



The Connection

The Newsletter of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

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

Fall 2014

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Across the globe, fund raisers watched with awe this summer as the deserving ALS sector jettisoned its charitable earnings with the phenomenon known as the ice-bucket challenge. Most interesting was the fact that celebrities, to unknown entities, raised unprecedented dollars with minimal effort, save for a cold dance of freezing water.

The ice-bucket challenge quickly garnered world-wide attention as one of the greatest case-studies to-date in how connectivity has changed the rules for fund-raisers. With the sharing of video, we have learned to have light-heartedness even in the name of a very serious, fatal disease known as Lou Gehrig's disease. Although the Challenge also brought tragedy, with some stunts going wrong, the rate of participation was so rapid; it is the success of the campaign that most people remember.

With the ability to connect quickly today, we must all rethink our fund raising strategies to move our messages to those that can help us. For the AIDS sector, this is increasingly challenging as we are sandwiched in a generation of people who have lost loved ones to this relentless epidemic, while we are also meeting and recruiting new supporters of twenty

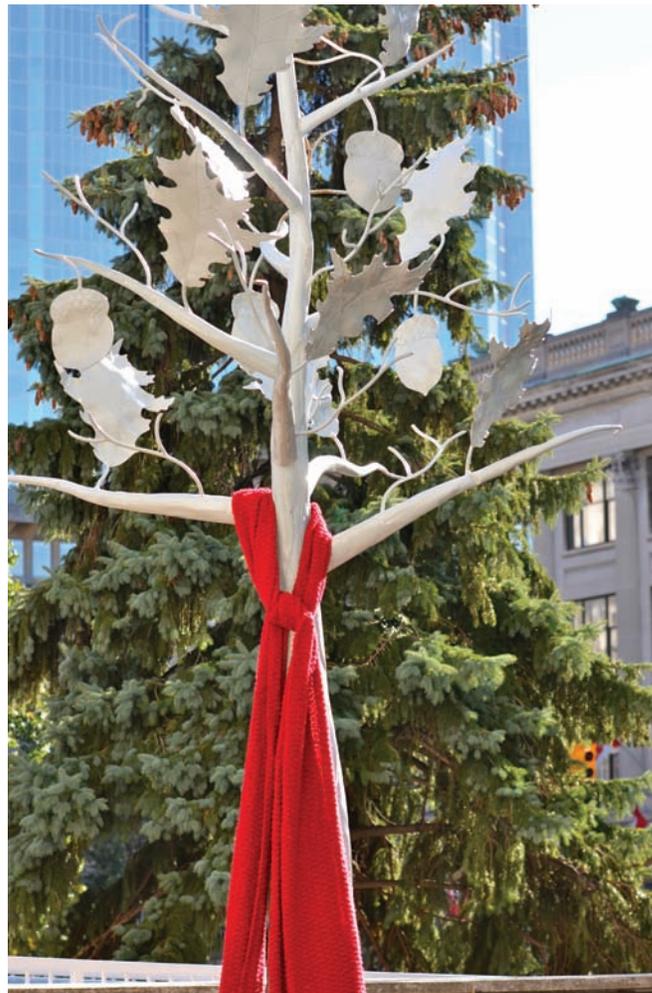
and thirty year-olds who may not yet, fully understand the havoc this disease can bring for those living with, at risk for, or affected by HIV/AIDS.

Each demographic communicates and feels differently according to Brian Lester, Executive Director of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection in Southwestern Ontario. According to Brian "we cannot, for a minute, lose touch with the people who have lived through the dying and death of their loved ones. At the same time, we need to explore new and innovative ways to engage young people to carry the torch – at least until a cure is found. As people who raise both awareness and

funds for the support, prevention, and treatment of HIV, we must challenge ourselves to find new ways of sharing our message".

In leading the way, RHAC has found an impactful way to do this by taking the symbolic red ribbon and making it into something even greater. According to Brian, this fall marks the annual **Red Scarf Project** for Regional H I V / A I D S Connection.

