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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2008

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HIV Grant to Fund Expansion of HIV Testing at Valley Medical Center, County Clinics

SAN JOSE, CALIF.— In Santa Clara County, an estimated 1,500 people are living with HIV who do not know they are infected. The Ira Greene PACE (Partners in AIDS Care and Education) Clinic has received a \$125,000 grant from Gilead Sciences, Inc. for its HIV Screening Initiative to expand HIV testing in the Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System.

“Expanding access to HIV testing is essential to the health of our community,” said Supervisor Liz Kniss, Chair of the Board of Supervisors Health and Hospital Committee. “We will continue to offer testing as part of health screenings so that any infected person is made aware.”

The PACE Clinic will develop and implement a plan to increase HIV testing, with the initial focus on people seeking diagnosis and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and later as a routine part of health screening, particularly for individuals identified as at risk for infection. In September 2006, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued recommendations that HIV testing should be performed routinely for all patients aged 13-64 years of age.

Early diagnosis and treatment of HIV infection can dramatically improve the health of the person and potentially delay or prevent progression of the disease,” said Dr. Marty Fenstersheib, Health Officer, Santa Clara County.

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By the end of December 2007, 3,882 cases of AIDS were reported to the Santa Clara County Public Health Department. Cumulatively, of the AIDS cases reported since 1983, 55.3% were White, 27.8% were Hispanic, 11% were Black and 5.3% were Asian/Pacific Islander.

The \$125,000 grant from Gilead Sciences, Inc. will assist in providing early diagnosis and treatment of HIV to Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System patients through increased staffing for testing, education, and counseling of patients that test HIV positive, as well as linking HIV positive patient to care at the PACE Clinic.

“HIV testing is a valuable component of the County’s HIV/AIDS services that goes hand in hand with treatment,” said Robin Roche, Executive Director, Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, Ambulatory and Managed Care. “We are very thankful to receive this grant from Gilead Sciences which will help us expand HIV testing.”

Free or low-cost HIV testing is available at the Santa Clara County Public Health Department’s Crane Center, 976 Lenzen Avenue, Room 1500B, San Jose, CA 95126, (408) 792-3720. HIV counselors provide anonymous or confidential HIV testing and counseling using both the standard HIV test and the rapid HIV test. No appointment is needed. Additional locations for HIV testing include Billy deFrank LGBT Community Center, 938 The Alameda, San Jose, and Asian American for Community Involvement, 2400 Moorpark Avenue, San Jose.

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