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### **World AIDS Day event works to support community**

Five years after U2's lead singer Bono appeared on stage at Wheaton College with Franciscan Sr. Sheila Kinsey and Wheaton College Professor Sandra Joireman, the commitment continues through the efforts of DuPage Glocal AIDS Action Network (DGAAN) and its affiliated group of volunteers and social service organizations. The spotlight may be gone, but DGAAN's goal persists: to help bring an end to HIV/AIDS while supporting victims and their families as they grapple with the debilitating nature of the disease. On Dec. 1, DGAAN will join in the international celebration of World AIDS Day—an event initiated in 1988 to draw attention to the need to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The Wheaton Franciscan-created and sponsored Canticle Ministries—a healing ministry dedicated to serving HIV/AIDS clients as they navigate the plethora of obstacles associated with the disease—together with DGAAN extend an invitation to the community to attend a prayer service commemorating World AIDS Day beginning at 1 p.m. Dec. 1 at the Wheaton Franciscan Chapel at the Our Lady of the Angels Motherhouse Chapel at 26 W 171 Roosevelt Road in Wheaton. Afterward a reception is planned in the Promenade and auditorium.

David Allen, director of Canticle Ministries, said he sees World AIDS Day as an opportunity to acknowledge that more than 40 million people around the globe are currently living with HIV/AIDS; millions more have succumbed to the deadly disease. The statistics are staggering, said Allen, but he points out that communities are coming together to support people rather than forcing them into isolation or shunning them.

He is particularly proud of the efforts by a group of student volunteers from Wheaton College and the College of DuPage who regularly offer to assist many of Aurora's Hispanic population, some of whom have been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Canticle Ministries operates Centro de Esperanza, a five-year-old drop-in center at 157 S. Lincoln Ave. It provides counseling opportunities for HIV/AIDS clients as they broach the myriad of obstacles that complicate their lives, such as access to healthcare and prescriptions, housing issues and more. Furthermore, the center's volunteers are on-hand to assist with a variety of educational opportunities, including courses in computer training and English as a Second Language to name a few.

One of the volunteers at Centro de Esperanza who is a member of Wheaton College's Kenosis group, the student arm of DGAAN, is a regular 21-year-old Julie Lundy. Having recently gleaned insights about the sociological implications of HIV/AIDS, she said what keeps her coming back to the center is the chance to be authentic with life at various levels. "This is how we see HIV/AIDS locally. I feel I'm learning. It's awareness, a relational thing. It's being able to be honest and getting to know each other."

For one of the center's clients, Juan, who has lived with HIV for the past 25 years, the drop-in facility is truly a ministry. "They help a lot. Without them, I would've given up on life. They've shown that they want to help. I want to let other people know that (the Canticle Ministries' Centro de Esperanza) is out there. And they want to work together to help clients."

Centro de Esperanza is open from 5-8 p.m. on Mondays. It's intentionally located near a community clinic staffed with physicians, a pharmacy and a team of dentists. "It goes along with our mission with the Wheaton Franciscans—to build relationships," said Allen.