

**HIV Vaccine Awareness Day – May 18th.  
Real People. Real Progress.**

**SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

**HIV Vaccine Awareness Day  
May 18, 2004  
HIV Vaccine Research: Real People. Real Progress.**

Dear Editor:

**AIDS continues to devastate communities in the United States and around the world.**

Today, approximately 40 million people around the world are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS. Of these, 37 million are adults and 2.5 million are children under the age of 15. In the U.S., over 40,000 people become infected with HIV each year. It is the number one killer of African-American men of all ages. Latinos, who make up 13 percent of the U.S. population, account for 19 percent of new AIDS cases. Over half a million Americans have died of AIDS since the epidemic began.

**May 18<sup>th</sup> is HIV Vaccine Awareness Day.** It is a day to educate Americans about the need for vaccines to prevent HIV. This year's theme is "Real People. Real Progress." [Insert organization name or "I"] would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of thousands of study volunteers, scientists and health professionals committed to finding a safe and effective vaccine. With the help of these people behind the science, much progress has been made toward developing a safe and effective preventive HIV vaccine. Currently, there are over 20 promising HIV vaccine candidates in various stages of testing, yet, there is still no vaccine. We are all in this together. All Americans, especially at-risk populations, such as communities of color and those who are sexually active, need to learn more about HIV vaccine research and be a part of making an HIV vaccine a reality.

**Scientists have been searching for a safe and effective vaccine to prevent HIV infection since the virus was first identified in 1984.** The progress made by researchers is significant. Each new test or human clinical trial brings us one step closer to finding an effective vaccine to prevent HIV infection, just like scientists did for polio and smallpox.

**For the second year in a row, the day will be commemorated with a twist on a familiar symbol of AIDS awareness.** Organizers are asking people to wear a red AIDS ribbon upside down on HIV Vaccine Awareness Day. The upside-down AIDS ribbon forms a "V, for "vaccines," the vision of a world without AIDS, and symbolizes the urgent need to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.

**HIV Vaccine Awareness day is a day to acknowledge those involved in HIV vaccine research. The more we know about the research, the sooner we can make an HIV vaccine a reality.** I believe in the real people and the real progress of HIV vaccine research and urge others to learn more about it.

[Opportunity to insert local information such as local activities, trials being conducted, etc.]

(Signature)

Name  
Address/City/State/Zip  
Phone Number

*May 18th. Wear your  
Red AIDS Ribbon upside down*

