



The Connection

The Newsletter of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

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

February 2012

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The Ontario Accord Commitment to GIPA/MIPA

The staff and board of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection (RHAC) commenced 2012 by coming together for a day to learn, explore and further develop our understanding and application of GIPA/MIPA (Greater/Meaningful Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PHA)) within our organization. We took this opportunity to re-state our commitment to this philosophy of service delivery and share ways in which GIPA can engage PHAs and serve the organization's mission. GIPA is about human rights, inclusion, self determination and dignity of the full human being and RHAC deeply embraces these concepts as we strive to deliver on our mission.

The history of this movement is a testament to the profound power of individuals when they come together to effect change. At the 1989 International AIDS Conference, AIDS Montreal activist Tim MacCaskell lead a denouncement of the Canadian government for its inaction on AIDS and read the *Montreal Manifesto* - a declaration of the universal rights and needs of people with HIV/AIDS. This was a defining moment along with similar actions taken around the world such as *Denver Principles 1983*, *Paris Declaration 1994* and *UNGASS 2001*. They are all historical markers of the powerful individual and collective voices of PHAs. These watershed moments profoundly influenced subsequent approaches to HIV research, access to early medications and available health care, as well as community-based responses and government involvement in issues related to HIV/AIDS. GIPA was about seizing control of the processes surrounding HIV research, health care, etc. to make PHAs active and equal participants as opposed to merely being the subjects and recipients of these processes. PHAs, mostly gay men at the time, served notice to the world that such a status quo would not be tolerated.

In the fall of 2011, "Living and Serving 3" (LS3) was released by the Ontario AIDS Network. It offers AIDS service organizations a GIPA/MIPA engagement guide and framework. It builds on the groundbreaking work of Toronto's Dr. Charles Roy who authored an important 1996 research document, "Living and Serving" before he passed away from AIDS. The LS3 document introduces *The Ontario Accord* - a declaration of solidarity of

PHAs crafted by representatives of organizations from across Ontario. This "made in Ontario" accord reminds us that meaningful PHA engagement is not only core to the HIV/AIDS movement, it is imperative to the work. At RHAC, we believe GIPA is more than a philosophy of service delivery; it is a foundational element that grounds the development of service delivery practices. It is my belief that the application of GIPA is about integrity in HIV/AIDS work. If we aren't thinking, creating and advancing the philosophy of GIPA we are failing in our mission!

At our first annual GIPA ceremony on January 19, each staff and board member signed the accord to demonstrate Regional HIV/AIDS Connection's commitment to advancing GIPA. We will hold a ceremony on an annual basis to recognize our progress and renew our commitment to this integral element of the HIV/AIDS movement.

GIPA is, and will continue to be, in the forefront of our work. If you are living with HIV, we invite you to get involved with RHAC in ways that bring meaning to you as an individual. To those living with HIV who currently help bring GIPA to life at RHAC each day—we sincerely thank you!

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kevin Murphy and Rob Newman hold the framed Ontario Accord that will hang in the reception area at RHAC.



Read the full **ONTARIO ACCORD** on page 4.

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Community Inspired. Courage Driven.

Reports from the Field

Greetings from the Six Counties!

Carlen Costa, *HIV Regional Resource Coordinator*



It's a brand new year and we have a lot of new energy coming through the six counties! As I take over for Jennifer Gritke while she is on parental leave, I realize I have some big shoes to fill.

Having taken this position in November, I have learned much from my new colleagues, made new friends and really been able to see first-hand the reasons

why RHAC works so hard to provide services across the six counties.

Our large territory is filled with opportunities to reach out to communities in a variety of ways. We kicked off this year's series of anonymous HIV testing clinics, in partnership with Options Clinic, on January 13 in St. Thomas. Our advertising is working - five people came in to be tested in a two hour period! The next two regional clinics are scheduled in Sarnia and West Lorne in the coming months (see the call out box on page 3). Our goal for 2012-13 is to continue offering regional anonymous testing clinics on a rotating basis in each of the six counties we serve. We will also continue connecting with old and new community partners and/or service providers with whom we can build lasting relationships. Service providers can refer new HIV+ clients to us for programs and services or provide us opportunities to educate their staff and clients about the current issues related to HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C and harm reduction. We aim to educate and inform thereby decreasing the stigma and discrimination associated with each virus. Sourcing space and audiences for informative presentations continue to be the most effective way for us to reach out. We always welcome suggestions from community members about where to offer presentations.

