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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Free HIV Testing Becomes Available in Putnam County

Brewster, NY—More than one million people in the U.S. are living with HIV and one in four is unaware of their infection, according to a 2008 report by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

These statistics highlight the importance of testing because early treatment makes a difference in an HIV positive person's wellbeing and outcome. Beginning July 24, the Putnam County Department of Health will be offering free anonymous and confidential HIV testing.

“Early diagnosis is key for individuals who have contracted HIV,” explains Allen Beals, MD, Putnam County's Commissioner of Health. Early treatment makes a big difference in the patient's quality of life. “Medications are vastly improved today and HIV positive individuals live longer and healthier lives,” continued Dr. Beals, “nonetheless, prevention is still our number-one strategy. Helping to identify all HIV positive individuals is the essential first step.”

Testing will be available Tuesdays and Thursdays at two Putnam County Department of Health locations—121 Main Street in the Village of Brewster and at the main office at One Geneva Road, near the intersection of Route 312 and Interstate 84. Appointments are necessary and interested residents should call 845-808-1390, x43114. Tuberculosis (TB) testing is also available for at-risk individuals. STD screenings will begin in the fall.

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HIV infection was first reported in the U.S. in 1981, but was unnamed at the time. Since then, approximately 1.7 million people in the U.S. have been infected. This number includes over 619,000 who have died and approximately 1.2 million adults and adolescents who were living with HIV infection at the end of 2008, the most recent year for which data are available. The impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic spans the nation with HIV diagnoses reported in all states.

The Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of Putnam County residents through prevention of illness and injury. For more information, please visit our website at www.putnamcountyny.com; or visit our social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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Other HIV statistics:

More than 50,000 new infections are reported annually; more than 50% result from contact with individuals who are unaware of their own infection

Of the approximate 56,300 new infections in 2006, the breakdown is as follows:

By age:

34 % = 13 to 29 years

31% = 30 to 39 years

25% = 40 to 49 years

10% = 50 plus years

By sex:

73% = male

27% = female

By transmission category:

53% = MSM* (men who have sex with men)

31% = Heterosexuals

12% = IDU (injection drug users)

4% = MSM-IDU

*MSM—the term men who have sex with men is used in CDC surveillance systems because it indicates the behaviors that transmit HIV infection, rather than how individuals self-identify in terms of their sexuality.

Source: CDC Fact Sheet: Estimates of New HIV Infections in the United States (August 2008)