In what has now become a fall tradition, a remarkable community knit-a-thon begins each September with volunteers from all over the region knitting red scarves for distribution in



the community during AIDS Awareness Week and World AIDS Day. The scarves are distributed to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS. Individuals can simply accept the scarves, or pass them on to someone who really needs them in the long winter months. While the scarves are 'free' per se, individuals who want to make a difference for people living with HIV/AIDS can accept the call to action (outlined on a label affixed to the scarf) and connect with RHAC in order to make a donation. Before the campaign is launched, donations have already made a difference such as the \$1000 donation from Union Gas for the purchase of yarn. This donation replicated itself when retailers sold their yarn to RHAC at greatly reduced costs.

The magic of the **Red Scarf Project** is quietly underway with knitters from all walks of life. For example, there are dedicated Retirement Home knitters; knitters at other social service organizations such as the Unity Project, My Sisters Place and Women's Community House; knitters from London Police Services; nurse knitters; teacher knitters; first-time knitters; and life-long knitters – to name just a few.

Regional HIV/AIDS staff and volunteers will begin adorning at least four communities with Red Scarves on Monday, November 24th and officially end their campaign on World AIDS Day, December 1st.

Martin McIntosh – who heads up volunteer efforts for RHAC is predicting the largest number of red scarves since the inception of the campaign. While he says it is too early to have an exact number, he says it will be more than last year's 500, but perhaps less than next year's goal of over 1000!

Next year marks the 30th Anniversary of RHAC and its predecessor – the AIDS Committee of London. It will also mark an historic amalgamation of the John Gordon Home with RHAC. The Executive Director of the new entity, Brian Lester says we need to collectively raise awareness this year about the **Red Scarf Project** and - in turn - about HIV/AIDS. He says RHAC is planning a more comprehensive, community branding of the **Red Scarf Project** for next year.

Until then – if you plan to dance with an ice-bucket, wear a red scarf...and tell both stories.



HIV Stigma 2014

On September 28, 2014 the London Free Press ran an HIV focused editorial crafted by youth empowerment gurus Craig and Marc Kielburger. They effectively articulated the impact of present day HIV related ignorance and fear. They told the story of high school student Ashley Murphy who is living with HIV. At age 7 she was invited to her first sleepover, however due to her HIV positive status a friend's mother demanded Ashley be excluded from this event. The good news is that the host parents refused to indulge this ignorance based demand. Still this stigmatizing event disturbingly illustrates the shroud of stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. While Ashley was able to join her friends for her first sleepover, in subsequent years other friend's parents have ordered them to not share drinks with her or have given her disposable cups and utensils. It is irrational fear borne out of ignorance that continues to drive HIV stigma and prevent people living with HIV from accessing testing, treatment and care.

In 2012 the Public Health Agency of Canada published an HIV/AIDS Attitudinal Tracking Survey conducted by EKOS Research Associates Inc. Prior to 2012 the last survey was conducted in 2006. Survey findings reveal that HIV/AIDS stigma and related discrimination remain both overtly and covertly present in our society.

The survey results found that while there is some favourable movement toward less stigmatizing attitudes about HIV, many Canadians are still uncomfortable with the thought of certain specific situations involving more perceived direct contact with a person with HIV/AIDS. Forty-eight percent say that they would feel uncomfortable using a restaurant drinking glass once used by a person living with HIV/AIDS (relatively unchanged from 49 percent in 2006). Fifty-one percent say they would be uncomfortable if a close family member or friend dated someone with the illness (compared to 56 percent in 2006). Forty-one

percent attribute people's discomfort with HIV/AIDS to the fear that the disease may be transmitted through casual contact (an increase from 36 percent in 2006).

Ashley also shared that HIV/AIDS information is virtually absent from the education curriculum. We at RHAC have understood for quite some time that the younger generation is not receiving adequate information on HIV/AIDS and sexual health. This reality will not only negatively impact this generation's sexual health knowledge, it will also serve to perpetuate HIV/AIDS stigma.

Thanks to Craig and Mark for bringing this issue into the forefront and a special thanks to Ashley for sharing her lived experience - to hopefully break the cycle of stigma.

We have much to learn from this amazing teenager and we still have much work to do to ensure HIV stigma is eradicated to achieve a more just world for all people living with HIV/AIDS!

Thanks for your continued support.

