



# The Connection

The Newsletter of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

Serving Perth, Huron, Lambton, Elgin, Middlesex, and Oxford Counties

October 2012

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## AIDS Awareness Week and World AIDS Day: Get Involved! Show Your Support!

### Getting to Zero



The week of November 26 - December 1, 2012 marks AIDS Awareness Week in Canada. The week is a chance for RHAC to raise awareness about the many issues associated with HIV/AIDS locally. It culminates each year with World AIDS Day on December 1, a day dedicated to increasing awareness of HIV/AIDS issues worldwide and an occasion to call upon leaders to honour their commitments in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The new theme "Getting to Zero" echoes the UNAIDS vision of achieving "Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths."

### Did You Know?



"The red ribbon became an international symbol of AIDS awareness during 1991. The New York based group called Visual AIDS Artists Caucus, together with Broadway Cares and Equity Fights AIDS, established the wearing of a red ribbon as a way of signifying support for people living with HIV/AIDS." (Avert.org/aids-history87-92.htm)

"The artists who formed the Visual AIDS Artists Caucus wished to create a visual symbol to demonstrate compassion for people living with AIDS and their caregivers. Inspired by the yellow ribbons honouring American soldiers serving in the Gulf war, the color red was chosen for its "connection to blood and the idea of passion -- not only anger, but love, like a valentine."

"First worn publicly by Jeremy Irons at the 1991 Tony Awards, the ribbon soon became renowned as an international symbol of AIDS awareness, becoming a politically correct fashion accessory on the lapels of celebrities. At the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert held at Wembley Stadium, London on Easter Sunday 1992, more than 100,000 red ribbons were distributed among the audience, with performers such as George Michael wearing one.

"The red ribbon continues to be a powerful force in the fight to increase public awareness of HIV/AIDS and in the lobbying efforts to increase funding for AIDS services and research." ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red\\_ribbon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_ribbon))

### Red Scarf Project

We are looking to collect approximately 400 red scarves made by talented community members to use during AIDS Awareness Week, November 26 - December 1, 2012. On the morning of November 27 we will be creating a public awareness installation in downtown London using the scarves, while a group of individuals does a similar installation in Stratford.



Each scarf will include an information card that explains the significance of the red ribbon and the ongoing issues related to HIV/AIDS locally. People will be encouraged to take the scarves home and any remaining pieces will be gathered and given out to RHAC service users.

Scarves are to 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. Just contact Natalie at 1-866-920-1601. **Please have scarves completed and dropped off to Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, 186 King Street in London, by November 12!**

Community Inspired. Courage Driven.

## Educational Display

Throughout the week of November 26-30, RHAC will have an educational display in the corridor outside the main doors of London's Central Library, 251 Dundas Street, London. Several of our community partners such as Middlesex London Health Unit and Options Anonymous HIV Testing Clinic will also be there providing safer sex information. *Come visit us!*

## Film Screenings & Author at Central Library, London

- 1) Talk by author Allan Stratton about his books *Chandra's Secrets* and *Chandra's Wars*, and screening of *Life, Above All*, a film inspired by Mr. Stratton's books  
**When:** Monday, November 26 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. is Allan Stratton's talk with film screening from 1-3 p.m.  
**Where:** Wolf Performance Hall, London Central Library, 251 Dundas St., London
- 2) Screening of documentary film *Positive Women: Exposing Injustice*  
**When:** Tuesday, November 27 from 7-9 p.m.  
**Where:** Wolf Performance Hall, London Central Library, 251 Dundas St., London

## Our Very Own Tree in Victoria Park!

Each November, the City of London holds an event to turn on the lights strung around all the trees in Victoria Park. The trees stay lit in the evenings until the end of December. RHAC has arranged to have one of the trees lit each year completely with red lights to Remember, Honour and Celebrate. As well, a sign identifying Regional HIV/AIDS Connection will accompany the tree. *Join us for the lighting of the lights the evening of Friday, November 30!*

## Annual World AIDS Day Vigils

On **Friday, November 30**, we will be hosting our 4th annual AIDS Vigil in **Stratford** at Community of Christ Church, 226 Forman Ave., Stratford. The ceremony will begin at 7 p.m. followed by refreshments and socializing.

