

FOR IMMEDIATE USE

News Release

Media Contact: Charles Hemepeck
Ph: 320-631-0404
charles@raan.org

Greater MN HIV Infection Rates Remain Constant

LITTLE FALLS (Minn), April 26, 2011 – According to the statistics released today by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), 331 confirmed new cases of HIV were reported in Minnesota during 2010. While that number is down from last year’s 17 year high; it is important to note the long-term trend for new HIV infections continues to rise. The Rural AIDS Action Network, a leading source for HIV information and services in greater Minnesota, believes this data highlights the importance of continued HIV testing, prevention and education across all parts of Minnesota.

As Minnesota continues to see a rise in people living with HIV, it will be especially important to make sure up-to-date and accurate information is available for people who are sexually active. This is especially true for communities in Greater Minnesota where new infection rates for HIV remained constant. Approximately 15% of new HIV cases occurred in Greater Minnesota compared to 14% in 2009. MDH also reports there are 6814 people in Minnesota known to be living with HIV with nearly 1000 individuals living outside of the metro area.

“A lower number of new HIV infections is always encouraging; but it underscores the continued need for prevention and education about HIV. People in Greater Minnesota need to remember that HIV is still a public health concern,” said Charles Hemepeck executive director of the Rural AIDS Action Network. “Our agency saw a 13% increase in the number of people accessing our services in 2010 and we conducted 736 HIV tests in 2010 compared to 626 HIV tests in 2009.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates nearly 21% of the population living with HIV does not know they are infected. This means there are thousands of people across the state unaware of their HIV status and potentially transmitting the virus to other people. The Rural AIDS Action Network offers free and confidential testing at many locations across Minnesota. To learn more about HIV services in Greater Minnesota, including HIV testing visit www.raan.org or call 800-966-9735.

The Rural AIDS Action Network works to foster knowledgeable, caring communities which ensure quality services and support for people affected by HIV/AIDS. For more information or to find out how you can help please visit www.raan.org.