

Headline	AIDS victims give free hugs to strangers		
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'AIDS victims' give free hugs to strangers

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KUALA LUMPUR: A group of undergraduates posed as HIV/AIDS victims and hugged strangers to help destigmatise the disease.

Some 200 students from Universiti Malaya's Medical Society wanted to convey the message that HIV cannot be spread through touch at a ceremony to mark World AIDS Day in Berjaya Times Square yesterday.

"We want to educate the public about the facts relating to HIV/AIDS and that it cannot be spread through a handshake or hug," said a student.

Youths interviewed at the event expressed concern with the statistics which indicated that those aged between 19 and 39 years represent close to three quarters of all HIV/AIDS cases in Malaysia.

"Youths need to know the importance of safe sex and practising abstinence before marriage," said Sarah Tai, 20, a first-year medical student.

Business administration student Mohd Rahimi Radzi, 23, said he knew of several youths who were HIV positive.

"They need support to deal with the disease and return to their normal lives," he said.

Camelia Sulaiman, 25, who volunteers with an NGO called Positive



Centre of attention: Passers-by checking out the decorations put up in conjunction with World AIDS Day in Kuala Lumpur.

Warrior, said the stigma against those with the disease must end.

"They are just like any other person who suffers from an illness and should not be treated differently," she said.

The society also joined hands with the Malaysian AIDS Council to launch

the Red Ribbon Youth Club, which will spread awareness about the disease on campuses.

The club's ambassador is Aaron Aziz, who is a popular local actor.

"If you think that HIV does not concern you, think again.

"All young people must know how

to protect themselves from HIV and it starts by being responsible for your health," said Aaron.

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