On **Saturday, December 1**, RHAC and many community partners will be hosting the annual World AIDS Day Vigil in **London**. Both vigils remember the lives that have been lost to HIV/AIDS, honour those living with HIV/AIDS and celebrate the efforts and success of the past 30 years. They are also days of hope looking to the future for the prospect of a cure.



The London vigil will take place in the Birch Room of the Civic Garden Complex at 625 Springbank Drive, London. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. with the vigil happening from 7-8 p.m. Light refreshments will follow.

*For information on other AIDS Awareness Week events, visit [www.hivaidconnection.ca](http://www.hivaidconnection.ca)*

## Reports from the Field

### Greetings from the Six Counties!

Jennifer Gritke, Regional Coordinator of HIV/AIDS Services



I am happy to be back and updating everyone on our regional work. After nine months away, I admit I had forgotten how beautiful and vibrant the various communities are in the six counties we serve. Since I returned in early September, I have already racked up 807 kilometers on my car and visited Stratford, St. Marys, Clinton and St. Thomas!

The summer months found us doing a lot of planning for our annual **Are You Doin' It?** testing campaign, which was held from September 24 – 28. We rolled this campaign out regionally this year, with posters and materials going to 50 agencies and organizations across six counties. We also held a successful anonymous HIV testing clinic in St. Thomas during Testing Week.

Network meetings continue to be a great way for RHAC to become involved in other communities. We recently attended network meetings in Perth and Huron, which provided opportunities to promote our fall events, discuss similar client issues with other providers, and come up with ideas for new ways to reach our regional at-risk populations.

Our major regional event this fall is the World AIDS Day Vigil in Stratford. This is our 4th year hosting the event and it has truly evolved into a special way to Remember, Honour and Celebrate. This year's Vigil in Stratford will be on November 30, from 7-9 p.m. at Community of Christ Church. We invite everyone to attend. If you are from one of our regional communities living with, or affected by HIV/AIDS and are interested in speaking at or being involved in our vigil in Stratford, please contact Jennifer Gritke at 1-866-920-1601 or by emailing [jgritke@hivaidconnection.ca](mailto:jgritke@hivaidconnection.ca).

We continue to offer anonymous HIV testing clinics in conjunction with Options Anonymous Testing Clinic throughout the region. See the call out box on the next page for more detailed information.

As we look toward the next few years of regional work, we will be educating the broader community about HIV/AIDS risk, as well as reaching specific populations who may be at greater risk of acquiring HIV/AIDS and individuals affected by or living with HIV/AIDS.

I hope everyone has an wonderful fall – I know I will enjoy seeing all the fall colours as I drive around our little piece of Southwestern Ontario!

*Regional HIV/AIDS Connection serves the counties of Perth, Huron, Lambton, Elgin, Middlesex, and Oxford.*

## Regional Anonymous HIV Testing Clinics

Stratford – January 18, 2013, 2-4 p.m.  
Choices for Change Offices  
10 Downie St., 3rd Floor

Done in private room, results in 15-20 minutes,  
pre- and post-test counselling, drop-in

For more information, contact Jennifer Gritke at  
1-866-920-1601 or [jgritke@hivaidsconnection.ca](mailto:jgritke@hivaidsconnection.ca)

## HiMMM – Health in Middlesex Men Matters – Asking for Survey Participants

HiMMM is a community driven survey of the health of gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. To participate you must be 18+ and must live in Middlesex County. You will receive a \$10 gift card in appreciation of your participation. For more information, visit [www.himmm.ca](http://www.himmm.ca) and to participate visit [northernoriele.ca/himmm/enter.php](http://northernoriele.ca/himmm/enter.php).

