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**For Immediate Release**

## **Largest Turnout Expected for 23<sup>rd</sup> AIDS Walk**

**Governor Roberts, Senator Merkley, Attorney General Kroger, and Mayor Adams, join Honorary AIDS Walk Co-Chair Commissioner Wheeler as they address 10,000 Walkers gathered in the fight against HIV/AIDS.**

PORTLAND, OR (October 9, 2009) – On October 11, 2009 – activists, political leaders, community leaders, and thousands of Oregonians will come together as they rally to raise awareness of HIV & AIDS, combat HIV-related stigma, and generate funds for critical services. In total, more than 10,000 individuals are anticipated to fill Pioneer Courthouse Square for the **23<sup>rd</sup> Annual AIDS Walk Portland presented by The Standard.**

*AIDS Walk Portland*, a 5k walk and rally will raise critical funds for HIV/AIDS prevention, education, care and support services throughout the Portland metropolitan area. This year's opening ceremony, beginning at 10:30 am at The Square, will include comments from Senator Jeff Merkley, Attorney General John Kroger, Mayor Sam Adams, Chair of Multnomah County Commission Ted Wheeler, Governor Barbara Roberts, and Michael Kaplan, executive director of Cascade AIDS Project (CAP) and more.

With a renewed focus on HIV/AIDS within the US domestic front brought about by federal initiatives, such as the CDC's **nine and a half minutes** ([www.nineandahalminutes.org](http://www.nineandahalminutes.org)) **campaign**; and with growing local efforts via **CAP's Screw Stigma campaign** – this year's Walk is destined to be Portland's largest and most impactful AIDS Walk ever.

As backdrop to this year's AIDS Walk – new statistics at the federal and local levels help highlight the need for more resources and awareness. Statistics include:

- An estimated 1.1 million individuals in the United States are living with HIV.
- 20 to 25% of individuals living with HIV in the US do not even know they are infected.
- 56,000 new infections occur each year in the US – that's one infection every nine and a half minutes.
- HIV disproportionately affects the poor and communities of people of color.
- Over 7000 Oregonians are living with HIV.

According to Michael Kaplan, CAP's Executive Director and openly HIV-positive for 17 years, "With these new statistics, our goal is to bring awareness to the community. For the first time we will have **100 openly HIV-positive people** lead off *The Walk*. We not only want to remind people that we are part of the community, but that by coming together publically we can fight the isolation and stigma associated with HIV and AIDS. With a new HIV infection occurring every 9 ½ minutes, we still have to work to prevent the spread of this disease while we support people living with HIV." For more information about *AIDS Walk Portland*: [www.aidswalkportland.com](http://www.aidswalkportland.com).

## **About Cascade AIDS Project (CAP)**

Cascade AIDS Project is the oldest and largest community-based provider of HIV services, including housing, education, and advocacy in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

CAP's mission is to lead efforts to prevent new HIV infections, care for people affected and infected by HIV/AIDS, educate communities to eliminate stigma and shame, and advocate for immediate action in combating the pandemic.

Overall, last year CAP provided HIV/AIDS education and prevention services to 16,040 people and coordinated wrap-around support services for 2,502 men, women, and children affected and infected with HIV/AIDS. In addition, 735 people 19,960 hours of their time to help CAP achieve its mission. More information about Cascade AIDS Project is at [www.cascadeaids.org](http://www.cascadeaids.org).

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