Executive Director



Paving the Way for Continued Harm Reduction



Safer Inhalation Kits: RHAC and its community partners successfully launched the distribution of Safer Inhalation Kits in the community this fall. Counterpoint Needle Exchange at Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, Middlesex London Health Unit and My Sister's Place have joined the many

communities already distributing Safer Inhalation Kits including Elgin-St. Thomas, Haldimand-Norfolk, Halton, Hamilton, Toronto, Sudbury, Haliburton, Durham Region, Kawartha, Wellington-Dufferin, Guelph, and Thunder Bay.

There is a strong and increasing demand for safe smoking equipment across Ontario. The issue has become a public health concern due to the limited availability of safer smoking supplies which has resulted in the dangerous practice of sharing used supplies. Offering Safer Inhalation Kits can:

- 1) decrease the transmission of HIV, Hepatitis C and other communicable diseases among those who smoke crack cocaine;
- 2) create the opportunity to connect those who use crack to existing services such as income assistance, addiction treatment, and health care;
- 3) decrease the sharing of drug smoking paraphernalia; and
- 4) provide opportunities to teach people who use crack about safer smoking and crack use practices.

By providing safer smoking supplies, we will reduce the gap in harm reduction efforts between those who inject drugs and those who smoke crack cocaine. We will also be better positioned to reduce the harms associated with smoking crack cocaine, and expect to see benefits at both the individual and population level.

Saving Valuable Lives

Naloxone: In response to a growing number of opioid overdose deaths in this region, the Middlesex-London Health Unit, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, London InterCommunity Health Centre and the London Area Network of Substance Users

have partnered to develop *The Naloxone Program*, launched June 2014.

Community naloxone distribution has been a central component of opioid overdose prevention programs in many communities worldwide, and has saved thousands of lives. Through *The Naloxone Program*, people who are at risk of opioid overdose receive education regarding overdose risk factors, recognizing an overdose, managing an overdose (including how to administer naloxone), safe storage and handling of the overdose management kit, and follow-up after naloxone administration. Trainees are then provided with a pocket-sized overdose management kit, which includes two ampoules of naloxone, safety engineered syringes, instructions for managing an overdose, and a training certificate. The importance of calling 911 for all overdoses is stressed during the training. Education and naloxone kits are provided at the Middlesex-London Health Unit, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, and the London InterCommunity Health Centre by certified staff under medical directive.

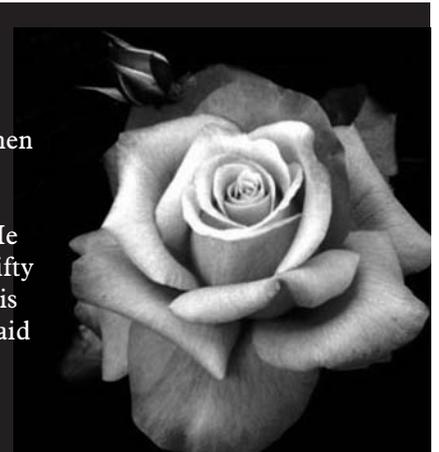
At this time, naloxone kits will be provided only for RHAC clients who access support from the needle exchange or Hepatitis C Care Team programs. Please encourage clients to contact 519-434-1601 for the location-specific training dates and times that work best for them.



On the front lines, both volunteers and staff play a vital role at RHAC.

In Memorium

We learned with sadness of the passing of Wally Duffield, a former volunteer with RHAC when we were the AIDS Committee of London, and with the John Gordon Home. Wally left an indelible mark on many organizations in the City as his volunteer contributions were far reaching. Not surprisingly he received a Governor General's Award as a Caring Canadian. He was a volunteer with at least six organizations in the arts and human service fields for over fifty years. Theatre goers and performers alike said Wally was the spark to an evening out with his heart of gold, witty humour, and graciousness. Donald D'Haene of Double D Productions said "volunteers are the ones who make it possible for others who get the glory on the stage". RHAC would not be what it is today without the "Wallys of the World".