## Volunteers in Action



### Walking the Walk

Toni came to RHAC in February of 2012. She began by volunteering weekly with Couch Crew, but quickly got involved with the Ambassador Program staffing booths at various community events such as Sunfest, Pride and the Stronach Community Centre Family fair. Toni's

outgoing personality makes her an amazing outreach volunteer who is not afraid of questions and is not embarrassed if she doesn't know the answer. She'll offer, "Everyone has to learn at some point!" if people feel uneasy asking questions.

The most amazing gift Toni brings to the agency is that she often volunteers alongside her two daughters, answering their questions and teaching them about the work we do at RHAC. She doesn't just talk the talk, she walks the walk, living our values statement, "The courage to do what is right". Toni also supports fundraising events like A Taste For Life, where she was a greeter, and the Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life where she worked at registration then participated as a walker. She is often the first to respond to monthly volunteer updates, offering her help wherever she can. *Thank you Toni for all you do!*

## Celebrating Volunteers

### Volunteer Award Recipients

On September 6, at our Annual General Meeting, two volunteers were recognized for their outstanding contributions to Regional HIV/AIDS Connection's mission.



Laura Davis was awarded the Dr. Ian Mackie Award of Knowledge for her important efforts in community outreach and education through our Ambassador Program.

Diane Schots was awarded the Newman Family Award of Hope for her longstanding work with the Country Cupboard Food Bank and her community activism.



For more information about RHAC's Volunteer Awards program please visit [hivaidsconnection.ca/volunteer](http://hivaidsconnection.ca/volunteer).



### 2012 Honour Roll Recipient David Feeney

David Feeney has given seven excellent years of service to RHAC. During that time, he exhibited integrity in his approach to the work, showed true leadership with the board and demonstrated a genuine commitment to RHAC's mission. He also demonstrated caring, concern and unwavering dedication.

In David's words, "For many years I avoided becoming involved in the AIDS movement because I didn't want to reflect upon the terrible illness that had robbed me of friends. Eventually, I internalized the old adage "you are either part of the problem or part of the solution," and joined the board with the goal of trying to make a difference."

David Feeney definitely became part of the solution. He carried forward the history, the struggle and the courage and, in fact, made a difference. *Thank you, David.*



# Volunteer Training Dates

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

Upcoming dates are:

November 6, 2012 – 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
January 9, 2013 – 2-4 p.m.

Contact Natalie Hébert at [nhebert@hivaidconnection.ca](mailto:nhebert@hivaidconnection.ca)  
or 1-866-920-1601

## Past Events

### Take Back The Night

On September 20, several RHAC staff and volunteers participated in London's Take Back the Night march. Take Back the Night is an internationally held march and rally intended as a protest and direct action against rape and other forms of violence against women. TBTN is a feminist action movement that brings attention to the violence faced by women and girls in their daily lives. We march and chant and literally take over the streets as a statement about women feeling safe to walk the streets alone.



There is growing evidence that violence against women and gender inequality are key components when addressing HIV prevention initiatives for women. RHAC supports the community's efforts to raise awareness about gender-based violence.

### Hemophilia Heroes Meet

Brian Lester, Executive Director of RHAC and Matthew Maynard, Hemophilia Ontario's regional service coordinator for Southwestern Ontario, had the chance to meet Texan Barry Haarde on July 27 when he stopped in London during a 3,700 mile cycling tour of the U.S. and Canada to raise funds for children living with hemophilia in developing countries.



Barry Haarde and  
Matthew Maynard

Both Matthew and Barry were born with hemophilia, a rare disorder that prevents blood from clotting properly. Needing blood transfusions to survive, both men were exposed to viruses present in the blood supply in the early 1980s. Maynard, 55, was diagnosed with Hepatitis C. His two brothers, also born with hemophilia, acquired hepatitis C and HIV through blood transfusions and died in 1990 and 2001. Haarde, 46, also contracted a blood disease

after a transfusion in the early 80s, and lost a brother-in-law to AIDS in 1980 and a brother to hepatitis C in 2007.