It has been one year since RHAC rebranded. We are working hard to make sure the transition is smooth and our updated resources are in your communities. Renaming/rebranding was important to the agency as it provides a more inclusive view of our outreach efforts and of our presence in the six counties.

Annually, we now offer two World AIDS Day Vigils, in London and Stratford. In April 2012, we will be holding our biggest fundraising event of the year, A Taste For Life, in both London and Stratford as well! Visit www.atasteforlife.org to see the full restaurants listings and details for Wednesday, April 25. Funds raised in Stratford/Perth will help us continue to provide free programs and services to people from Perth.

If you would like to order our updated materials and resources or would like more information about our regional work please contact Carlen Costa and I will gladly pass them along.

The coming year is already shaping up to be busy. And, I look forward to working throughout the region and continuing to build the relationships my predecessor worked so hard to secure and develop - keeping the "R" in RHAC, continuing to travel and bring awareness throughout, and making sure our communities know there is a safe space for each one of you to belong is what I look forward to most.

Thank you to everyone who has made my transition seamless and pumped with positive energy. The year ahead is sure to be a wonderful experience, and I am eager to make RHAC my new home.



London HBT* Working Group Update

*Homophobia, Biphobia, Transphobia

The HBT Working Group (HBT) came into existence two short years ago when several motivated individuals and groups gathered with the goal of addressing hate and violence directed toward members of LGBT2Q communities in London. At that time, the group sought to raise community awareness about homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and its impacts by organizing events in recognition of International Day Against Homophobia (May 17) and Transgender Day of Remembrance (November 20). The group also provided a forum to share information about relevant community supports and resources.

Since its inception, the HBT Working Group has grown into a collaborative of over 20 community organizations.

2011 was an exciting year for HBT. Specifically, the group applied for a grant in partnership with the London Police Service through the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services' Safer and Vital Communities Initiative. HBT was successful in this application and is now poised to move forward with some exciting new developments that will establish the HBT Working Group as a go-to resource for people seeking information and support regarding issues impacting LGBT2Q community - particularly in terms of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and hate-motivated violence:

- A new HBT Working Group website will provide resources, information, and a new online reporting mechanism for those wanting to report LGBT2Q-related hate incidents and hate crimes. In addition, the website will feature an online expansion of the London Police Service's RHVP (Report Homophobic Violence Period) campaign.
- A newly-hired Curriculum Development Coordinator, Deb Patterson, will create a comprehensive LGBT2Q training curriculum that will enable HBT-affiliated community service organizations to address LGBT2Q concerns in their work, while delivering a consistent message throughout the community.
- A support group for survivors of LGBT2Q-related hate activities/crimes will have met for the first time on January 30 at the Middlesex London Health Unit, 50 King St., London. For more information about the group or HBT in general, please contact Kevin Murphy at 519-434-1601, ext. 250 or by emailing kmurphy@hivaidconnection.ca.

The HBT Working Group looks forward to success in the year ahead as we continue to provide support, services and information to the community with the goal of ensuring that all community members are accepted, supported, respected and safe.

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

Anonymous HIV Testing Clinics in the Region

Friday, April 13, 2-4 p.m.
West Lambton Community Health Centre
429 Exmouth St., Suite 100, Sarnia

Friday, May 11, 2-4 p.m.
West Elgin Community Health Centre
153 Main St., West Lorne

Rapid testing in 15-20 minutes
No appointment necessary
Call 1-866-920-1601 for more information

I-Track

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection began participating in the Public Health Agency of Canada's research survey called I-Track during the week of January 16*. The purpose of I-Track is to document risk behaviours associated with HIV and hepatitis C virus (HCV) in people who inject drugs (IDU). By participating in I-Track, RHAC will be contributing to the assessment of national trends in injecting and sexual risk behaviours among IDUs.

Over a period of approximately six weeks, 200 individuals will be interviewed onsite by the survey team. Participants can expect to be asked personal questions about drug use and sex, as well as be encouraged to provide a finger prick blood sample to be tested for HIV and hepatitis C. In return, participants will be given a \$20 voucher for their time and effort redeemable at places such as London Transit (bus tickets), Walmart, Tim Horton's and Loblaws/No Frills.

