

The Potter's House Megachurch Offers Free HIV Tests on World AIDS Day

For World AIDS Day on Sunday, T.D. Jakes' church, the Potter's House in Dallas, provided free HIV testing.

The Potter's House was one of many organizations in Dallas to host events for World AIDS Day, remembering AIDS victims, celebrating those living with HIV and testing those who may be newly infected.

"With it being not only a national, but an international epidemic, we wanted to show our solidarity," Bonné Moon, an associate pastor at the megachurch, told *The Dallas Morning News*. "The statistics are growing at alarming rates."

Dallas County has the highest rate of new HIV infections in the state and one of the highest in the country, World AIDS Day Dallas organizers say.

According to Dallas County Health and Human Services, 25 percent of new HIV diagnoses are in teenagers between the ages of 13 and 18, 49 percent of them are African-Americans, and 18 percent of new diagnoses are women, ABC affiliate WFAA reports.

Juanita Dauya—a volunteer assisting with the tests—was impressed with the turnout, telling WFAA that they tested about 500 people.

Moon said the megachurch offered HIV testing in 2006 but chose to do so again because the congregation has grown and a new generation of teenagers has gone through its youth program. She explained that the church's leadership has always emphasized the importance of HIV testing.

“It’s easy, it’s simple and it’s so important,” Moon says. “This is something you do as a man or a woman of God—you become accountable.”

The Potter’s House leadership says it’s time to end the silence and the stigma around HIV testing, so Moon and several of the church’s staff joined the public in getting tested for HIV.

“We can’t ignore because we want to stay undercover,” Moon told WFAA. “You know the cover is off, and we just need to be healthy, know what our status is, and do something about it—particularly not spread it!”

Testing coordinator Kenny Skinner says the test requires a pinprick on a finger and that results are available within 60 seconds.