Maynard was the chapter president of Hemophilia Ontario from 1982-85 at the start of the impact of the tainted blood tragedy. He became involved in hemophilia care and research in the early 80s and helped start the clinic at St. Josephs Health Care, and has continued to fight to raise awareness.

Haarde's tour, which is part of the Save One Life program, raised funds for children in developing countries living with hemophilia without access to proper medication, while fighting to end stigma and discrimination faced by people living with HIV/AIDS. As of his stopover in London, Haarde had raised roughly \$22,500 towards his goal of \$50,000 for the Save One Life charity. "There are not many who are survivors of the blood tragedy," Maynard said in the *London Community News*. "So that's one of the reasons that it's important for us to get together." Haarde said he is the first person with hemophilia to ride a bicycle from coast to coast across North America.

Maynard, who is involved in Camp Wendake to provide programming for those infected and affected by HIV said, "The lessons in stigma, hardship and anger have been followed by greater lessons of forgiveness, compassion and acceptance - all part of the legacy of HIV."

Currently, there are roughly 3,500 people living with hemophilia in Canada and 22,000 in the U.S.; one person in 10,000 is born with the disorder.



Hemophilia Ontario shares office space with Regional HIV/AIDS Connection. It provides services to individuals with hemophilia in London and the surrounding area. For more information visit [www.hemophilia.ca](http://www.hemophilia.ca).



### Coast-to-coast peace bus stops in London



Cori Baldwin Paquette

London's Cori Baldwin Paquette, 16, had the chance to spend some time at Regional HIV/AIDS Connection while riding the Children's International Summer Villages' (CISV) Peace Bus this summer. The "carbon-neutral" 15 passenger van, carrying mostly teens 14-18, left Halifax July 26 and ended Sept. 2 in Victoria, stopping in approximately 20 communities to do volunteer work.

The bus stopped in London August 11 and 12. Cori said, "My experience at Regional HIV/AIDS Connection was really eye-opening and changed my perception of those with addictions and ways we can support them and understand them."

...continued

Michelle Baldwin, Cori's mom and Executive Director of Pillar Nonprofit Network said, "Our time at Regional HIV/AIDS Connection was outstanding with so much learning and such kindness from your staff. Having Keri share her story was so moving and I heard the youth walking out of the building talking about how amazing that experience was for them. I have always thought myself to be very accepting, but I found Keri and Karen expanded my thinking as well. We also learned so much by putting together the harm reduction kits."



*The Peace Bus's mission is to educate and inspire action among Canadians for a more just and peaceful world.*

## A Taste For Life

Despite the fact we are still waiting to collect donations from two participating restaurants, we can finally announce a projection about the total funds raised during A Taste For Life 2012.



A TASTE FOR LIFE

This year on Wednesday, April 25 we had 30 locally owned and operated restaurants supporting Regional HIV/AIDS Connection for our 9th Annual A Taste For Life in London, and six restaurants for our first Taste in Stratford!

In both communities, over 1,500 people went out to dine and raised over \$57,000 in support of free services and programs for people living with, affected by or at risk for HIV/AIDS!

Without fundraised dollars RHAC would not be able to continue to provide free services such as: Country Cupboard Food Bank, Wellness Assistance Fund, two AIDS vigils and much more.

Special thanks to media sponsors The London Free Press, Astral Media and CTV. We are grateful for the ongoing sponsorship support of Pinpoint Publications who help us produce all the necessary print and electronic promotional materials for Taste.

Sincere thanks once again to TD for its Exclusive Presenting Sponsorship of A Taste For Life in London. In addition to sponsorship dollars, TD provides volunteers the night of the event and hundreds of TD employees go out to dine at many local restaurants in support of our efforts.

A Taste For Life in London is presented by TD



## Scotiabank AIDS Walk For Life



The evening of Saturday, September 15 the annual Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life was held at Springbank Gardens. Feedback about the evening Walk has been very good! The red lanterns held by walkers added a nice touch as the sun went down. To date, over \$35,000 has been raised to support free programs and services for people living with, affected by and at risk for HIV/AIDS at the three partner agencies: Camp Wendake, John Gordon Home and Regional HIV/AIDS Connection.