The survey is confidential and anonymous. Each participant is coded, but the codes are not tied to peoples' identities meaning no one will know specifically who was tested or what their results were. This also means the survey team won't be able to tell participants the results of their tests. Although this information won't be available, the team will have resource materials on hand outlining other testing options in London.

The survey team consists of interviewers Wendy Leslie and John Holmes, Survey Coordinator, Mike McGregor and Site Coordinator, Sheila Coad. For more information, please contact Sheila Coad at 519-434-1601 or scoad@hivaidsconnection.ca.

* The survey has received ethics approval by the Middlesex-London Health Unit, Research and Ethics Board of the University of Toronto and Health Canada/the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Volunteers in Action

The more you give, the more you get!

My name is Yury and I am a volunteer at RHAC.



I began volunteering with the agency as a member of the Couch Crew just after arriving in Canada from Russia in 2010. Working on the Couch Crew we were packing different things, to make people safer, from condoms to piercing kits. Working on that wonderful team, I got an idea of what the social side of HIV/AIDS is. Now I understand that even a little cotton ball can save someone's life and create a barrier for the wave of HIV.

Later on, Natalie, the Coordinator of Volunteer Services, gave me an opportunity to show if I am good with papers, figures and tricky computer programs. After surviving through a trial data input session I got tons of pieces to put together like a huge puzzle. I enjoyed entering tax receipt information, managing the database, taking stock of volunteers' hours and inputting new volunteers in the system. It seems like a professional bureaucrat was slumbering for years inside me sewing elbow patches and waiting for escape!

Volunteering at RHAC gave me a lot of benefits and its influence cannot be underestimated. First of all, I got into a friendly environment with wonderful people who are always ready to help. I think this is the most important thing for every newcomer who needs to learn the ropes. Moreover, through volunteering with the agency I now have a person who can act as an important reference for me. It helped me get my first job with the YMCA and to become a student at Western's Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry.

If that was not enough, I brushed-up on my computer skills and enhanced my ability to communicate in English, which is my second language. Finally, I hope my contribution will help the community, making me feel like a vital part of it.

Volunteers Needed!

WANTED: Greeters for A Taste For Life in both London and **Stratford** on Wednesday, April 25!

Are you outgoing and friendly? Passionate about the work RHAC does in the community? Then greeting at a restaurant during A Taste For Life may be for you.

YOU MUST BE ABLE TO:

- attend the training from 6:30-7:30 p.m. April 18 in London (Stratford date TBD)
- greet at a restaurant from 5-10 p.m. on April 25

For more information contact Natalie Hébert at 519-434-1601, toll free at 1-866-920-1601 or by emailing nhebert@hivaidsconnection.ca



Volunteer Appreciation Dinner!

Thursday, May 24

Doors open at 5, Dinner at 5:30

In the Big Room at The London Music Club

470 Colborne St., London

Contact Natalie at nhebert@hivaidsconnection.ca



Volunteer Training Dates

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

Upcoming dates are:

- Wednesday, March 21 – 1:30-4:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, June 12 – 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Contact Natalie Hébert at nhebert@hivaidsconnection.ca
or by calling 1-866-920-1601

News

Community Room Rejuvenated

Using a generous capital donation from the medical students at Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry at Western University, we were able to do some painting, buy some new furniture and generally spruce up the community room!



Accent walls painted in blue and a vibrant orange give the space some energy and



vibrancy. The new chairs are comfortable and stylish making it a pleasant space to spend time. Couch Crew benefits twice weekly from the new layout and we are proud to hold any community meetings and volunteer orientations/HIV basics every other month there. A feature piece is the lovely electric fire place and mantel over which a large screen television is mounted. Take a look next time you are at RHAC.



Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities RHAC becomes compliant January 1, 2012

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection is committed to becoming fully compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. As of January 1, 2012 RHAC officially adopted its Customer Service Standards for persons with disabilities document. Read about our accessibility feedback process and download our accessibility feedback form and send it back to us. It can be found online at <http://www.hivaidsconnection.ca/contact-us>.

Find us on Facebook



Go to our website at www.hivaidsconnection.ca 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.