The Impact of Collaboration

*This fall's Annual General Meeting for Regional HIV/AIDS Connection was its last as a single entity; by next fall RHAC will have amalgamated with the John Gordon Home in London. Not surprisingly **The Impact of Collaboration** was the theme of remarks at the Annual General Meeting and reflected in the following article in the Annual Report by RHAC's Executive Director, Brian Lester, and Board President, Mana Khami:*

At Regional HIV/AIDS Connection we work within a set of ten guiding principles that speak to the values we uphold as we engage in the social justice work associated with supporting marginalized populations. These include but are not limited to; Dignity, Inclusion, Collaboration, Harm Reduction, Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA) and Accountability.

Given the expansive partnerships emerging between RHAC and other key service providers we wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on the broad impact of collaboration!

Our guiding principle of collaboration states that "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 and Hepatitis C."

RHAC cannot effectively deliver on its mission without strategic partnerships that enhance the service experience of those living with, at risk for, or affect by HIV/AIDS/HCV. In the past year we have participated in and benefited from the strengthening of many of our existing collaborations.

For numerous years we have witnessed an increase in demands for services related to our Counterpoint program. The individuals we serve remain vulnerable to HIV/HCV and many other health issues, such as endocarditis, abscesses and death by overdose. Because of our collaboration with the London Intercommunity Health Centre (LIHC) many of these individuals now have direct access to health care services such as abscess care, nursing consults, HCV/HIV testing and referrals to medical services where they are treated with dignity and respect.

Our recently launched overdose prevention partnership between the Middlesex London Health Unit (MLHU), LIHC and London Area Network of Substance Users (LANSU) will reduce the number of overdose deaths in our area. Overdose deaths in our region are disproportionately high when compared to the rest of the province and this dynamic partnership will save valuable lives and reverse this concerning trend.

Finally, our successful collaboration with John Gordon Home has led us down a path of pursuing a legal amalgamation. We are approximately mid-way in the process and we are excited to potentially chart a new course that will improve services, create efficiencies and strengthen our position to weather unpredictable political and funding environments. Ultimately the amalgamation is about providing an unparalleled level of service to those who rely on us for care and support.

Effective collaboration creates opportunities, builds relationships and inspires great work, all which leads to making a positive difference in the lives of individuals and the broader community. The difference we can make is wonderfully articulated by client and volunteer Andy "The people within this

agency have literally, physically and emotionally saved my life and many like myself".

It has been another dynamic, transitional, challenging and profoundly rewarding year at RHAC. Without the commitment and dedication of our amazing staff, Board and volunteers, RHAC would not continue to function as a thriving and respected organization known for making a difference. Thanks to each supporter for your collaborative commitment to RHAC!



Brian Lester, Executive Director with Board Directors: Lynn Humfrees-Trute, Michael Mullan, Mana Khami, David Smith, Geoff Bardwell, Tendayi Gwaradzimba, and Nancy Griffiths. Absent when photo taken: Matt Reid and Stephen Barr

Beyond the Call!

Outgoing President of the Board of Directors, Tamara Landry was inducted to the Regional HIV/AIDS Connection Honour Roll at its AGM on September 4. Tamara was recognized for her outstanding contribution to the Agency, in addition to her ongoing work in the HIV/AIDS sector. Tamara is shown graciously accepting her award and that of an 'honourable red scarf'!



Highlights of RHAC in 2013/14 as reported in the recent Annual General Report



"Effective collaboration creates opportunities,..."



...builds relationships and inspires great work"



- IDU Outreach continued to grow with almost **2,000** deliveries
- **2,800** individuals served through Counterpoint
- **20,925** individual visits through Counterpoint
- **100** social/educational support groups held
- **200** presentations to over **6,000** people
- Over **22,000** publications distributed
- Over **35,000** condoms distributed
- Record-breaking volunteer hours

- HIV Testing Clinics and presentations in Perth, Huron, Lambton, Middlesex, and Oxford
- Hosted **2** major conferences
- Open Closet and Country Cupboard received major support from Green Shield and London Potter's Guild respectively
- Schulich "Tachycardia" raises largest amount ever
- Integration with John Gordon Home reaches half-way mark

Photos from the Annual General Meeting

Voice Knowledge Hope

Each year Regional HIV/AIDS Connection aims to recognize volunteers who help to personify and bring the vision of our agency to life. The annual VKH awards reflect the key pillars of our agency vision; Voice, Knowledge and Hope. Collectively they provide the opportunity for outstanding volunteers to be nominated in recognition of their valued contributions.