Special thanks to our regional Scotiabank representatives for providing a \$2,500 local sponsorship this year, as well as pledging to match any funds raised by Scotia employees locally. This contribution gave our efforts a significant boost. We appreciate the financial support as well as representation on the Walk committee, and hope to grow our relationship with Scotiabank in the future.

Next year's Walk is already booked at the same location and time on Saturday, September 14. Mark your calendars and start thinking about next year's Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life!



Find us on Facebook

Go to our website at [www.hivaidconnection.ca](http://www.hivaidconnection.ca) and click on the Facebook tab in the bottom left corner of the page then click Regional HIV/AIDS Connection on Facebook. Follow the latest news and events on our page.

## The Power of Partnership – Thank You!

RHAC has a rich history of developing strong long term partnerships as we strive to effectively address HIV/AIDS/HCV in the communities we serve. From a social determinants of health perspective the challenges associated with HIV/AIDS/HCV intersect in many ways often contributing to a decreased quality of life and diminished health outcomes for those we serve. We at RHAC recognize that we can't address these issues in isolation and that strategic partnership development is key to achieving success in our work. The notion of collaboration and partnership is embedded in our guiding principles;

We believe *“In actively pursuing partnerships and collaborative initiatives that enhance both access to resources and the quality of services and supports available to individuals affected by HIV/AIDS/HCV.”*

Over the years we have developed partnerships which are built on a foundation of common purpose, shared values and desire to affect change in the lives of the individuals we serve. Maintaining effective partnerships is not always easy, yet I would offer that at the core of any successful partnership is the element of trust. Trust between organizational leadership and trust among the staff working at the front line will solidify partnerships and inspire goodwill to work through issues. Trust is earned over time through clarity in communication, actions of consistency and demonstrated integrity while maintaining a lens that ensures the shared people we serve are at the centre of our collaborative intent. In 2012, we have a number of long term and new successful partnerships which serve to enhance RHAC's capacity to provide meaningful programs to some of our community's most marginalized. In the interest of space I won't list our many awesome partners but they are proudly listed on our website at [www.hivaidsconnection.ca](http://www.hivaidsconnection.ca).

To the many partners of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, I offer a sincere thank you. It is your interest in, and willingness to work with us that enhances our capacity to meet our mission. Know that we appreciate your contributions and we are committed to doing all that we can to create a triple win outcome for the people we serve, RHAC and each of our highly valued partners.

Thanks for your continued support!



Executive Director



## Pride London Festival 2012

RHAC has been participating in Pride London Festival for many years and has enjoyed creating a variety of themes for our float in the annual Pride parade. This year was no exception, with our float highlighting the importance and relevance of marriage equality.

Over 50 RHAC supporters marched along with our float from Western Fair to Victoria Park, and we all took pride in what seemed to be the biggest parade to date.

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection was present at many other Pride events during the week leading up to the festival, such as Pride Literary Night, the annual Pride Dance and a special “Pride Edition” of Bathhouse Bingo.

Over the course of the week we gave out over 3,000 condom packs and other materials, as well as taking advantage of the opportunity to get together and engage with so many wonderful community members.

This was an exceptional year for the Pride London Festival Committee and we look forward to next year's festivities.

For more information, please contact Kevin Murphy at 519-434-1601. Visit [www.pridelondon.ca](http://www.pridelondon.ca) to find out more about Pride London Festival.

## PHA News

### Client Holiday Dinner



Regional HIV/AIDS Connection will be hosting a Client Holiday Dinner Tuesday, December 4 at 336 Glenrose Drive, Byron, Ontario.

The traditional turkey dinner, which is open to all clients living with HIV, their families and friends, will begin at 5 p.m. and wrap up around 8 p.m. As well as all the trimmings, the evening will feature a visit from Santa, door prizes and raffles.

### Client Lunch

Executive Director, Brian Lester, and Director of Client Services, Shannon Dougherty, have been meeting with clients for lunch and information sharing four times per year.