Getting to Zero – World AIDS Day Campaign for the Next Few Years

World AIDS Day was launched 23 years ago to increase awareness, fight pervasive stigma and, in part, to raise funds. Today WAD continues to be an important annual marker of the work done within this movement. It is also a day to take time to remember those we have lost, honour those living with HIV/AIDS and celebrate all that has been accomplished in the movement. WAD is also important to help remind people that HIV/AIDS has not gone away and that there are many things still to be done in HIV/AIDS work.

Because of the development and improvement of lifesaving medications over the past 15 years the situation with HIV/AIDS has improved for millions living with the virus. This “optimism” has inspired the new WAD campaign entitled “Getting to Zero”. The theme will be used until 2015 and echoes the UNAIDS vision of achieving “Zero new HIV infections, Zero discrimination and Zero AIDS-related deaths.” It’s an ambitious vision and one that Regional HIV/AIDS Connection fully endorses.

However realizing such an ambitious vision will require a critical shift in how we think about HIV/AIDS. The fact is more and more people are living with HIV each day; these same people are often living in fear from stigma imposed on them by society. Together, we can get to the root of HIV/AIDS discrimination - stigma. Those of us in this movement call upon society to examine attitudes, beliefs and biases about HIV/AIDS. It is time to abandon stigmatizing thoughts about the virus and those living with or at risk for HIV/AIDS.

THE ONTARIO ACCORD

A Statement of Solidarity with GIPA/MIPA

“We, people living with HIV/AIDS and allies in the community:

- *Commit to the greater involvement and meaningful engagement of people living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA/MIPA); GIPA/MIPA puts PHAs at the centre and is grounded in human rights and the dignity of the full human being*
- *Aim to transform all who live with, work in, and are affected by, HIV/AIDS in Ontario*
- *Commit to personal and social transformation*
- *Value community expertise in embracing the challenge for the betterment of society*
- *Value inclusion over exclusion, a quest for integrity at all times and the embodiment of self-determination*
- *Promote the evolution of thought, action and collaboration among us and with our allies*

Because GIPA/MIPA is about human struggles and aspirations, ethics, empowerment and accountability are its foundation.”

This accord was created by representatives of Ontario organizations at a Living and Serving 3 consultation meeting in July 2011.

Past Events

Holiday Dinner

Once again one and all gathered for our annual client holiday dinner. This year the dinner was held on December 12 at the beautiful and welcoming Byron Community Church. With just over 100 in attendance and Santa Claus right on time it was a wondrous evening for all and nobody left empty-handed. Many thanks to all the dedicated volunteers, and generous benefactors who made this dinner a memorable event for all.



For the second year in a row, participants and supporters of the event were invited to make a donation to Counterpoint's IDU Outreach Program. The Outreach Program was chosen to receive the proceeds based on the work it does in harm reduction, education and outreach to drug users. Event attendees recognize the role these efforts play in keeping individuals and communities healthy.

With \$230 raised at this year's tournament, Counterpoint is committed to continuing its collaboration with tournament convenor, Michael Mullan.

A huge thank you to Michael for all his hard work and dedication and to everyone who came out and supported the event! Regional HIV/AIDS Connection looks forward to attending the tournament for years to come.

Annual AIDS Vigils

Stratford – November 30, 2011



Our annual Stratford vigil was held once again at Community of Christ Church. Approximately 30 people attended to hear music, speeches, the candle lighting ceremony and then enjoy some mixing and mingling in the meeting hall afterward.

Thank you to our wonderful volunteers from Stratford who put the event together, sourced the space and provided technical assistance.

London – December 1, 2011

Since December 1, 1988 World AIDS Day is celebrated around the globe annually. Regional HIV/AIDS Connection gathers to Remember Honour and Celebrate the vast history of the AIDS movement in and around London and all those whose lives have been woven into the fabric of our local history. This year the Vigil was held at Christ Anglican Church. The evening was a mixture of song, dance, and passionate speakers who all took the time to come together to reflect. Many thanks to all our amazing volunteers and generous community partners.



Upcoming Events

Western Ontario Opening Doors HIV Counselling Initiative Presents the 2012 Conference – *Opening Doors: Closing the Door on Stigma!*

This conference's innovative and thought provoking program focuses on stigma; not only discussing how people living with HIV/AIDS experience stigma, but also exploring and reflecting upon stigmas that exist within the HIV+ population. Join us at the Hilton in London, Ontario on March 1-2 as we explore and hear firsthand accounts from HIV+ individuals representing women, gay men and drug using communities.



