ADULT HEALTH OUTCOMES ARE IMPACTED BY ADOLESCENT CONNECTEDNESS
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently published research in Pediatrics on the long-term health impact of adolescent connectedness. It refers to an individual’s feeling of care, support, and belonging at school and at home. Adolescents who feel connected are less likely to get a sexually transmitted disease as adults. They also have better outcomes in other areas of sexual health, mental health, violence, and substance misuse. To read the entire click here.

MMWR HIGHLIGHTS PREP USE AMONG MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN (MSM)
The July 12, 2019 Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) includes the article: Changes in HIV Preexposure Prophylaxis Awareness and Use Among Men Who Have Sex with Men — 20 Urban Areas, 2014 and 2017. The article highlights the increase in Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) use among this population but also notes lower usage rates among Black and Latino MSM. Data were collected from National HIV Behavioral Surveillance (NHBS) programs. The article references efforts to increase uptake among men of color including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s demonstration project: Targeted Highly-Effective Interventions to Reverse the HIV Epidemic (THRIVE). DDP is funded as one of seven THRIVE sites (known locally as Bridges 757) and has successfully increased uptake among African American men, who represent the largest proportion of clients participating in DDP’s PrEP Program. DDP collected NHBS data in 2017 but it was not included in the MMWR analysis as VDH was not a NHBS participating site in 2014.

For questions about NHBS, please contact Jenny Kienzle at jennifer.kienzle@vdh.virginia.gov or (804) 864-7986. Questions about DDP’s PrEP Program may be directed to Eric Mayes at eric.mayes@vdh.virginia.gov or (804) 864-7335.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT: NATIONZ FOUNDATION
Nationz Foundation, a Richmond community-based organization, participated with VDH, Walgreens and the Kaiser Family Foundation’s Greater than AIDS campaign for National HIV Testing Day (NHTD), which is recognized annually on June 27th. While numerous agencies across the state hosted great NHTD events, Nationz went the extra mile to promote a sense of excitement and opportunity for the public.
Zakia McKensey, Nationz Director, organized their event as a three-day block party. Nationz offered games, grilled food, and refreshments to those that came for testing. They also created a radio public service announcement advertising their Walgreens location and participating hours. Nationz staff and volunteers were present each day for testing and to rally the community. Volunteers stood on the street corner with signs promoting the testing location and asked those driving by to honk their horns if they knew their HIV status. VDH staff and Walgreens leadership came to the Azalea Avenue store to support the event and Greater Than AIDS staff was on site posting social media updates. Nationz tested 166 people during their three day event. DDP would like to give a special thanks to Zakia McKensy and all of her staff for all their efforts. For more information on the Nationz Foundation and the services they provide, visit their website at http://www.nationzfoundationrva.org/.

PERSONNEL
Welcome
STD Prevention and Surveillance (SPS) is excited to welcome Brianna Carey to the team! Brianna will be our new STD Program Analyst, responsible for leading the DDP Security and Confidentiality Guidelines work group, retaining DDP records appropriately with the Library of Virginia, as well as monitoring agreements with local health districts to fund Disease Intervention Specialist (DIS) services. Previously, Brianna worked as an Associate Specialist for Environmental Health at the Association of Public Health Laboratories. Brianna can be reached at (804) 864-7714 or brianna.carey@vdh.virginia.gov.

SPS welcomes Emilie Schweikert as our new Public Health Intern. Emilie is a Master of Public Health candidate from Virginia Tech working on her practicum this summer. She will be completing an analysis of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis co-infection with HIV. Emilie can be reached at emilie.schweikert@vdh.virginia.gov or (804) 864-7714.

Please welcome Kaitlyn Hauter to the HIV and Hepatitis Prevention team! Kaitlyn joined DDP in early June after completing her Master’s of Public Health from George Washington University and relocating to Richmond from Northern Virginia. She got her start in public health by way of teaching English in Ukraine as a Peace Corps volunteer. While in Ukraine, Kaitlyn’s school implemented several HIV education projects, which led her to pursue her MPH. She also worked with the Culmore Clinic in Falls Church, a nonprofit clinic for the uninsured in Bailey’s Crossroads. Kaitlyn is excited to be here, serving the residents of Virginia in a new way. She can be reached at kaitlyn.hauter@vdh.virginia.gov or (804) 864-7593.

The Central Registry Unit (CRU) within SPS is pleased to welcome Brendan Lewis to our team as a data entry technician. Brendan attended Tidewater Community College to study English and then transferred to Virginia Commonwealth University to complete his degree. He has performed and taught percussion for a few high schools and Drum Corp International groups. His hobbies include teaching music, running, and playing video games. Brendan can be reached at brendan.lewis@vdh.virginia.gov.

Congratulations
SPS congratulates Walter Backus, a longtime VDH DIS, on his promotion into the Eastern STD Program Coordinator position, effective July 10. He will be working closely with DIS, local health departments, and community based organizations in the eastern region to ensure they have the tools necessary to be successful and effective in their roles.