This year Lilka Yonge (pictured with husband Brad and their daughter Delilah at our Annual General Meeting) was presented with the prestigious Knowledge Award, in honor of Dr. Ian Mackie, the founding Medical Director of the HIV Care Program from 1989-1996, who challenged HIV stigma by sharing with the broader community the facts about HIV/AIDS and medical research.

Lilka is currently employed at the London Middlesex Health Unit and is a graduate of the Social Justice program at King's University. Over the past 5 years she has actively cultivated and shared her knowledge in helping us to serve our mission in London and Middlesex counties.

Congratulations Lilka and thank-you for your ongoing support of our vision.



TD Bank Shows Pride in Allison Everett

Allison Everett joined our volunteer team back in February of 2014, bringing great energy to the team from day one. As an employee of TD Bank Group, she was provided with an opportunity to earn a \$500 grant for her commitment to volunteering here at RHAC. TD's Volunteer Grant Program is just one of the ways that TD recognizes and supports the volunteer efforts of its employees in our local community. Allison sought out this program and then stepped up to the challenge, completing the required minimum 40 hours across a variety of roles, starting as a greeter for the TD sponsored 'A Taste for Life' fundraiser, and then branching out to do community outreach, and harm reduction support. When asked for three words to describe her volunteer experience Allison responded with "inspiring, engaging and motivating"!

Thank-you Allison and thank-you TD for recognizing the personal commitments your employees make to local charities!



★ CELEBRATING VOLUNTEERS ★

Volunteer Orientation

Find out more about the work we do and get an Introduction to HIV and Hepatitis C Basics
Register with Martin McIntosh at mmcintosh@hivaidsconnection.ca for an upcoming session:

NEXT SESSION:
Wednesday, January 21st, 2015
6:00 to 8:00 pm



What Matters to Us!



Terry Hart and Phyllis Adams have been long-time supporters of the work we do at Regional HIV/AIDS Connection (RHAC). Terry is a monthly donor through Circle of Care and Phyllis is a volunteer. We had a chance to chat with this dynamic duo about why they donate their time and money and what keeps them involved year after year.

Why do you support RHAC?

Phyllis: I was an emancipated youth at 15. I was a kid out there making decisions on my own and I didn't always make the best choices. When I see people accessing the services at RHAC I think "this could have happened to me too".

Terry: In the 80s I was not tuned in, a bit oblivious really, to the AIDS crisis. At this time in my life I'm able to donate. I find myself saying "Wow, this is still such a big issue medically and socially" and I know I can make a difference now.

Phyllis, what keeps you coming back to volunteer?

Phyllis: Well it's the people; the staff is lots of fun and really know their stuff. There's a variety of things to do, to be educated about. I'm always learning and meeting new people. I feel like what I do at RHAC matters.

Terry, both you and Phyllis are really involved with the London Lesbian Film Festival. Can you tell us a bit about the relationship between the festival and RHAC?

Terry: Well it's a good fit.

Phyllis: We're all queer!

Terry: The festival has been around for 24 years and RHAC 29 years. We're both doing work in London, both non-profits and part of the queer community. Also, through my involvement at Metropolitan Community Church, I learned about the history of lesbians providing care for HIV positive men in the 80s. There were so many men affected that the women's community rallied to provide that piece, that care. We have this shared history of supporting each other and building our community up. Stigma continues around HIV and people who use drugs.

What would you say to someone who is hesitant to help because of stigma?

Phyllis: I'd tell them to count their blessings and realize this could be them too. You get a chance to volunteer with people who need you and at the heart of it, we are all the same: queer, straight, injection drug users, trans folk. AIDS and Hepatitis C don't discriminate. Being HIV positive is only one part of a person, there's more to a person than their status.

Terry: I think stigma is the reason to help. I joined Circle of Care at the 25th Anniversary, it was such a great event, and I was surprised how few people do monthly giving. I love the automatic withdrawal and even a small monthly amount really adds up fast. I'm proud of being a donor because I get to see what a difference it makes.