This is an opportunity for anyone impacted by HIV/AIDS; service providers, people living with HIV and caregivers, to further their understanding of the stigma that accompanies the HIV virus and to reflect upon our own biases.

The cost of the conference is \$25 for service providers, \$15 for students, and no charge for people living with HIV/AIDS. Accommodation (for those outside of London) is included in the cost. Transportation and childcare subsidies are available.

Louise Binder, Lawyer, Activist, PHA, is kicking off the conference at our Keynote Dinner on March 1, followed by an exploration of stigma and biases, and an informative panel discussion led by HIV+ members of the community. This is an event you don't want to miss! You can register online <http://woodci.eventbrite.ca> or contact RHAC at 519-434-1601 or 1-866-920-1601 for more information.

Chess Tournament Raises Funds for RHAC

On Saturday January 7, 2012 over 30 individuals gathered at Poacher's Arms for the Ludvik Anthony Mitek Chess Tournament. Since 2007, the tournament has been held annually in January to bring together friends to celebrate Lud's life.

In the beginning a small number of friends got together to play chess and honour a great friend; however, a growing number of individuals have expressed an interest in the event over the years. To accommodate this growing interest among friends of friends, the tournament is now held in a public venue.

With 12 chess players entered in the tournament this year and over 20 people cheering on the sidelines, the afternoon has also been recognized as a great opportunity to give back to the community.



A Taste For Life in London AND STRATFORD!



Two A Taste For Life events are planned this year for Wednesday, April 25! We are offering Taste in Stratford as well as in London.

Check out the website for full restaurant listings in both communities www.atasteforlife.org.

We are challenging people to get out and make donations on top of the cost of their meals. Each diner receives an envelope into which they can make a donation and enter into a draw to win prizes such as Downtown Dollars or gift certificates from Kingsmill's.

We work to have approximately one third of the overall proceeds from the night come from donations at tables. The donations have a significant impact on our ability to continue to provide free programs and services to people living with, at risk for and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Specifically, funds raised through Taste help us continue to provide these free programs and services to our clients:

- Country Cupboard Food Bank
- Wellness Assistance Fund
- Client Holiday Dinner
- Annual AIDS Vigils in London and Stratford
- PHA Retreats
- PHA Lunch and Learns
- Monthly Social Support Groups (see beside)



Save the date and challenge your office to dine out on April 25!

A Taste For Life in London is presented by TD

Students From TRIOS College Make Contribution



Charity Katerenchuk

During the last few months of 2011 TRIOS college students started doing some fundraising for Counterpoint. This came about after Nick and Karen did a presentation to the TRIOS Addiction Workers class about the services Counterpoint offers in the community.

Charity Katerenchuk and Donna Armstrong headed up the fundraising. They put together raffles, a sock and

mitten tree and a swear jar to raise funds. To date they have raised \$625 from the raffle, collected over one hundred pairs of socks and mittens - monies raised through the swear jar continue to pour in!

In an effort to raise awareness and get donations, Charity spoke to several companies. The International Union of Painters and Allied Trades Local 1590 were kind enough to give a cheque for \$500. These funds were spent on bus tickets and coffee and treats for our first annual, and very successful, flu clinic.

Agility Logistics worked with the students to co-ordinate donations of \$2,200 worth of products for our clients. These include sunscreen, after-sun lotion, toothpaste and shampoos.

TRIOS continues to raise funds for Counterpoint. We are extremely grateful for the passion they feel for our program and the fundraising they continue to do!

PHA Groups

PHA Café

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

Meal provided



February 9
March 8
April 12
May 10

Contact Richard MacDonagh at 1-866-920-1601 or rmacdonagh@hivaidsconnection.ca

Women's Group

Social Group for HIV+ Women
Last Thursday of each month from 6-8 p.m.

February 23
March 29
April 26
May 31



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

Winner's Circle

Social Support Group for Long-Term HIV/AIDS Survivors

The group started last April and is still growing.

Winner's Circle is a closed group with openings twice a year to welcome new participants.

We will be inviting new people in March and September 2012.

