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AIDS Foundation to hold Kuching Gala

KUCHING: The Malaysian AIDS Foundation (MAF) will hold its Kuching Gala on Dec 8 at the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCKK).

A press statement said Datin Patinggi Datuk Amar Jamilah Anu – the Chief Minister’s wife – is patron of the event held to mark World AIDS Day, which is observed globally on Dec 1.

Themed ‘Dedicated to the People of Sarawak’, the fundraiser will benefit the establishment of the state’s first One-Stop Healthcare Centre for Integrated HIV Treatment, Care and Support.

The idea was conceived in response to barriers faced by people in rural areas and the deep interiors of Sarawak in accessing free HIV healthcare services provided by the government and non-governmental organisations.

Located in Kuching, the community healthcare centre will act as a halfway home that is seamlessly linked to the Sarawak General Hospital, in addition to offering a continuum of HIV/AIDS-related care such as community-based HIV testing, counselling, treatment literacy, and legal and welfare service referrals.

It will be run by the Sarawak AIDS Concern Society, a Malaysian AIDS Council partner organisation.

Headlined by MAF’s own Red Ribbon Celebrity Supporters Aaron Aziz, Bob Yusof, Dayang Nurfaizah, Dee (of ‘Jangan Ketawa’), Fahrin Ahmad and Ziana Zain, the star-studded event will feature special performances, auctions, and a fine dining

experience courtesy of main sponsor BCKK.

“We are proud to partner with the MAF on this charitable endeavour of such a grand scale and be part of the solution to the AIDS epidemic in Sarawak,” said BCKK chairman Datuk Raziah @ Rodiah Mahmud-Geneid.

“As a business that strives to create meaningful connections, we hope our contribution will be the impetus that brings people and communities closer together towards achieving the common goal of a Sarawak society free from the negative impact of HIV and AIDS.”

Tables priced at RM25,000 (Diamond), RM15,000 (Platinum), RM10,000 (Gold), RM5,000 (Silver) and RM2,500 (Bronze) are now available for purchase.

Sarawak began recording HIV incidences in 1989, three years after the first case in Malaysia was notified.

As of December 2015, there have been an accumulated total of 2,178 HIV infections, 480 of which resulted in AIDS-related deaths.

The current HIV notification rate in Sarawak stands at 8.7 per 100,000 persons, lower than the national average of 10.9 per 100,000 persons.

However, new HIV infections in the state have been on the rise in the past five years, with as many as 230 new cases recorded last year compared to 169 in 2011.

“What the figures fail to capture is the harsh reality of battling the negative social impact of HIV and AIDS,” said MAF chairman Professor Datuk Dr Adeeba Kamarulzaman.

“Stigma continues to fuel the AIDS epidemic, the burden of which is most felt by women and children, pushing them to the margins of society and away from lifesaving HIV and AIDS health services. The situation in Sarawak is further compounded by the diversity of its geographical features that impede access to these otherwise readily available services.”

She said the One-Stop Healthcare Centre is only the beginning of MAF’s commitment towards closing the gap and strengthening the state-led AIDS response.

“Given that the number of infections in the state is relatively small, there is a real opportunity to end AIDS right here in Sarawak, ahead of all the other states in Malaysia,” she added.

The MAF Kuching Gala is jointly organised by the state government in partnership with the Sarawak AIDS Concern Society; and supported by BCKK, Hilton Kuching, Cats FM, Malindo Air, Mouawad, Outled, and Lumiere Creativo.

For reservations or enquiries contact MAF via Arif (012-9594596) or Hafsa (019-4413577).

All purchases are entitled to a tax exemption receipt.

Concert-only tickets priced at RM 60 are available from www.ticketpro.com.my or 03-78807999.

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Datuk Raziah @ Rodiah Mahmud-Geneid, BCKK chairman