We are thankful that Terry and Phyllis continue to support the programs for people who use our services. We couldn't ask for better allies in addressing stigma. If you are interested in volunteering contact Martin McIntosh, mmcintosh@hivaidsconnection.ca. If you would like to join Circle of Care, RHAC's monthly giving program call Natalie today at 519-434-1601.



Go to our website at www.hivaidsconnection.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 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.

Banque Scotia® **Scotiabank®**
MARCHE ACTION SIDA™ **AIDS WALK™**
FOR LIFE

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, The John Gordon Home, and Camp Wendeke representatives joined 150 participants for a sunset walk Saturday, September 13 in Springbank Park, London. In a bittersweet and unique strategy, organizers of the local Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life marked its 25th Anniversary by retiring the Walk.

Faced with increasing competition in the not-for-profit sector, the three-key partners agreed to explore new fund-development opportunities in the future that will continue to support critically-needed services for people living with, at risk-for, or affected by HIV/AIDS.

Walk organizers indicate although the Walk has been strong, with long-term and loyal supporters, the event is not growing as multiple charities are holding similar events in the region. They have “chosen to end the walk on a strong note and not wait until revenues decline”. With almost \$40,000 raised in the final Walk, Walk Coordinator, Natalie Hebert of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection says “twenty-five years of activism and fundraising for AIDS services in London is a great story; we look forward to a new chapter of collaboration in partnership with John Gordon Home and Camp Wendeke”.

First Runner Up for Top Walker was Joe Morrison of TD Bank. Joe has been a long-time and loyal supporter of the Walk. The Top Walker Award in the final year went to Donna Bray and her dog Sky. Not surprisingly, but greatly appreciated was the contribution of the entire Bray family who have walked for many years in memory of their son and brother Daryl Bray. Wearing a trade-mark orange balloon in memory of Daryl, the Bray family – known as the Memory Walkers - raised almost \$12,000 for this year’s Walk through a number of annual fund-raising activities such as a garage sale and golf-tournament. The Bray family members have been major donors to the local HIV/AIDS sector. In closing remarks, Walk committee members and Emcee Jan Sims of CTV London, said they hope families such as the Brays, are able to continue their support, when new, local activities in support of the three partners become known.

Approximately 71,000 people are currently living with HIV/AIDS in Canada with up to one third of that number NOT knowing they have HIV. Despite significant advances in medical treatments, there remains no cure or vaccine to prevent new infections from a wide-range of demographic groups. With the spread of HIV, the needs of clients in the London area continues and AIDS organizations need to raise more money now than ever before.





This year's Pride parade was the largest ever, and RHAC and the John Gordon Home were an astounding 71 marchers strong! So...what happens when you get that many supportive, engaged, and enthusiastic folks together? A boisterous celebration of LGBT2Q+ communities, culture, and RHAC's agency values of diversity, inclusion and sex positivity ensues!

However, dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers not only supported RHAC's presence in the parade; these amazing individuals also contributed significantly to the success of outreach activities. This year, such activities included an agency booth at Victoria Park and the distribution of approximately 2,000 condom packs, among others.

The members of RHAC's internal Pride Committee would like to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to everyone who helped coordinate, support and promote agency participation in this year's Pride celebrations. We hope that you had as much fun as we did and we look forward to celebrating with you again next year!



The inviting rhythms and sights of Sunfest 2014 attracted large crowds of people to Victoria Park on the 3rd-6th of July to celebrate our rich diversity. As a community-inspired organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for individuals living with or at risk of HIV/AIDS, RHAC had the opportunity to advocate and educate the community at this event. Over 3,500 condom packages - which included information brochures and approximately 1,700 packages of lube - were distributed throughout the weekend with the help of our lovely, dedicated volunteers. We're looking forward to another outreach experience again in 2015 - please come check out our booth, we will be happy to see you!

