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## SMS ways to help HIV/AIDS sufferers

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Send an SMS to help a person with HIV or AIDS. This is the call made by the Malaysian AIDS Foundation at the launch of its Circle of Hope Fund Campaign which consolidates three schemes that assist people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA).

The three schemes are the Paediatric AIDS Scheme, Drug Assistance Scheme and Business Assistance Scheme. Each SMS contributes RM2.50 and payment may be one-time or monthly.

Simply type "MAF" to 36886 to make a one-time donation or type "MAF ON" for a monthly donation.

The fund was officially launched by foundation chairman Datuk Marina Mahathir at the council's headquarters in conjunction with AIDS Memorial Day which falls tomorrow.

This year's International AIDS Memorial Day theme is "Turning Remembrance into Action".

"We still want to remind people that AIDS is still here and affects a large part of the world. It is a disease that has killed 15 million people, including Malaysians," she said.

The SMS campaign will coincide with public service announcements which will be aired over several Astro channels for the next few months.

Together with Red Communications Sdn Bhd and Pesaka Grey Sdn Bhd, the MAF plans to gain more funds to help people with AIDS.

"We try to get the message across that people with AIDS are living normal lives. Most need help in living, not dying," Marina said.

The Paediatric AIDS Scheme was launched in 1996 while the Drug Assistance Scheme started in 1998.

The drug assistance scheme helps poor PLWHAs access antiretroviral therapy so that they remain healthy.

The paediatric scheme provides eligible applicants financial aid of RM80-RM100 a month, transportation to access treatment and sponsorship of viral load tests.

The business scheme was launched two years ago and provides interest-free loans of up to RM1,000 to initiate or enhance small-scale business.

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