



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Southern AIDS Living Quilt**  
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## **Southern AIDS Living Quilt Raises Awareness on the Web**

*Women across the South share personal stories of living with HIV/AIDS*

MIAMI, FL – Thursday, October 30, 2008 – AIDS is the leading cause of death for African American women ages 25-34 today. HIV infections could be reduced by 30 percent per year if all HIV infected persons knew of their infection and adopted behavioral changes to limit the spread of the disease. The Southern AIDS Living Quilt, [www.livingquilt.org](http://www.livingquilt.org), is a unique project that collects and shares video and audio stories from women on the front lines of the fight against the spread of HIV and AIDS. The Living Quilt highlights the need for routine testing, early diagnosis, and increased access to care for those living with HIV/AIDS in the South.

“We must turn the tide on the 56,000 new HIV infections annually,” said Tom Liberti, Board Member of the Southern AIDS Coalition and Chief of the Bureau of HIV/AIDS for Florida’s Department of Health. “Nationally, Florida ranks fourth highest in AIDS case rates and second in the number of AIDS cases reported. It is critical that we act now.”

In an effort to increase awareness of this crisis in the South, today’s presentation of the Living Quilt at the University of Miami’s Miller School of Medicine, Mailman Center for Child Development brought together representatives from the Southern AIDS Coalition, Care Resource and Promote to Prevent (P2P).

“The stories that make up this quilt will empower young women to get tested and know their status,” said Alex Moreno, Director of the P2P Program and Adolescent Outreach and Education at the University of Miami’s Miller School of Medicine. “I urge young Latinas across the region to share their stories and prevent the spread of HIV.”

The true power of the Living Quilt project is in the stories it shares and the inspiration it brings to others. While some are telling their stories for the first time, others have embraced the importance of communicating the changing face of HIV/AIDS.

Visitors can also upload stories of their own, becoming part of the Quilt through their own unique narrative. The Living Quilt site also provides valuable information and resources on HIV and AIDS, including where to find testing resources across the United States.

## HIV/AIDS in Florida

HIV disproportionately affects minorities in Florida:

- Nationally, Florida ranks fourth highest in AIDS case rates and second in the number of AIDS cases reported.
- Women make up almost one third of people living with HIV/AIDS in Florida in 2006. Today, there are more than 25,000 women living with HIV/AIDS in Florida.
- More than 80 percent of these women living with HIV/AIDS in Florida are minorities (70 percent African American and 13 percent Hispanic).

### **About the Southern AIDS Coalition**

The Southern AIDS Coalition was formed in 2001 as a membership organization of government representatives, corporations, and community advocates. This unique partnership is borne from the burgeoning numbers of people whose new infection rates are much higher than the rest of the U.S. population. SAC highlights that federal funds do not meet the needs of those living with HIV in the South and are not equally distributed across the country. SAC works to provide southern citizens an opportunity for adequate HIV/AIDS prevention information, treatment, and health care. SAC is a federally recognized 501(c)3.

### **About Test for Life**

Test for Life is an educational campaign that began in 2006 by the National Minority Quality Forum—a non-profit research and educational organization dedicated to ensuring that high-risk racial and ethnic populations and communities receive optimal health care. Test for Life raises awareness of the importance of routine HIV screening in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS.