A few years ago a long term RHAC supporter living with HIV offered the suggestion that we light a fourth candle during our various remember, honour and celebrate ceremonies. The traditional lighting of three candles is an important and powerful ritual in the HIV/AIDS movement. It offers those living with HIV and their allies the opportunity to pause and reflect on our shared losses, successes, milestones and hope in the work. Based on the PHA suggestion we now light four candles at our vigils in London and Stratford and at our Annual General Meeting. The fourth candle is officially our symbol of hope that a cure will be found for the virus that has killed over thirty five million people worldwide. It seems that London Ontario offers hope this may be realized. We at RHAC watch with great interest about the news of the successful phase one results of the first and only preventative HIV vaccine developed by Dr. Chil-Yong Kang and his team at Western’s Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry. The encouraging findings from Phase I Clinical Trial report on the UWO website indicates; “Phase I Clinical Trial (SAV CT 01) of the first and only preventative HIV vaccine based on a genetically modified killed whole virus (SAV001-H) has been successfully completed with no adverse effects in all patients”. This is indeed a promising development for people who are at risk of contracting HIV. We will be watching closely as this initiative moves into the next phase of clinical trials. It is important to remember that such a vaccine is still numerous years away from being an accessible treatment option for people. Given there is still no cure it is still important for people to protect themselves from HIV. Across the globe 34 million people are currently living with HIV and dealing with the stigma associated with the virus. To that end, we also look forward to learning about the development of a therapeutic vaccine. Until such a time RHAC will continue with its mission while burning that fourth candle.

Thanks for your continued support

Brian Lester
Reports from the Field
Greetings from the Six Counties
Carlen Costa, Regional Coordinator of HIV/AIDS Services

This summer just literally flew by and I had the pleasure of travelling throughout most of the regions these past few months, specifically in hosting multiple anonymous testing clinics. I was in Lambton County at the West Lambton Community Health Centre in Sarnia; in Oxford County at the Woodstock Community Health Centre; in Middlesex at the Women’s Rural Resource Centre in Strathroy; and in Perth at the Shelterlink for youth in Stratford. We have been able to connect with many of our key demographics, specifically at-risk women and at-risk youth. Thank you to all the community hosts, as we sincerely appreciate your support. If you would like to host a FREE Anonymous Testing clinic, please connect with us for more information!

The Fall also kicks off with our annual A Walk for Life fundraising campaign that is hosted in London, as sponsored by Scotiabank. It is always a well-attended event. We couldn't have raised the funds without your support throughout the counties and look forward to next year being just as fabulous.

Coming up regionally is also the Stratford AIDS Awareness Day Vigil on Saturday November 30. This annual commemoration takes place during AIDS Awareness Week, and is complementary to our London based vigil. We appreciate the support we continue to receive throughout the counties. Please see our website for more details as this date draws near.

There are many ways we are trying to get in touch with you and bring you services and information regionally. Through the re-launch of our social media tools we have been able to successfully do so. Please, if you are active online with social media, you can either look for us, like us, or tweet us here:

Facebook Regional HIV/AIDS Connection
Twitter @_RHAC

This is just one of the ways we are trying to increase our accessibility for you and engage you, no matter where you live! We want you to know, we are always here and available for support, services, education and information.

Finally, just a reminder, that throughout the year we are always looking for ways to engage and educate within the 6 counties. Along with our Anonymous Testing clinics that occur almost monthly throughout the regions we are also always looking for ways to connect with you! If you would like to request an educational and informative presentation for you, your colleagues, social club or otherwise, we would love to provide more information on what we offer. After working through Lambton, Perth & Middlesex this Fall we are always finding new information & resources to share. Please connect with me either by email at ccosta@hivaidsconnection.ca, by phone at 519-434-1601 or by any of our social media outlets.

Happy Fall 6 counties! I'll be seeing you soon.

Celebrating Volunteers
2012 Voice and Hope Awards

Volunteer participation is a key element to the success of RHAC. The Regional HIV/AIDS Connection’s Volunteer Awards celebrate volunteers who embody our value statement: “The courage to do what is right” and embrace our vision of Voice, Knowledge and Hope. On Thursday September 5th, at our Annual General Meeting, two of our volunteers were formally recognized for their outstanding contribution to RHAC over the past year. Please join us in congratulating this year’s award recipients.

Tammy Wetslaffer was awarded this year’s Voice Award, in honor of Betty-Anne Thomas, the first Executive Director of the AIDS Committee of London 1985-1999, who gave voice to the challenges people living with HIV/AIDS faced at a time when many remained silent. Tammy has used her voice to affect positive change through her engagement with the Client Services HEP C and Harm Reduction teams, as well as through her ongoing volunteering with couch crew and our outreach education events.

Edward Ede received this year’s Hope Award, in honor of the members of the Newman family who, in October of 1991, chose to make their HIV status public and spoke out against stigma and discrimination. Ed’s years of continued volunteer service in relation to the mission we serve is valued and is shared actively through his current volunteer role at our agencies front reception.

Congratulations Tammy & Ed!

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection serves the counties of Perth, Huron, Lambton, Elgin, Middlesex, and Oxford.
Volunteers in Action
Modeling the way

Lilka Young’s involvement with RHAC over the past five years can well be described as a journey from behind the scenes to center stage. As a student in the Social Justice Program at King’s University she was strongly impacted by reading Stephanie Nolen’s “28: Stories of AIDS in Africa”, and made an important decision to act locally, choosing RHAC as the place to do so. Her earliest roles included minute taking for our Board meetings, and various behind the scenes administrative roles, where her strong attention to detail and oversight were extremely valuable. Over the years she has grown increasingly active, not only in her own involvement, but in also getting others to engage. One such example has been enlisting her mother and friends in support our Red Scarf Education program for the past two years. This year she completed the Ambassador Training Program, and has taken on front facing positions in support of Sunfest, and other outreach events. Most recently she has been a key player on this year’s SCOTIABANK AIDS WALK committee and a leading individual fundraiser. She was recently asked to give three words to describe her volunteer experience. The words she selected were engaging, inspiring and meaningful. These very same words aptly speak to the volunteer that she has become and what she continues to bring to RHAC.

Volunteer Training Dates

Orientation & HIV Basics
are offered at 186 King Street, London

Upcoming dates are:
November 6, 2013 – 6:30-8:30 p.m.
January 8, 2014 – 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Contact Natalie Hébert at nhebert@hivaidscarconnection.ca or 1-866-920-1601

Past Events

AGM

2013 Honour Roll Recipient, John Fyfe-Millar

John Fyfe- Millar gave many years of service to Regional HIV/AIDS Connection from 2003 - 2009.

During that time, he exhibited integrity in his approach to our work, showed true leadership with his contribution to our Board of Directors and demonstrated a genuine commitment to RHAC’s mission.

He has always demonstrated caring, concern and unwavering dedication.

One of John’s nominators said this about him, “John has helped those of us in the business community to become more educated about HIV/AIDS and got us involved and thinking about the issues”.

John continues to support our agency and those we serve today and we hope to work together with him for years to come.

Congratulations, John!
**A Taste for Life 2013 grand total:**
$47,766.28!

Thank you to our sponsors, restaurants, volunteers and supporters in creating a successful fundraiser that ensures our essential free services meet the need in our community!

Special thanks once again to TD for its Exclusive Presenting Sponsorship of A Taste for Life in London.

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**Sunny Spirits at Sunfest 2013**
Mbaka Wadham

This year, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection had an absolutely wonderful presence at the 2013 Sunfest festival which ran from Thursday, July 4th to Sunday, July 7th. The RHAC booth was open from Friday evening all the way through to closing night on Sunday. Our volunteers, Ambassadors and staff worked tirelessly to engage with the community by handing out resource packs and answering any questions that community members had regarding HIV/AIDS, RHAC’s services, and related issues. No amount of threatening gray clouds or even rain could dampen the spirits and dedication of volunteers, Ambassadors and staff to further Regional HIV/AIDS Connection’s mission! More specifically, Ambassadors, volunteers and staff distributed 6000 brochures, 2700 condoms, 2550 packs of lube, and supported 230 individuals to complete our Bar Outreach Survey. We extend much gratitude to all of the people that were involved in RHAC’s presence at this year’s Sunfest festival. We look forward to working with you again at Sunfest 2014!

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**Pride 2013**
Kevin Murphy

The summer season brought Regional HIV/AIDS Connection lots of activity this year - including our participation in the annual Pride London Festival, which took place in July. RHAC staff and volunteers put together a very successful event schedule that was built around the promotion of our “Are You Doin It?” HIV and STI testing week awareness campaign. This campaign happens during the last week of September each year. RHAC provided information and materials to community members with the support of enthusiastic RHAC representatives at a total of eight Pride events held throughout the week. These events included Pride Speaker’s Night, Pride Literary Night and an RHAC information booth at Victoria Park.

An exciting addition to our regular roster of events was this year’s community production of RENT, hosted by Lavish. The production ran throughout Pride week and raised funds for RHAC at each show. RHAC was also showcased this year as an important community resource and was honoured with the Best Community Agency award by the Pride London Board.

Our team engaged over 50 supporters who marched proudly with us in the annual Pride Parade; this year’s parade was the largest parade to date. Our “Are You Doin It?” campaign logo was featured on t-shirts worn by supporters in the parade and our testing week theme helped us get the message of the importance of regular testing for HIV and other STIs out to the community. For more information about RHAC’s “Are You Doin’ It?” campaign, please visit www.testingweek.ca.

