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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 9, 2014

**Douglas County AIDS Project to transfer services,
programs to local health organizations**

LAWRENCE, Kan. – On July 1, the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department and Heartland Community Health Center will begin offering programs and services provided by the Douglas County AIDS Project, which will close its doors July 31.

The Health Department will assume leadership of targeted HIV testing, education and prevention efforts for local, at-risk members. Heartland Community Health Center will provide Medical Case Management services for those with an HIV/AIDS diagnosis. There currently are about 130 cases of HIV/AIDS in Douglas, Franklin, and Jefferson counties.

Douglas County AIDS Project (DCAP) is largely funded by two Kansas Department of Health and Environment grants. DCAP has requested the \$36,000 grant for case management to be allocated to Heartland Community Health Center, and the \$60,000 grant for testing and education be allocated to the Health Department.

These transfers stem from the medical advancements made in the treatment of HIV/AIDS during the past 15 years. Care for people living with HIV/AIDS is now similar to that of a chronic medical condition. To successfully and continually develop, it is now necessary for DCAP's programs to operate within integrated health care settings.

“At DCAP, we continually tell our clients that in order to manage their HIV infection they must be immersed in health care. They must consistently see an infectious disease doctor, primary care physician and have 100 percent adherence to their prescribed medication,” said DCAP Executive Director Trenton Garber. “Transferring our client services into a health care setting is a reflection of that mantra.”

Transferring HIV education and prevention programming to the Health Department utilizes the breadth of its professional expertise. The Health Department already provides about 800 HIV tests annually as a part of sexually transmitted disease testing. With the additional grant funding, the Health Department also will provide

HIV testing in the community, targeting at-risk populations. It will take on the approximately 500 HIV tests provided annually by DCAP.

"It has been rewarding to work with community partners and the DCAP Board and staff to ensure that HIV/AIDS services will continue to be available in our community. This partnership benefits the public's health by allowing the Health Department to focus on health promotion and disease prevention while linking those who need medical care and case management to Heartland Community Health Center," said Health Department Director Dan Partridge.

Since its inception 15 years ago, Heartland Community Health Center has provided primary care to patients with a variety of medical conditions including HIV/AIDS. Its practitioners' skill sets are specifically geared toward managing chronic disease and promoting healthy behavior, making it easy for clients to access the care they need. All patients who received case management services through DCAP will be able to receive those same services through Heartland. Patients who live in the Health Center's service area will also be able to receive their primary care through the clinic.

"I am grateful for the partnership Heartland has with DCAP and the Health Department. DCAP has played an incredibly vital role in this community for the last 25 years. At Heartland, we count it a privilege to be carrying forward the work that DCAP has done so much to advance," said Heartland CEO Jon Stewart.

The decision to transfer services came after a great deal of deliberation with input from numerous local organizations, community health officials, Kansas Department of Health and Environment staff members as well as from medical providers, DCAP supporters, its staff and clients. The communities served in Douglas, Franklin, and Jefferson counties will continue to see the benefits of DCAP's initiatives. "It will be difficult to let go of DCAP as a place, a group of people, and collection of memories. But the things that have made DCAP a part of this community for the last 25 years endure," Garber said.

About DCAP

DCAP was founded in 1989 to confront the fact that many doctors, nurses, schools, and charities in our community refused outright to help those living with HIV/AIDS. Twenty-five years later, DCAP works in a much different environment, but continues to live by its mission: "To provide supportive and responsive care for a diverse community affected by HIV/AIDS. Through leadership, education and advocacy, DCAP is committed to raising awareness and reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS." The decision to transfer services is a reflection of the ongoing commitment this community has in providing supportive and responsive care for people living with HIV/AIDS as well as preventing and reducing the spread of new HIV infections.

About the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department has served the Lawrence and Douglas County community for more than 120 years. Its mission is to advance policies, practices and programs that promote health for all, prevent disease and protect the environment.

About Heartland Community Health Center

Heartland Community Health Center exists to serve all community members, regardless of income. Heartland acknowledges that people are more than just physical bodies, which is why Heartland practices holistic, integrated health care – a health model that focuses on physical health as well as emotional, social, and spiritual health. Heartland provides a medical home for patients by offering accessible, continuous, and compassionate care to ensure that all needs are met.