

# VCU Common Ground Client Advisory Board

# NEWSLETTER

Quarter 2

## June 5<sup>th</sup> is HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day

Long Term Survivors (or LTS) refer to those who have lived with HIV for many years. Approximately 330,000 or 25% of people in the United States living with HIV are classified as HIV Long-Term Survivors.

Pre-HAART LTS have been living with HIV since before 1996 or the start of the modern era of high active antiretroviral therapy (HAART).

Post HAART LTS have been living with HIV for more than 10 years. Their experiences are very different than someone who was diagnosed earlier in the epidemic.

Lifetime survivors (also referred to as Dandelions) were either born with HIV or acquired it as young children.



### Facts about Long-Term Survivors:

- Nearly 50% of people with HIV in the US are over the age of 50. By 2030, this number is expected to rise to 70%.
- LTS face specific issues such as AIDS Survivor Syndrome, an HIV-specific trauma as a result from living through the most unjust years of the AIDS pandemic. LTS may also face anxiety, depression, survivors guilt, social isolation or other challenges.
- Many LTS deal with the consequences of decades of HIV treatment as well as the common effects of aging.

### Empowering Yourself as a Long-Term Survivor

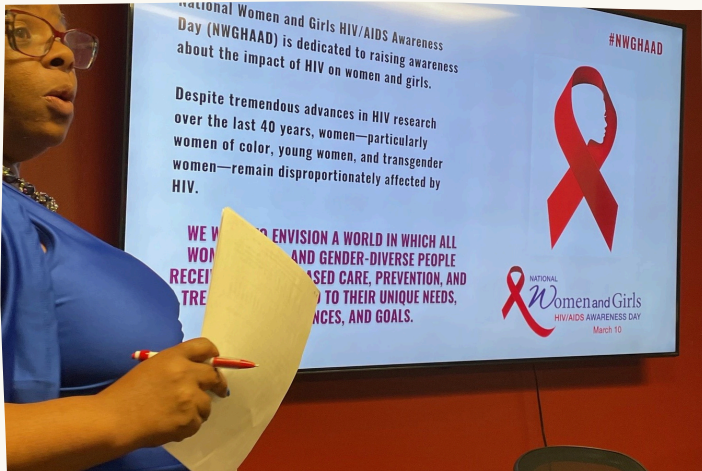
- Take Charge of Your Health - Staying informed about your HIV drugs, having a good relationship with your healthcare providers and keeping on top of your diet and exercise will greatly improve your health outcomes.
- Get Support - Social support for HIV long-term survivors is incredibly important. Reach out to local support groups, mental health counselors, peer mentors or even with other LTS.
- Tell Your Story - Speaking your truth is a part of the healing process and finding community.

# Women and Girl's HIV/AIDS Awareness and Empowerment Day Recap



*The Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness and Empowerment Conference was held in the Minority Health Consortium on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025.*

This event supported the **National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**, an annual awareness campaign observed on March 10<sup>th</sup> to raise awareness about how HIV distinctly impacts women and girls.



JustBU Inc. (a Richmond-area women's HIV advocacy group) and the VCU Ryan White Program brought together local providers, leaders, community members and clients to speak about their experiences as women in HIV/AIDS care work and treatment.

Lecturers at the event spoke about how HIV/AIDS affects women, specifically women of color and transgender women disproportionately. They also discussed social barriers HIV-positive women face including stigma, lack of community and misconceptions around transmission.



Thank you all who shared their stories  
We greatly appreciated the ability to foster a platform where members from our local community could meet, talk and thrive while empowering themselves in their diagnosis!

We look forward to continuing our partnership with Just B U Inc. and creating more impactful events together in the future.

**Thank you to all who attended this event!**

Visit: <https://www.justbuinc.org/> for more information on their program and mission.

# National HIV Testing Day - June 27<sup>th</sup>

**This year's NHTD theme is**  
**“Level Up Your Self Love: Check Your Status”**



National HIV Testing Day (NHTD) was first observed on June 27, 1995. This day encourages people to get tested for HIV, know their status, and raise awareness about HIV.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What should you do if you miss a dose of your medication?

If you realize you have missed a dose, go ahead and take the medication as soon as you can, then take the next dose at your usual scheduled time.

If you miss multiple doses of your HIV medications, talk to your provider and pharmacist about ways to help you remember to take the medications at the same time every day.

### Can you take a break from taking your medications?

Taking a break in your treatment suddenly can be potentially harmful for your health. For example, drug resistance can build when patients stop taking certain medications, meaning that medicine can no longer be used to treat HIV. Stopping your medication will also lead to a lower CD4/T-Cell count as the HIV virus reproduces throughout your body.

There are major health consequences to taking a break from your medications. Talk to your provider before making any changes to your medication regimen.

### What is HIV drug resistance and how can I avoid it?

When HIV isn't fully controlled by anti-HIV drugs, the virus makes copies of itself at a very rapid rate. Changes in the HIV genetic code (or mutations) can occur, creating new forms of the virus that may not react to a particular drug the same way as the original virus.

This is called drug resistance, because the virus can multiply and cause disease even when a patient is taking the drug as directed.

Modern HIV treatment is designed to reduce the amount of HIV in the body to a level that cannot be detected by standard lab tests (called "undetectable viral load"). The lower your viral load, the lower your risk of developing resistance because there's less virus to produce mutations.



# Have you heard?

Eligible residents of Virginia can receive an HIV self-test to take in the privacy of their home or where is convenient through the Virginia Department of Health's FREE HIV Testing Program.

[www.greaterthan.org/hiv-self-tests-virginia/](http://www.greaterthan.org/hiv-self-tests-virginia/)

## UPCOMING EVENTS & AWARENESS DAYS

RVA Recovery Pridefest - June 1<sup>st</sup>

HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day - June 5<sup>th</sup>

National HIV Testing Day - June 27<sup>th</sup>

Black Pride RVA - Day of Purpose Festival - July 19<sup>th</sup>

Zero HIV Stigma Day - July 21<sup>st</sup>

Southern HIV/AIDS Awareness Day - August 20<sup>th</sup>

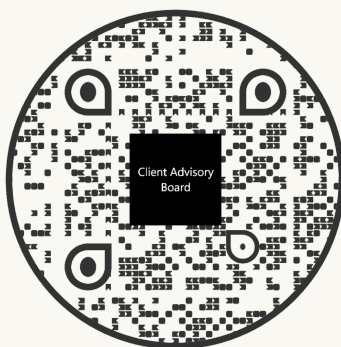
United States Conference on HIV/AIDS (USCHA) - September 4<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>

*Hosted by NMAC, #2025USCHA will be held in Washington, DC.*

*This year's theme is Aging with HIV. For more information visit: [uscha.life](http://uscha.life)*

For Us By US (For Positive By Positive) - October 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup>

*OASIS Florida is proud to present their 27th Positive Living Conference at the Island Resort on Okaloosa Island! Registration spots are filled on a first come, first serve basis. Application deadline is October 3rd, 2025.*



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