A great big thanks to everyone who helped us out this year by offering their time, talent and support. If you are interested in helping out with next year’s Pride planning committee, please contact Kevin Murphy at kmurphy@hivaidsconnection.ca.
Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life

We had a wonderful turnout for the 24th annual Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life London! Stay tuned to our website for the final total. Thank you to our sponsors, Scotiabank and CTV, volunteers, committee members, participants and donors for helping fund John Gordon Home, Camp Wendake and Regional HIV/AIDS Connection!

Upcoming Events
Brewing Up Love and Support

Our good friends at Fire Roasted Coffee will be creating a signature coffee and chocolate bar that will be available for AIDS Awareness Week in November. We are still working out the details but watch our website www.hivaidsconnection.ca in November for more exciting news about this project.

Start thinking now about ways you could use either the coffee or chocolate, or both as gifts that would “keep on giving”, as a portion of the sales will help us support programs and services here at Regional HIV/AIDS Connection.

Ideas:
- A great hostess gift for holiday events
- Lovely gift of appreciation for your staff team
- Great stocking stuffers
- Treat yourself … keep in your private “survival stash” drawer

Thanks Fire Roasted!

Red Scarf Project – Is In Full Swing!
Call for additional Knitters

Many folks already have their knitting needles working away at top speed. We are once again hoping to collect approximately 400 red scarves made by talented community members to use during AIDS Awareness Week, November 25-December 1, 2013.

We kindly request that scarves be knit or crocheted using red yarn to approximately 6 inches X 60 inches (15 cm X 150 cm). If you have the capacity to purchase your own yarn as a donation to this project, please do. If you cannot afford to purchase your own yarn, we will provide yarn for you. Just contact Sue Brooks or Meredith Fraser at 519-434-1601 or call toll free 1-866-920-1601.

Please have scarves completed and dropped off to Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, 186 King Street in London, by November 12! Dust off those knitting needles and join in the fun!

P.S. If you’re like some of us and can’t knit to save your life, consider donating some red yarn or volunteering to help distribute these treasures.

Happy Knitting Folks!
Inspirational Mondays and Fabulous Fridays

Watch our RHAC twitter feed @_RHAC, our facebook page or see them on our website www.hivaidsconnection.ca beginning October 28th. We will be posting photos, quotes, and small creative tidbits to help you get inspired and to start your week well with “Inspirational Mondays”… because as we know, Mondays can be tricky to get going sometimes.

Then to finish up your week and start your weekend well in the same way, watch for “Fabulous Fridays”, where we hope to bring a smile to your face or send you into your weekend with some fun facts or zany news!

Meet us at “Our Tree” in Victoria Park

Please join us on Friday, November 29th, for our second annual “Tree Lighting” event, as Victoria Park holds their “Lighting of the Lights” ceremony. We will gather at our own beautiful tree to Remember, Honour, Celebrate and together share our collective hope for a Cure. We will help countdown to when our tree turns red as it lights up and we can enjoy the special moment together. All of the trees will remain lit in the evenings until the end of December.

This year we will be enhancing the night by sharing with others gathered in the park, 75 of our amazing red scarves from our AIDS Awareness Campaign. If you have your own red scarf please wear it. If you don’t perhaps you, like some other lucky folks, will end up with one as well. For more details on this and other Awareness events, visit www.hivaidsconnection.ca.

London World AIDS Day Vigil

The London World AIDS Day Vigil will take place on December 1st at the Palace Theatre, located at 710 Dundas Street London, Ontario. The World AIDS Day Vigil is an event in which we remember, honour, and celebrate those who we have lost to HIV/AIDS and look hopefully towards the prospect of a cure. Doors will open for the event at 6pm, and the event will run from 6:30pm to 8pm. Please direct any questions regarding this event to the Client Services team at Regional HIV/AIDS Connection at 519-434-1601.

PHA Café

PHA Cafe is a social support group held on the second Thursday of the month. Groups provide an opportunity to talk, engage in activities, and get to know one another. Past groups have included social outings, movie nights, and guest speakers. Please contact Richard MacDonagh, Case Manager at 519-434-1601 ext. 228 or by email rmacdonagh@hivaidsconnection.ca for more information.

Women’s Group

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection provides a place for women living with HIV where they come together once a month and share their experiences in a safe and supportive environment. The group meets the last Thursday evening of each month and meetings include dinner, discussion, as well as social and educational events. Women's Group is open to all women who are HIV+ from our local and regional areas. Dinner, transportation and child care subsidy are provided. For more information please contact Miriam Rivera, Case Manager at 519-434-1601 ext. 235 or email mrivera@hivaidsconnection.ca or Keri Wheatley, HCV Peer Support Worker at 519-434-1601 ext. 261 or email kwheatley@hivaidsconnection.ca.

