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MaineGeneral Recognizes World AIDS Day Dec. 1

In honor of World AIDS Day December 1, MaineGeneral's HIV Services will join members of the greater Augusta community to raise awareness of the impact of HIV and AIDS in central Maine and the comprehensive care, education and prevention services MaineGeneral offers.

A celebration will take place at the Unitarian Universalist Community Church at 69 Winthrop Street in Augusta, Tuesday, December 1 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. It will feature Augusta-based singer-songwriter Martin Swinger accompanied by harpist Louise Gephart and speakers from HIV support services. The ArtVan, a mobile arts therapy program, will be on hand and two blocks of the Names Project AIDS Quilt will be displayed. The quilt memorializes and celebrates people who have died of AIDS-related causes.

MaineGeneral's celebration is one of several AIDS-related programs taking place in Maine that day. The Maine Centers for Disease Control reports more than 1,200 people with AIDS live in Maine, including 39 who have been diagnosed this year.

"This local observance is to remember the many people who have lost their lives to AIDS and to celebrate the wonderful people who work toward improving the quality of life of people living with this disease," said Michael Fletcher, a member of the event's planning committee.

"It's also important to remember this disease continues to take lives and that we need to stay vigilant against its spread," he added.

MaineGeneral provides a number of HIV-related services. The Horizon Program, based at the Gardiner Campus, offers comprehensive medical, case management, counseling and support services to all identified HIV-positive individuals in nine Maine counties: Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Sagadahoc, Somerset and Waldo.

MaineGeneral's Harm Reduction Program offers anonymous HIV testing and counseling, a needle exchange program, counseling and support for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and education and community outreach.

For more information on World AIDS Day and MaineGeneral's HIV services, contact Sean Douglas at 621-3770.