



Xavier Contact: Melissa Newell

(504) 520-5425 | mnewell@XULA.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A New Initiative by Xavier University of Louisiana Aims to Raise HIV Awareness and Prevention in Louisiana

New Orleans, LA – For almost 100 years, Xavier University of Louisiana has focused on eliminating health disparities in underserved populations. This defining principle, deeply rooted in the identity of the university through the mission bestowed by its foundress, St. Katharine Drexel and her Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, led to the creation of the university’s Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education (CMHDRE) within the institution’s College of Pharmacy. On National Black HIV Awareness Day, Wednesday, February 7, 2024, Xavier’s CMHDRE will host a kickoff event on Xavier’s campus to launch its newest initiative, “Louisiana Can,” which aims to raise awareness and prevent the spread of HIV through engaging, educating, and empowering the Louisiana community. The event will be held in Xavier’s McCaffrey Ballroom, on the third floor of the [University Center](#), located at 4955 Drexel Dr, New Orleans, LA 70125.

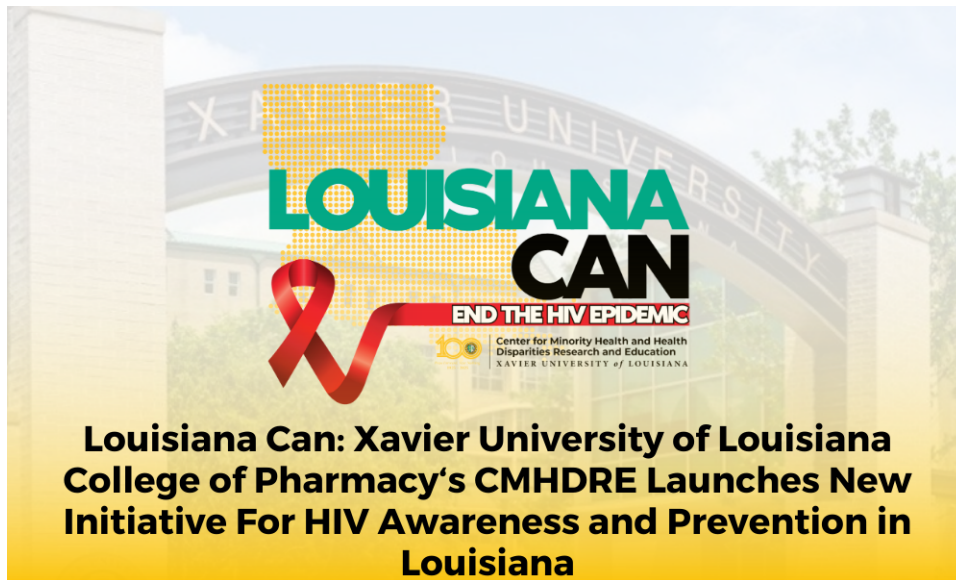
Various speakers, including local community leaders, healthcare professionals and HIV advocates will be featured as the initiative recognizes National Black HIV Awareness Day. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear personal stories from individuals living and thriving with HIV, learn about prevention methods and treatment options, and connect with local resources. The event will also include the debut of the initiative’s theme song, “Louisiana Can,” performed live by LuiZana, also known as [Louisiana Ca\\$h](#).

“Everyone in Louisiana should have access to the information and resources they need to protect themselves and their loved ones from HIV,” said **Dr. Kathleen Kennedy, dean of the College of Pharmacy at Xavier University of Louisiana**. “We are committed to working with communities across the state to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and promote prevention.”

Established in 2002, the CMHDRE’s initial focus was on the disparities among patients with diabetes and diabetes-related illnesses. As it has grown in support from faculty and staff, the center has expanded its purview on the social determinants of health, including racism, public health policy, education, income, and the environment, all of which contribute to health disparities. Recognizing the need for research, education, and advocacy about HIV, the CMHDRE established the initiative to educate the Louisiana community, address stigma, promote testing, identify resources, and examine policies that impact people living with HIV to lessen the infection rate in the state.

In Louisiana, new HIV cases disproportionately affect the Black population, and the state is among those with the highest rate of new infections. The CMHDRE collaborated with the Satcher Health Leadership Institute (SHLI) at Morehouse College of Medicine to establish Louisiana Can, modeled after SHLI’s own initiative, “Georgia Thrives,” which seeks to benefit HIV education and research in the state of Georgia. Along with SHLI, the CMHDRE will also work with local health organizations, community groups, and government agencies that can help ensure progress toward the goal of ending the HIV epidemic through research, education, and advocacy.

For more information about the Louisiana Can program and how to get involved, please visit the initiative’s website at www.louisianacan.org.



###

About Xavier University of Louisiana

Xavier University of Louisiana, America's only historically Black and Catholic University, is ranked among the top three HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities) in the nation. Recognized as a national leader in STEM and health sciences, Xavier produces more African American students who graduate from medical schools each year than any other university in the United States. Additionally, Xavier's College of Pharmacy is also among the top producers of African American pharmacists in the country.

Established in 1925 by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as a place for African Americans and Native Americans to receive quality education, Xavier has since expanded its programs in art, business, education, biological sciences, chemistry, pharmacy and political science. More recent additions in robotics, bioinformatics, engineering, data science, neuroscience and genetics, in addition to new STEM-based master's programs, have provided Xavier students (3,419 students) an unbeatable combination of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities and life experiences. Xavier students collaborate with world-renowned faculty, who are experts in their fields, to produce award-winning research and notable work. The winning Xavier formula provides students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect and feeds their souls, thereby facilitating a more just and humane society for all. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana, visit us online at www.XULA.edu or contact Melissa Newell at (504) 520-5240 or XULANews@XULA.edu