The Winners Circle

The Winners Circle is a social support group for long term survivors living with HIV/AIDS. The group meets once a month. For more information contact Rob Newman at 519-434-1601 or 1-866-920-1601 or rnewman@hivaidsconnection.ca.

Quarterly Feedback Lunch with the Executive Director

Please join us to share your thoughts regarding HIV client services

Thursday December 19, 2013
12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.
30-186 King Street London, ON

For more information or to RSVP for this lunch, please call 519-434-1601 / 1-866-920-1601 or email rnewman@hivaidsconnection.ca
Staff Announcements

Departures

Mike McGregor, Interim Needle & Syringe Program Coordinator
Mike has left RHAC to return to The Unity Project. During his time both as IDU relief worker, Interim Needle Exchange Coordinator and finally as Interim Needle & Syringe Program Coordinator brought incredible skills and experience that made him a perfect candidate for this role. He built on his pre-existing strong and trusting relationships with clients, staff and volunteers during his time here. Mike supported the work of Counterpoint with a quiet but strong presence and he will be missed. Luckily Mike will remain with us for some additional shifts as available. Thanks Mike!

Kori McCoskey, Reception (temporary)
Kori has moved on to take a new administrative position with London Intercommunity Health Centre. During her time at RHAC Kori was often the first smiling face we all saw at the reception desk or heard greeting folks on the phone. Kori brought great organizational and administrative skills to her work at RHAC. We look forward to working with Kori in her new role and thank her for her solid contribution to our work and the positive energy she contributed daily.

Deanna Holden, Administrative/Bookkeeping Assistant
Deanna has left RHAC's team to join the team at the HealthLine.ca Information Network. Deanna was an integral part of keeping the administrative platform working efficiently over the last 3 years. We congratulate her on taking the opportunity to expand her experience in the social service sector and thank her dedication and incredible hard work during her time at RHAC. We wish Deanna success in her new position.

Arrivals

We are happy to welcome Mwaimba Chileshe who joined RHAC's team in August 2013 as Receptionist/Administrative Assistant. Mwaimba comes to us as a University of Baltimore graduate. Through her experience working in social services and sales, Mwaimba has highly developed customer service skills and a strong administrative background.

Take Back the Night

Over the years, Take Back the Night has become internationally known as a way to take a stand against gender-based violence targeting women. While the march began as a way to protest the violence that women experienced while walking in public at night, the purpose of these marches was to speak out against this violence and also to raise community awareness as a preventive measure against future violence.

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection staff and volunteers participated in London's Take Back the Night events in Victoria Park on September 19th. This year, we set up an information booth at the park to both showcase the women-specific work that we do in our region and profile the links between HIV and gender-based violence targeting women. In so doing, our goal was to raise awareness about the relationship between VAW and HIV risk and to help community understand the complexity of these issues. Violence against women places women at increased risk of HIV both through direct risk of infection and by creating environments in which women are unable to adequately protect themselves. Evidence is growing and affirms that key components of effective HIV prevention include addressing both violence against women and gender-based inequalities.

If you are interested in more information about women and HIV, please contact Bonnie Baynham, Women’s HIV/AIDS Community Development Coordinator at bbaynham@hivaidscsaetion.ca.
Monthly Donors Fund
Unmet Needs

Natalie Hébert, Fund Development Coordinator

As a recipient of this newsletter you know the value of providing free, essential services to people living with HIV/hepatitis C. Presently 80% of people who use our services live in poverty. These individuals are at risk of losing housing, food security and health without access to the services funded by people like you.

We believe that people who use our services are the best authority on both their health and wellness priorities. You can ensure these priorities are met by signing up for our monthly giving program, Circle of Care.

Through Circle of Care you can help fund unmet needs like:
- Bus tickets for transportation to medical appointments ($4/round trip)
- Access to protein rich foods, like legumes, dairy and meat ($7/person/month)
- Phone and TV during a hospital stay ($15/day)
- Respite care at the London Regional AIDS Hospice, John Gordon Home ($27/day)
- Trillium Drug Program deductibles for prescription medications ($50-$125/month)

Operating RHAC on a balanced annual budget means that we can only address the most pressing issues for the people who access services each month. For example, sometimes we run out of bus tickets before the end of the month. At other times our Case Managers must confer on which individual need is a priority and turn down other requests that would usually qualify because of limited funds.

Our goal this year is to raise $5,000 through Circle of Care. We can do it with your help. Join with current and former Board Members, staff and volunteers to ensure that no one’s request for essential services is denied in our community.

As a former volunteer, current donor and staff person I am deeply committed to ensuring people who use services at RHAC get what they need. I want to honour your contributions past and present so please call me with your questions and comments about Circle of Care or any other aspect of the work RHAC does at 519-434-1601 ext 257. I’ve included a form you can use to sign up for Circle of Care. I hope you join us!

Thank you!