HIV in the world, including 16 million women, and 3.2 million children (under the age of 15).

WHO also reported that 1.5 million people, including 190,000 children, died from AIDS in 2013.

That’s why HEU continues to support the work of community organizations like Positive Living Society of British Columbia and the Stephen Lewis Foundation, who advocate for better education, support and care for those living with HIV, both at home and globally.

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