World Hepatitis Day

In case you happened to miss it, World Hepatitis Day happened on July 28th. This is a day dedicated to spreading awareness and promoting testing for hepatitis C. There were many agencies in London that put up displays and posters to mark the event. Regional HIV/AIDS Connection also partnered with London Intercommunity Health Centre and Hemophilia Ontario to run an information booth outside of the Central Library. It was great chatting with passerbys about their experience and knowledge of hepatitis. If you were out and about, you may have noticed chalk messages about testing outside of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection and London Intercommunity Health Centre. Overall, World Hepatitis Day was a great success thanks to all of the volunteers who helped educate others about hepatitis. In the meantime, there are ways that you can help promote awareness of hepatitis C:

- Wear a "Hep C Awareness" button
- Read a brochure about hepatitis C

Are You Doin' It?

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection and its partners were excited to deliver the 5th annual "Are You Doin' It?" testing week campaign this year. The Are You Doin' It? campaign seeks to both raise awareness about and promote HIV and STI testing in London and the surrounding counties in RHAC's catchment.

Community partners for this event include: The Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy (Oahas) - Southwest, London InterCommunity Health Centre's Options Clinic, the Middlesex London Health Unit, Fanshawe College, and Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Youth Action Centre). The AYDI team held several HIV rapid-testing clinics within London, in Woodstock and in St. Thomas with the support of Options Clinic, Elgin St. Thomas Public Health, the YWCA (St. Thomas) and the Woodstock Community Health Centre. The only way to know your HIV status for certain is to get tested ...and with a rapid test, you can know your status in a few minutes, while maintaining complete anonymity!



- Organize a hepatitis C presentation for a group or agency you belong to
- Get tested if you think you might be at risk

If you would like to be a part of World Hepatitis Day events next year, contact Zach at ztempleman@hivaidsconnection.ca.



From the Field

Carlen Costa, Regional Coordinator of HIV/AIDS Services

Regionally, our focus this fall is all about connecting, building relationships and sharing.

Our counties have been busy connecting with us and we have had the opportunity to collaborate on some great campaigns; namely, The Red Scarf Project as part of AIDS Awareness Week. You will have read of our campaign on the cover of this newsletter, but I am thrilled to report that we are running The Red Scarf Campaign not only in London-Middlesex County, but our friends in Stratford-Perth, Woodstock-Oxford and St. Thomas-Elgin are all running their own Red Scarf campaigns! As mentioned on page six, if you are interested in contributing either red yarn, funds or just want to crochet a stitch for a red scarf, please connect with Martin or any team member from the Community Relations team at RHAC.

To compliment AIDS Awareness Week, we will also be hosting our annual vigils to honour, remember and celebrate the lives we have cherished and lost throughout the battle against HIV and its stigma. The **Stratford Vigil will be held on Sunday November 30th**. The **London Vigil is on World AIDS Day, December 1st**. Please check our web site and social media outlets for locations and other information related to the vigils.



Another of our major regional events is now in the planning stage and we couldn't be more excited! The annual **Opening Doors Conference will be held in Windsor in March 2015**. This past year's conference was a memorable experience and we look forward to sharing our stories and experiences with you again next year. Conference details will also be communicated via our social media once they are confirmed.

To find out what is going on in your region, including the next schedule of Anonymous Testing Clinics, or to simply stay connected – please visit our website www.hivaidconnection.ca (Events Calendar); Twitter @RHAC or like us on Facebook!

Presentations, network meetings and planning for spring and summer events will keep me busy throughout the region for the rest of the winter. If you have any ideas for regional work or if you live outside London and are interested in becoming a regional volunteer, please don't hesitate to contact me at ccosta@hivaidconnection.ca or call me at 1-866-920-1601.

Community Corner – New Medical Director at the Infectious Diseases Care Program

The London health care community welcomed Dr. Michael Silverman to the team at the Infectious Diseases Care Program at St. Joseph's Hospital this past summer. Dr. Silverman comes from Lakeridge Health in Oshawa where he had a long history of providing care to people living with HIV and over 2,000 people living with Hepatitis C.

Dr. Silverman brings a fresh new perspective on provision of care and a vision for how to expand services into the community beyond HIV health care. Due to his keen interest and expertise, Dr. Silverman is expanding services to include treatment of Hepatitis C. He believes in individually tailoring treatment regimens for quality of life, which may include harm reduction strategies.

