

HIV scare riles Mo. high school

By Sandra Jordan
Special to Sentinel-Voice
ST. LOUIS (NNPA) — The HIV scare at Normandy High School apparently has prompted an increase in HIV testing at area health organizations.

Planned Parenthood in St. Louis reported testing at least a dozen young people on the first day of its offer of free HIV testing for high school

students at any of its six St. Louis area locations through the end of November.

"We actually saw a big influx of high school students since everything started hitting the news, and it wasn't just from Normandy; there were students from all over the area," Erin Meyer, public relations and media coordinator for Planned Parenthood, said.

"So once this HIV story kind of broke, we've seen an increase of high school students coming to our clinic for HIV testing in general."

Staff at the Betty Jean Kerr People's Health Centers, reports increased call volume about HIV testing from "young-sounding voices."

"We are seeing a two or threefold increase in

pediatric HIV testing," CEO Dwayne Butler said. All three People's Health Clinics offer free testing for HIV.

The St. Louis County Health Department conducted onsite testing at the high school after the probe of one confirmed positive test for HIV led investigators to Normandy Senior High, where they said up to 50 students may have been exposed to the virus that causes AIDS.

School administrators at Normandy and the Health Department worked collaboratively to make sure the onsite tests conducted last week maintained confidentiality. Superintendent Stanton Lawrence said all 1,200 students spent four minutes in a testing station that had separate entrance and exits.

"The only persons manning those stations are the St. Louis County Department of Health," Lawrence said.

County Health Director Dr. Delores Gunn said complete test results were expected in seven to 10 days.

Students who chose not to
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Firefighter brass ousted after slur

MILWAUKEE (AP) — The head of the Wisconsin firefighters union resigned recently over a racist comment he made the day after Barack Obama became the first African-American elected president.

Rick Gale, who had worked on Obama's Wisconsin campaign, apologized to the union and the public in his resignation letter.

The Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin said Gale's comment was "offensive, inappropriate and racially insensitive and does not reflect the views of our union."

Gale, who headed the union for eight years, admitted in his letter that he used the "single racially charged word" during a private, casual conversation while having drinks with several board members Nov. 5.

"The word has no business in my vocabulary and I should not have used it — not even in private," he wrote.

"In doing so I let myself, the PFFW Executive Board and the entire membership down," he added. "I am sorry. I have asked the PFFW and the public to accept my deepest and sincerest apology."

Gale, a lieutenant with the West Allis Fire Department, said he was also resigning from all the governmental and public boards on which he served.

Those posts include membership on the State of Wisconsin Retirement Board as an appointee of Gov. Jim Doyle, an ardent supporter of Obama throughout the presidential race.

Obama was endorsed for president by the International Association of Fire Fighters, whose general president Harold Schaitberger issued a memo to its Wisconsin affiliates commenting on the resignation by saying Gale's comments were "inexcusable."

"However, this is also an opportunity to restate clearly my fundamental goal of building a union that is free from all forms of bigotry and bias," Schaitberger said.

Vick

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released from federal prison to a halfway house ahead of his scheduled release next July.

Vick would have limited freedom at a halfway house and more opportunity to contact officials of NFL teams in hopes of returning to the league for the 2009 season once training camps open next January.

Former Atlanta Falcons star Vick, who filed for bankruptcy protection in prison, must still have the approval of NFL commissioner Roger Goodell before being allowed back into the league.

Another factor would be that Vick's time away from the game will likely have diminished the fitness, skill and speed that made him a run and pass threat and one of the highest-paid quarterbacks in the NFL before everything fell apart.

Vick, the 2001 top pick in the NFL draft, signed a record 10-year deal worth 130 million dollars in 2004 but claimed he now owes 4.4 million dollars more than he has despite 16 million dollars in assets.

Animal rights groups protested outside the courthouse and Michael Markarian, an executive vice president of The Humane Society, was unhappy with the deal.

"We had hoped the Commonwealth of Virginia would send a stronger message that dogfighting crimes are cruel and unacceptable," he said.

"Nevertheless, Michael Vick is already paying his debt to society with a federal prison sentence and his example has demonstrated to people across the country that dogfighting is a dead-end activity that can jeopardize your freedom and your future."

Conference coaches immigrants on civic service

By Albert C. Jones
Special to Sentinel-Voice
SALT LAKE CITY, Utah (NNPA) — They traveled from Chicago to teach refugees and immigrants living in Utah how to organize and become viable community providers.

That was the goal of Patrick Augustin, executive director of the Pan-African Association (PAA) and Melineh Kano, program director of the Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries (IRIM), who serves as president of the 11-member volunteer board.

Both are based in Chicago.

Augustin, a Haitian-American, and Kano, an Armenian who immigrated to the U.S. from Iran years ago, were presenters last week at the Utah Refugee Conference.

"Mr. Patrick Augustin has come here today to teach us how to develop organizational capacity so our immigrants and refugees can help members of their communities," said Gerald Brown, director of Utah's Refugee Services Office.

"The first thing I noticed



Sentinel-Voice photo by Albert C. Jones/Diversity Times

Amadou Niang, president of United Africans of Utah, asks a question during the Utah Refugee Conference. Listening is James Whitaker, a director with the Utah Department of Workforce Services. The conference taught immigrants to become active civic servants.

about Patrick is that he worked all the time. In five years, he has turned the Pan-African Association into the best refugee organization in the country," said Brown to those meeting in the Salt Lake Marriott-University Park.

In recent years, Utah has

been the resettlement site of refugees fleeing war on the African continent, including Somalia, Sudan, Liberia, Ethiopia, Burundi, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Togo, according to the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Add to those refugees and immigrants in the past year

from Burma and Iraq, according to the International Rescue Committee.

Utah Gov. Jon M. Huntsman Jr. created the Refugee Services Office in November 2007 after recommendations from a Refugee Working Group co-chaired by Governor Huntsman and Salt Lake

County Mayor Peter Corroon.

Brown has more than 25 years of professional experience working with refugees at the local, national, and international levels.

Chicago has been experiencing an influx of African immigrants, refugees and exiles since the mid-1990s, said Augustin. Recent immigrants and refugees have been resettled in Chicago from Iraq and Burma, Kano said.

"Pan-Africanism goes back a long time," Augustin said, "to when slaves were sent to the Caribbean. Slaves were placed on ships from all over Africa. They didn't know each other. They decided we have to fight — no matter what tribal issues they had. When you come to the Pan-African organization, there is one voice and we are all united as one."

PAA has grown from one program with a staff of three in the first year to the seven programs and staff of 12. Pre-employment, community building and social adjustment are addressed by the nonprofit. Programs include mentoring youth, adults and

elderly to becoming more familiar with the American lifestyle.

PAA also hosts community development workshops, wellness programs, supports entrepreneurial initiatives, academic advisory and vocational services. PAA dance and drum groups perform regularly throughout Chicagoland, Augustin said.

"Some of you are planning or thinking about starting a new organization," he said. "It's not easy. Take slow steps — slower than a turtle. It is better to move with caution and have a plan so that your organization can be a stable organization and survive for years."

The leader as organizer has a variety of responsibilities.

"As a leader, you can't dedicate all your time in the office taking care of clients," Augustin said. "Clients have issues and a need to be continually meeting with them. Don't let your heart get in the way. You have to be out and do your public relations. You have to get known by your community. You as leader have to go out and meet with

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