Want Beyoncé and Jay-Z Tickets? Then Get Tested for HIV

This South Carolina health center reaches urban and rural clients with a new testing van—and a raffle for free concert tickets!

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Adam Weaver, prevention program manager at Palmetto Community Care in Charleston, South Carolina, knows how nerve-racking it can be to get tested for HIV.

“In every given scenario, knowing is better than not knowing,” Weaver said. “If people do test positive, there are organizations like ours and government programs to get you on medication to have the chance to live a long, healthy life.”

Weaver says he wants to make HIV testing as commonplace as getting a physical or your blood sugar checked out—so what better way to get people in for a test than to give away tickets to the biggest concert tour of the year?

“This is definitely part of why we do the incentives that we do, so that we can encourage people to come in so they can see it’s not that scary,” Weaver said.

Until Thursday, June 28, anyone who comes in for a free HIV test at Palmetto Community Care is automatically entered into a raffle for tickets to a Beyoncé and Jay-Z concert on August 21 in Columbia, South Carolina. The winner will be announced June 29.

HIV tests are offered at the Palmetto office as well as at the testing van the center acquired in May thanks to a $50,000 grant from the Elton John AIDS Foundation. The van, according to a press release, is aimed at providing care to “rural and high-needs communities.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the South has higher rates of HIV in rural and suburban areas than anywhere else in the country. “And a lot of our rural and suburban clientele don’t have access to transportation,” Weaver said. “The CDC also points out that the South has very limited public health infrastructure.”

Palmetto Community Care, Weaver noted, services three counties in South Carolina, covering 2,600 square miles. The van helps staff reach the farthest corners of this area. “I can drive for an hour and a half and still be in our service territory,” Weaver said.

The organization conducts around 1,600 HIV tests a year, and 20 people tested HIV positive in 2017, according to Weaver. So far this year, 13 new cases have been identified.

“Should anyone test positive, I work with our case management team to get them linked into our services, where our case managers get them into medical care and help them with transportation, financial assistance, prescriptions and insurance,” Weaver said.

Even if you test HIV negative, Weaver noted, it’s important to consider measures such as pre-exposure prophylaxis [PrEP] or to take advantage of other prevention resources. Weaver calls testing “one of the most important things that you can do.”

“We’re seeing at least 10 or more people a day, so I definitely think [the raffle] is helping,” Weaver said. “Beyoncé brings the crowd wherever she goes.”

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