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Celebrities' anti-HIV message

STAR POWER: Datuk Siti Nurhaliza is among the new Red Ribbon Celebrity Supporters

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IN CONJUNCTION with International AIDS Candlelight Memorial 2012, Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) has unveiled its new Red Ribbon Celebrity Supporters (RRCS) lineup.

The versatile RRCS celebrity lineup consists of Datuk Siti Nurhaliza, Datin Paduka Umie Aida, Faizal Tahir, Fahrin Ahmad, Dayang Nurfaizah, Owen Yap, Shah Shamshiri, Zainal Alam Kadir, Winnie K, Joey G, Aanantha, Uthaya, Aaron Aziz and Bob Yusof. It was announced by MAC president Tan Sri Mohd Zaman Khan recently.

"Malaysians living with HIV are still subjected to discrimination.

"We need our celebrities to spread the word among their fan base and the public, who are usually more receptive and warm up to famous faces," he said.

These celebrities will use their individual expertise to engage the public in their mission to educate

people about the disease.

"I plan to write a play that addresses the AIDS issue, and the stigma and discrimination that HIV-positive individuals face," says actress Umie said.

Writer and television host Zainal Alam Kadir said he decided to join RRCS after learning why the villagers receive little education on AIDS.

Singer Winnie K hopes to reach out to the Chinese community through her stage performances.

Newcomer to RRCS actor Aaron Aziz said his target group was teenagers as one in four people with HIV were teenagers.

"As a father, I feel very strongly about the youth as they are our future," he added. "I want to tell them that they should be concerned about HIV and AIDS, and they must know how to protect themselves," he said.

Carrying the theme "Promoting Health and Dignity Together", the Memorial Day falls on May 20.

"I believe that people living with HIV deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. I hope, with my

small contribution, that I will be able to make a difference," said Bob, an AIDS and HIV activist.

Throughout next month, MAC will hold multi-faith memorial services to remember the lives of more than 12,000 Malaysians that have lost to AIDS.

There will be dialogues among HIV/AIDS players, political and religious leaders.

Red ribbon media awards will be presented on May 12 at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre.

The awards are to give recognition to the journalistic and creative responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic by members of the media and the local performing and visual arts community.

"The awards are a rallying call to our media partners to spread the truth about HIV and put an end to stigma," Zaman said.

Members of the print, broadcast and non-traditional (digital, internet and performing arts) media are in the running for a trophy, cash prize worth RM5,000 and a certificate of excellence.

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The Malaysian AIDS Council launches the **Red Ribbon Celebrity Support Programme**. Pic by Hasriyasyah Sabudin.