The next lunch is November 3 from 12-1:30 p.m. Clients will have a chance to meet the new Manager of Client Services, Sonja Burke. The lunch is open to all clients living with HIV. Come on out and let us know what's on your mind!

For more information about either event, contact client services at 519-434-1601, toll free at 1-866-920-1601 or email Rob Newman at [rnewman@hivaidsconnection.ca](mailto:rnewman@hivaidsconnection.ca).

## PHA Groups

### Women's Group

Social group for HIV+ women on the last Thursday of each month from 6-8 p.m.\*



November 29  
January 31, 2013  
February 28, 2013  
Meal provided.

\*Note: No women's group in December.

Contact Miriam Rivera or Keri Wheatley at  
1-866-920-1601  
mrivera@hivaidsconnection.ca or  
kwheatley@hivaidsconnection.ca

### PHA Café

Social/Support Group for HIV+ Individuals  
2nd Thursday of each month  
RHAC from 6-8:30 p.m.



November 8  
December 13  
January 10, 2013  
February 14, 2013  
Meal provided.

Contact Richard MacDonagh at 1-519-343-1601 ext. 228 or  
rmacdonagh@hivaidsconnection.ca

## Staff Announcements

### Departures



**Sheila Coad**, *Director of Harm Reduction Services*

Sheila Coad originally came to RHAC as a placement student in 2008. She later took on the roles of Harm Reduction Support Worker, HCV Educator/Support Worker and finally Director of Harm Reduction

Services. In her time at ACOL/RHAC, Sheila made a significant contribution to the work of the agency and will be missed by all, including community partners with whom she worked closely to advance our harm reduction work. We wish her much luck in her move to Toronto to pursue a life there.

**Carlen Costa**, *Regional Coordinator of HIV/AIDS Services*

Carlen Costa spent 10 months with us filling the role of Regional Coordinator of HIV/AIDS Services while Jennifer Gritke was on parental leave. Carlen is now pursuing a career as a sex therapist as well



as continuing to produce her show called Sexy Living with Carlen, which can be seen on Rogers TV. We wish Carlen all the best and believe our paths will continue to cross over the years to come.

### Arrivals

**Sonja Burke**, *Client Services Manager*



Sonja brings with her 14 years management experience in the not-for-profit sector. Most recently Sonja worked for the City of London as a manager for an Ontario Works case worker team. Prior to this she spent well over a decade at Goodwill Industries managing a range of employment programs designed to assist job seekers with return to work activities.

Additionally, Sonja has over 20 years experience working with persons with disabilities including; physical, psychiatric/mental health and developmental. Sonja has worked with a range of funders/programs over the years including with ODSP, Employment Ontario, Federal Opportunities Fund, Employment Insurance, etc. Sonja has a history of developing trusting partnerships/relationships to better meet the needs of service users. She possesses effective crisis management skills, and is a respected leader and manager of people. Sonja shares the same values that we uphold at RHAC and will make a strong addition to the team.



**Kori McCoskey**, *Reception*

Kori McCoskey graduated with a B.A. in Sociology and Psychology from Kings University College in 2010, and was recently presented the opportunity to volunteer at RHAC to kick-start a career in the social services field. She began volunteering in the Counterpoint Needle Exchange in June 2012 under the guidance of Karen Burton whom she had known for several years. In September, Kori took on a part-time placement working our reception desk. She has settled right in and is loving the agency. She says, "My colleagues and the clients have made me feel so welcome and I look forward to pursuing a career in Addictions Services."

### Welcome Back

**Jennifer Gritke**, *Regional Coordinator of HIV/AIDS Services*



Jennifer Gritke has returned to RHAC after 10 months of parental leave. She is resuming her role as Regional Coordinator of HIV/AIDS Services. Jennifer is responsible to liaise with secondary service providers as well as more general public in our efforts to disseminate regional HIV/AIDS education including helping people become aware of RHAC and the many programs and services we offer. Welcome back, Jennifer!

