

Major HIV Prevention Grant Awarded to Rural AIDS Action Network (RAAN) for Greater Minnesota Initiative

Little Falls, Minn. -- Rural AIDS Action Network (RAAN), the nonprofit organization working to raise awareness and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in Greater Minnesota, will receive a major four-year HIV prevention grant from the Minnesota Department of Health.

The \$211,280 grant will help fund programs aimed at preventing the spread of HIV in adults - and young people of all races – who are at risk of contracting the HIV virus.

“We’re pleased to receive this grant which will sustain our commitment to prevent as many new HIV infections as possible within the rural communities hardest hit by this epidemic, said RAAN Executive Director Charles Hempeck.

RAAN will offer a number of outreach, prevention and education programs, including HIV testing and counseling services that follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) recommendation for more universal testing.

HIV in Greater Minnesota

Approximately 13 percent of Minnesota HIV/AIDS cases are in rural areas, compared with 8 percent nationally.

Testing and diagnosis is important. Nearly 30 percent of HIV-positive individuals are unaware of their HIV infection. They may be symptom-free for up to a decade, continuing to unknowingly infect others with the virus.

Rural AIDS Action Network is especially interested in reaching minority communities with the HIV testing and prevention message.

“Men who have sex with men will continue to be our primary focus for HIV prevention and risk reduction education; additionally we are reaching out to communities at increased risk of HIV infection, including African American and Latino populations, both of which are disproportionately affected with HIV when compared to other demographic groups in Minnesota and the United States,” said Hempeck.

Across rural Minnesota, 29 percent of RAAN's clients are women, and more than one-third of the clients are people of color, including more African-born immigrants.

Free, Confidential Testing

To determine your risk factors for contracting HIV, please visit www.raan.org. RAAN has established a **toll-free hotline – 800-966-9735** – to schedule a free, confidential HIV test and to receive information about HIV prevention.

For more information about RAAN, please visit www.raan.org.

The Rural AIDS Action Network (RAAN) is a nonprofit, community-based organization whose mission is to organize, develop, and sustain caring communities of professionals and volunteers that serve and support persons living with, affected by, or at risk for HIV/AIDS in rural Minnesota.

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