

# Not your ordinary memorial day



A lot has changed in 33 years in the fight against HIV & AIDS. In 1983, the Global Network of People living with HIV launched a campaign to remember those who have passed from the disease and to shine a light on HIV & AIDS.

On Sunday the 15th of May 2016 the annual International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day will be held. This year's theme is 'Engage, educate, empower'.

Today we no longer see the disease as a life sentence. Antiretrovirals mean that people who are diagnosed with HIV&AIDS are now able to live long, healthy lives.

New HIV infections have fallen by 35% and AIDS-related deaths have decreased by 41% according to a UNAIDS report, *How AIDS Changed Everything*. In fact, the new Millennium Development Goal is to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

One powerful case study is how an organisation like Cotlands, which was originally a child hospice, has changed its business structure as a result of the success of mother-to-child treatment. In

2013, only 200 cases were reported of children being born with the disease, and the government plans to completely eradicate this number. Now Cotlands is a centre for early childhood education. This as a direct result of engagement, education, empowerment, and awareness – and keeping that light on HIV & AIDS.

Candlelight Memorial Day is an important reminder to keep the spotlight on HIV & AIDS, and to engage individuals, families, communities, governments, and workplaces in ending this epidemic, and to educate people on current treatment and prevention.

Today and every day we need to stand together to end this disease and all it has wrought by staying engaged, helping to empower, and to educate. Together, when it comes to the way out of this epidemic, we are not only shining but finding the light.