For more information about Winner's Circle and how to become a member, please contact Rob Newman

at 519-434-1601 or email rnewman@hivaidsconnection.ca

Staff Announcements

Departures



Daniel Pugh, Director of Education

Daniel's last day at RHAC was November 11, 2011. He has moved to Toronto to take on the position of Knowledge Transfer Exchange Coordinator at the Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance. Daniel started with the agency in 2005 as Gay Men's

Director of Education in early 2010. In his six years at the agency, Daniel made significant contributions to community partnerships, thus strengthening RHAC's ability to serve at risk populations. He led the department with initiatives to promote safer sex, awareness of HIV/AIDS related issues in various communities as well as issues related to homophobia. Daniel was a founding member and chair of the Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (HBT) working group and was a strong supporter of RHAC's Open Closet program for queer youth. All the best to Daniel from everyone at RHAC.

Jennifer Gritke, HIV Regional Resource Coordinator

Jennifer's last day before taking parental leave was November 11, 2011. She had been working at RHAC since April 2010 making invaluable connections to service providers in our six county catchment area. She was also an important contributor to setting up several anonymous HIV testing clinics throughout the region in partnership with Options Clinic. Jennifer and her husband are enjoying their daughter born on November 29. Congratulations Jennifer and Brian! We hope to see you back in September 2012.



Paul Sutton, MSM HIV Educator

Paul was with RHAC for almost two years. He was instrumental in outreach work to the community in the bathhouse and beyond. He also coordinated local men's health summits and helped HBT by successfully writing its grant proposal submission in the summer of 2011. Paul

has moved to Toronto and taken on another important role within the AIDS sector. Good luck to you, Paul!



Arrivals

Natasha Newby, Fund Development Coordinator

Natasha started at RHAC in June 2011! This newsletter's editor apologizes for neglecting to introduce her all those months ago! Natasha comes to us with a diverse work history ranging from restaurant server to administrator, theatre box office manager, volunteer coordinator and fund development coordinator. Her educational background includes diplomas in both Business Marketing and Corporate Communications and Public Relations, as well as certificate training in grant writing and web design. In her previous job as



Fund Development/Volunteer and Office Coordinator for St. Thomas-Elgin Second Stage Housing Natasha saw success in grant writing, as well as in organizing fundraising events. Natasha is driven, creative and passionate and she looks forward to being part of an agency that has so much heart.



Carlen Costa, HIV Regional Resource Coordinator

Carlen took over from Jennifer Gritke in November 2011. Simultaneous to travelling throughout the 6 counties of Perth, Oxford, Huron, Lambton, Elgin and Middlesex working with secondary service providers completing informative presentations, providing resources and setting up anonymous HIV/AIDS testing clinics with partner sites she has been busily working on completing her Master of Public Health and Doctorate of Human Sexuality. As a Sexologist, Carlen produces and stars in her own show on Rogers TV London called "Sexy Living with Carlen". She looks forward to making new connections and continuing to build upon RHAC's existing relationships.

Meredith Fraser, Director of Education

After completing her B.A. in archaeology at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Meredith moved to London where she received her M.A. in Anthropology from Western University in 2001; she then moved to Washington, D.C., where she completed her Ph.D in Anthropology at American University in 2007. Meredith has always been connected with social justice and human rights work, whether as a volunteer, a student, a researcher, an activist, an educator, or as a community service worker. Prior to her arrival at Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, Meredith served as the Program Coordinator of the Anti-Hate & Anti-Bias Program at LUSO Community Services, where she especially enjoyed coordinating the 1,000 Acts of Kindness Challenge. Meredith has been connected with Regional HIV/AIDS Connection for many years in an informal capacity (she even helped paint the agency's old location on Dundas St. several years ago!) and more formally as an Open Closet facilitator. She is thrilled to officially join the RHAC team in the role of Director of Education.



Bob Martin, MSM HIV Educator

Besides being a long-time resident of both Oxford and Middlesex counties, Bob is a long-time ally of the LGBT community and supporter of RHAC. Bob's roots with the agency go back 22 years, when he was one of the original four people who helped renovate and establish the first John Gordon Home on Dufferin Ave. Bob recalls "a scary time in London" in the early days of the North American epidemic when he lost 22 dear friends to a virtually unknown disease then called GRID. Bob has an education in photography and a work history in manufacturing, and feels it is time to take on one of the most meaningful duties in his career - helping London and region become a healthier, safer place for those in need of accurate and up-to-date information about one of the most challenging health issues our generation has ever seen.

