

World AIDS Day validates the disease is still with us



Publisher's note: *Maxine Alper with the Sierra Foothills AIDS Foundation office in South Lake Tahoe will be on KTHO FM-96.1/AM-590 (www.kthoradio.com) on Saturday at 10am and Monday at 6pm. The closest World's AIDS Day event to Lake Tahoe is in Reno tonight from 5-7:30pm at Joe Crowley Student*

Union at UNR.

By Jenny Lightfoot

World AIDS Day " which is each Dec. 1 – was created in 1988 to focus global awareness on the pandemic and generate positive action to stop the spread of HIV and eradicate AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

Well more than half a million people have died of AIDS in the United States " the equivalent of the entire population of Las Vegas.

Currently, it is estimated that more than a million people are living with HIV/AIDS here in America and about 20 percent of these people are unaware of their infection, posing a high risk of onward transmission. Every year approximately 56,000 Americans are infected with HIV, which means that every 9½ minutes someone in the U.S. is infected with HIV.

Alarmingly, 38 percent of people diagnosed with HIV progress to full blown AIDS within a year because they are unaware of their status and don't receive HIV medications soon enough.

World AIDS Day is an opportunity for us to work together to help reduce the stigma around HIV and to promote HIV testing. There now exists an HIV Rapid Test. This is a simple mouth

swab with results available in only 20 minutes. Education (the social vaccine) and testing are crucial to the prevention and transmission of the HIV virus.

Jenny Lightfoot works for the Sierra Foothills AIDS Foundation office in Auburn.