



AIDS RESOURCE CENTER OF WISCONSIN

Excellence in HIV Health Care

Contact: Bill Keeton, Vice President of Government and Public Relations

Bill.Keeton@arcw.org

414-225-1572 (o)

414-313-2036 (c)

For immediate release

Statement by ARCW President and CEO Mike Gifford on National Women and Girls HIV Awareness Day

Milwaukee... ARCW President and Chief Executive Officer Mike Gifford offers the following statement on the upcoming National Women and Girls HIV Awareness Day, set for March 10, 2013.

“The news this week of a baby from Mississippi cured of HIV after becoming infected with the virus in utero is a ray of hope in the fight against AIDS. While there is much we can learn about improving HIV health care and pharmaceutical treatment from this remarkable story, we are still, unfortunately, very far from a cure. The most important lesson to be learned from this story is that routine HIV testing must become a part of regular health care for everyone.”

“With advancements in the treatment of HIV, it is now possible – and common – to keep children born of HIV-positive mothers from becoming infected. However, this is only possible if pregnant women get tested for HIV as a part of their prenatal care, and if they have access to the appropriate anti-retroviral medications that will help prevent their unborn children from contracting the virus.”

“In addition to testing for HIV, we must also make sure women are receiving the education and information needed to stay free of HIV in the first place. Today, women account for approximately 20% of all people living with HIV, but make up 60% of people who contract the virus from heterosexual activity. The disproportionate impact of HIV among women of color is also staggering – HIV infection rates among African American women are 25 times greater than they are among white women and five (5) times higher among Latinas than white women.”

“While treatment advances can help women live long, healthy lives with HIV, we must always prioritize HIV prevention. At ARCW, we are committed to ensuring all women with HIV get the care and treatment they need while also continuing to provide HIV testing and prevention programs to women at-risk for contracting HIV. Until such time that a cure for HIV is available, we must remain dedicated to doing all we can to preventing HIV transmission.”

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