



WORLD AIDS DAY

Event Blends Music, Screening

Go-Go Concert Targeting Area Teens Is Free With HIV Test

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As dozens of teenagers swayed and shimmied to the throb of a go-go band on a District dance floor yesterday, a handful crammed onto benches nearby, silent and fidgeting as they waited to be tested for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Admission to hear the lineup of local go-go music greats -- Bad Company, 3rd Dimension, New Vision, All Stars -- was free for anyone who first submitted to the cotton-swab screening. For everyone else, the price was \$10.

Sponsored by a D.C. nonprofit group, Metro TeenAIDS, the program that blended music mania and HIV-AIDS consciousness at the Market Lounge in Northeast was one of scores of activities in the District yesterday that marked World AIDS Day. Other local events included the relatively common vigils, the relatively less common free curbside screenings, and town hall meetings, a concert and a dance marathon.

This year, the day followed the release of bad news about infection rates in the city and across the nation. A report issued Monday called the disease "a modern epidemic" in the District, which has the highest incidence of any city in the country. On Friday, sources at the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) said estimates of the number of Americans nationwide who become infected with the AIDS virus each year are 50 percent higher than previously thought, at 55,000 to 60,000 new cases rather than the previous estimate of 40,000.

The disease cuts across sex, race and age. From 1,000 to 1,500 HIV-infected people younger than 25 live in the capital, according to Metro TeenAIDS estimates. The group provides education programs and prevention resources to young people in the area.

[Adam Tenner](#), executive director of the nonprofit group, emphasized in an interview the importance of raising awareness of the disease, particularly among younger people.

"What we know is that go-go is a huge attraction," he said. "And what we know is this is one way to get youth where they are, to bring the information to them."

Tenner said that although many high school students have told Metro TeenAIDS they know someone with HIV or AIDS, "that doesn't translate into behavior."

He said too few know how to protect themselves, hence such outreach efforts as music.

Among the 82 young people who received HIV screenings by the group last week, a 23-year-old man and a 19-year-old woman tested positive; the woman's mother also had HIV, but her experience wasn't enough to prevent her daughter from a risky sexual encounter, Tenner said.

In a corner room barely insulated from the boom and pulse of the All Stars, Metro TeenAIDS counselor Saba Tsegaye gently questioned Lindsay Morris and Ethan Nuss, both 23, about fluids that transmit HIV.

Waiting his turn outside, Chris, 16, wondered aloud at the same question. Blood? Check. Saliva? Not sure. (The last names of Chris and the other juveniles are not included because of their age.)

Saliva and urine are common wrong answers that Tsegaye said she often hears when she teaches classes to D.C. high-schoolers.

Chris, a self-described All Stars fan from Southeast, said he was happy to get a free test "just to be on the safe side."

A teenager from Southeast said she was being tested for the seventh time in two years. She has had the same boyfriend for months but wanted another test. "I don't know if he's got other girlfriends," she said.

"You can't be too sure," chimed in David, 16, from Southeast, sitting on an opposite bench. David, who said he has a 1-year-old son, said he started being more careful after a friend's mother died of AIDS in 2004.

M'Shai Madon, 24, a rap artist from Northeast, cradled her sleeping 2-year-old son in one arm as she filled out a confidentiality form with the other.

Of HIV-AIDS awareness among the youths she often meets through her music, Madon expressed skepticism. "They're just starting to get the importance of testing. But they're not conscious on how to get the disease," she said.

Out of the testing room walked three just-screened adolescents. Waving yellow wristbands that meant they'd been screened, the three dived for the dance floor.