RHAC looks forward to working with Dr. Silverman at the Infectious Diseases Care Program and its ongoing partner, London InterCommunity Health Centre.

Upcoming Events – Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

- AIDS Awareness Week – November 24 to December 1
 - Red Scarf Project Launch – November 24
London, Stratford, St. Thomas and other communities
 - Stratford Vigil – November 30, 7:00 p.m.
Community of Christ Church, Stratford
- World AIDS Day – London Vigil – December 1, 7:00 p.m.
Palace Theatre, Procuiner Hall – Open to everyone
Followed by stage performance of The Normal Heart
(advance tickets required for performance)
- Client Holiday Dinner – December 11, London
- PHA Feedback Session and Lunch with the
Executive Director and Client Services Staff
December 18, 12:00 to 1:30 p.m.

**For all events please see our website
www.hivaidconnection.ca**

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

Staff Announcements

It is with sadness that we accepted the resignation of our long standing Director of Client Services – **Shannon Dougherty**. After working at RHAC for ten plus years Shannon arrived at the conclusion that she needed to resign permanently to tend to her wellness. During her time with RHAC, Shannon served as a valued colleague to many who experienced the benefit of working with her. She held a strong values alignment with all that RHAC stands for and her wisdom, compassion and experience contributed to our mission in unmeasurable ways. We all wish Shannon the best as she moves forward in her life.

While fondly bidding so-long to Shannon Dougherty, Brian Lester recently announced the permanent appointment of **Kelly Wright**, as Director of HIV Support Services.

Sonja Burke and Karen Burton announced that **Phyllis Adams** will be joining the Counterpoint team as a volunteer in the Needle Exchange on Tuesdays from 12:30 – 5:00pm.

Meredith Fraser, Director of Education was delighted to bring her team up to full complement with the following announcements:



We are pleased to share that **Blair Henry** joined Regional HIV/AIDS Connection in the role of Gay Men’s HIV Prevention Worker in August. Blair is familiar with the work of the organization, having served as a volunteer with RHAC, and brings a wealth of relevant skills and experience to the agency. More specifically, Blair has worked in the HIV/AIDS sector in Maun, Botswana,

where he engaged multiple parties (government representatives, stakeholder groups, and the public at large) in dialogues that resulted in policy changes and also influenced the USAID funding process for HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa. Further, in his role in Botswana, Blair grew a capacity-building NGO from six member organizations to a collaborative entity boasting more than 50 members. Blair also brings both presentation and workshop development/delivery skills to the table, having owned and managed (as a Lead Creative) a leadership and soft skills training company.

We are excited to announce that **Mbaka Wadham** is back at RHAC in the role of Women’s HIV/AIDS Community Development Coordinator. Mbaka served as the agency’s Multicultural HIV Prevention Coordinator when Mercy Nleya was away on parental leave in 2013 and we’re pleased to be working with Mbaka once again in a new capacity! Mbaka has a background in social sciences and brings valuable skills, assets and experiences to inform the work. More specifically, she has contributed to local



efforts related to HIV/AIDS as a volunteer with Regional HIV/AIDS Connection and with the John Gordon Home. Additionally, she spent time working with people living with HIV/AIDS in Zambia and conducted research for her Master’s thesis that explored the impact of HIV/AIDS on families in this region.

In making the ‘new’ staff announcements Meredith recognized the departure and outstanding service of **Kevin Murphy** during his tenure with RHAC as the Gay Men’s HIV Prevention Worker. Kevin’s sphere of influence within the HIV/AIDS sector extended well beyond the walls of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection to encompass work with the Ontario AIDS Network, and the Gay Men’s Sexual Health Alliance, among other provincial committees, organizations and entities.

Bonnie Baynham played an essential role as the agency’s Women’s HIV/AIDS Community Development Coordinator. Since the inception of the position, Bonnie brought an impressive depth of experience and skill to the work. However, it was Bonnie’s authenticity, honesty and accessibility that underpinned the successful relationship-building and community development activities that allowed the WHAI portfolio to flourish under her care. Meredith thanked and acknowledged both Kevin and Bonnie for their significant contributions as she bid them farewell and best wishes from RHAC.



