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CAP begins free Rapid HIV Testing on Saturdays at the Men's Wellness Center

PORTLAND, Ore. (Nov. 28, 2007) – Cascade AIDS Project is offering free rapid HIV testing for men who have sex with men at its Men's Wellness Center, 928 SW Stark Street, the first time the organization has offered HIV testing that was not conducted by an outside clinic or agency in its 22-year history.

CAP kicks off its weekly Saturday 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. testing, just in time for World AIDS Day on Saturday, December 1.

“We are thrilled to be offering testing for men on Saturdays,” said Michael Anderson-Nathe, Prevention Services Manager at CAP. “We opened the Men's Wellness Center specifically for gay and bi men in Portland, because we were hearing from that community, and seeing in HIV infection rates, a need for a space dedicated to the health and wellness of this population. We see offering free, rapid HIV testing to gay and bi men on a day that no one else offers it, in a space that was created specifically for them, to be a continuation of our commitment to serving gay and bi men in Portland.”

CAP is funded by the CDC specifically to offer rapid HIV testing to men who have sex with men because over 70% of all new HIV infections in Oregon annually are among this population. CAP already partners with Outside In to offer free rapid HIV testing as well as STD screening for gay and bi men every Tuesday night from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the center, giving men two options each week for free, rapid HIV testing.

Says Anderson-Nathe, “We believe it is important for all people to know their status, and we encourage testing for anybody who might be at risk. While our test site is specifically for men who have sex with men, no one leaves the Men's Wellness Center without information on how to reduce their risk and a referral to one of the many places around town offering HIV testing.”

CAP offers free rapid HIV testing every Saturday from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Men's Wellness Center on a walk-in basis. Testing can be either confidential or anonymous and is always paired with thorough counseling to help the person getting tested explore his risks for HIV and come up with an individualized plan to reduce those risks.

The test, called OraQuick Advance, uses a small amount of oral fluid to test for antibodies the body creates in response to HIV infection and gives results in about 20 minutes. It is nearly 100% accurate. A reactive test result from this test is considered a preliminary positive result, and those testing positive in this way will need to have a confirmatory Western Blot test in order to confirm the presence of HIV antibodies and access services or medical care.

The CDC estimates that 25% of people living with HIV don't know they have it, and these people account for about 75% of all new HIV infections. Evidence also suggests that those who know their status take steps to protect their partners and prevent the spread of HIV. Nearly half of all people who get tested in the conventional (non-rapid) method do not return to get their results. This makes giving at-risk populations their results right away an effective way to prevent the spread of HIV.

CAP offers a variety of services for people who are both HIV positive and negative. For more information, please visit their website at www.cascadeaids.org or call (503) 223-5907.

About Cascade AIDS Project

Cascade AIDS Project has provided community-based HIV services including housing and education to those living in Oregon and SW Washington since 1985. More than 6,000 families in CAP's service area have a loved one living with HIV. Last year, CAP supported 2,624 people with HIV/AIDS and their affected family members including 407 children. CAP educated nearly 29,000 individuals about HIV prevention, 44 percent of whom were children and youth. Part of making this possible is the devotion of CAP volunteers; 660 youth and adult volunteers gave 20,936 hours of service.

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