

YOUR VOLUNTEER HAND BOOK



Regional
HIV/AIDS
Connection

Community Inspired. Courage Driven.

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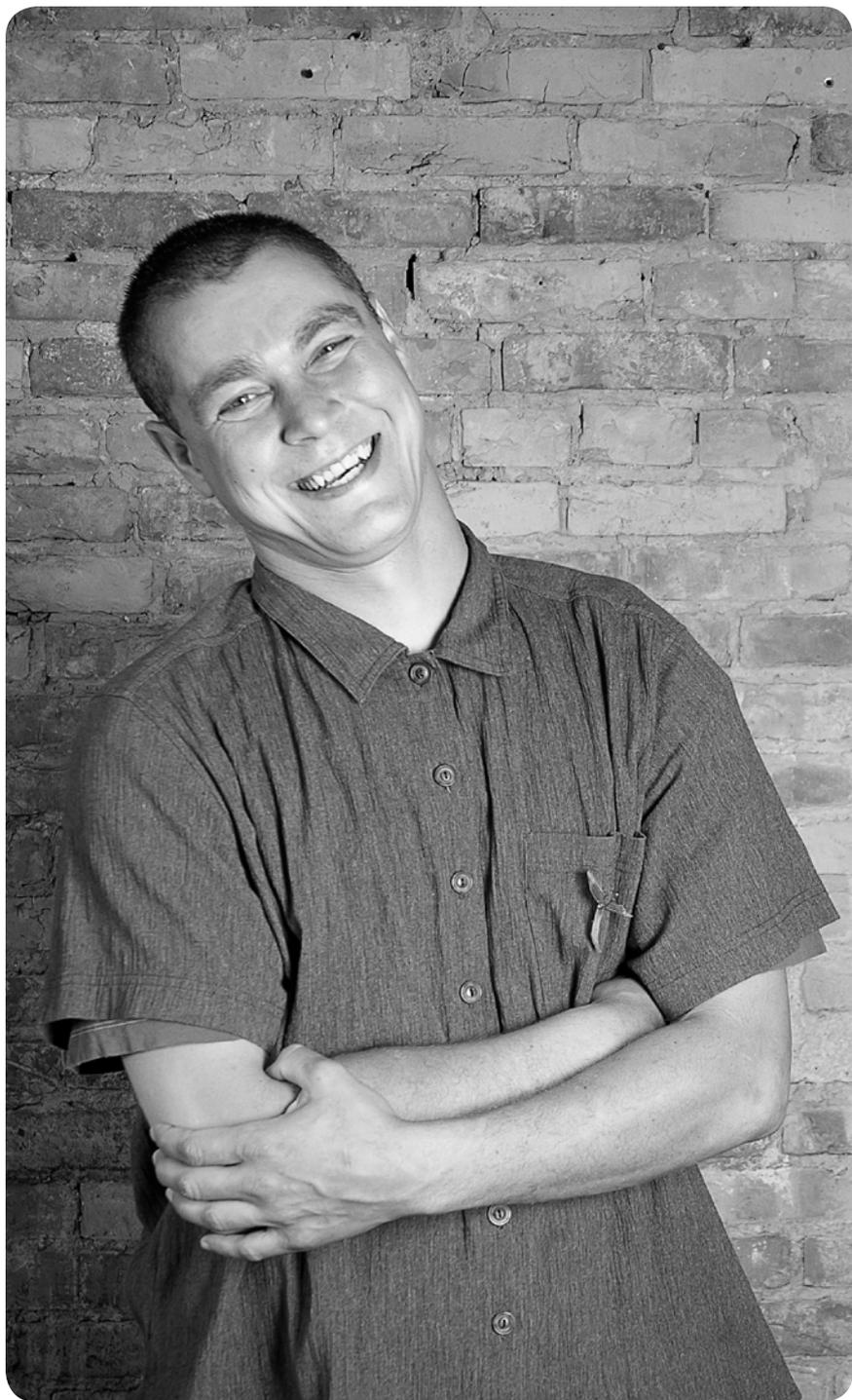
From the Executive Director

Welcome to the Regional HIV/AIDS Connection family! You have made a choice to support a social and health issue that has had a profound and lasting impact over the past 30 years. We are a community inspired, social justice organization that was established through the dedication, commitment and skills of concerned LGBT community members. In the early days of HIV/AIDS it was concerned volunteers who cared for individuals (mostly gay men) dying from AIDS while many in our community were paralyzed by fear or simply looked away. When you walk through our doors to volunteer, you honour this remarkable legacy - and we honour you. HIV/AIDS has impacted many communities over time and there is still much that needs to be done as we provide prevention, education and support programming. We could not successfully achieve our mission without you and we continue to be a vibrant and effective organization because of you. Thank you for sharing with us your most precious commodity - your personal time.

You are amazing!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Lester". The script is fluid and cursive.

Brian Lester
Executive Director



What is HIV/AIDS?

HIV stands for **human immunodeficiency virus** - a virus that weakens the immune system. The immune systems of people living with HIV may not allow them to fight off infections as well as people who do not have HIV (who are HIV negative).

AIDS stands for **acquired immune deficiency syndrome** - an advanced form of the illness caused by HIV. Not all people living with HIV will develop AIDS.

HIV is mainly spread by having anal or vaginal sex (intercourse) with an infected person without using a condom, or by sharing needles. Currently, there is no vaccine and no cure for HIV/AIDS. There are five bodily fluids that can have enough HIV to infect another person:

- Blood
- Semen
- Anal fluids/mucous
- Vaginal fluids
- Breast milk

For you to become infected, one of these fluids must get into your blood from someone infected with HIV.

For additional information about HIV/AIDS in both English and French, please visit the website of Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE) - Canada's source for HIV and hepatitis C information.

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C (hep C) is a chronic liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). Hepatitis means "inflammation of the liver", thus HCV causes inflammation and scarring of the liver.

Hepatitis C is only spread through blood. The blood of a person infected with the hepatitis C virus must enter your blood stream for you to become infected. Currently, there is no vaccine for hepatitis C.

Hepatitis C is NOT spread through any other bodily fluids such as: saliva, sweat, semen, vaginal fluids, urine, breast milk, etc.



What does RHAC do?

Mission

We are a community-inspired organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for individuals and diverse communities living with, at-risk for or affected by the challenges associated with HIV/AIDS.

Vision

Voice Knowledge Hope

Values

The courage to do what is right.

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection provides free & confidential services to people living with and at risk for HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C. We provide free education sessions on topics of HIV, hep C and harm reduction to increase knowledge in the community on these issues. While much of our funding comes from provincial, federal and municipal governments we also must fundraise about 10% of our total budget to provide client services such as **Country Cupboard Food Bank**, support/social groups, retreats and information sharing sessions.

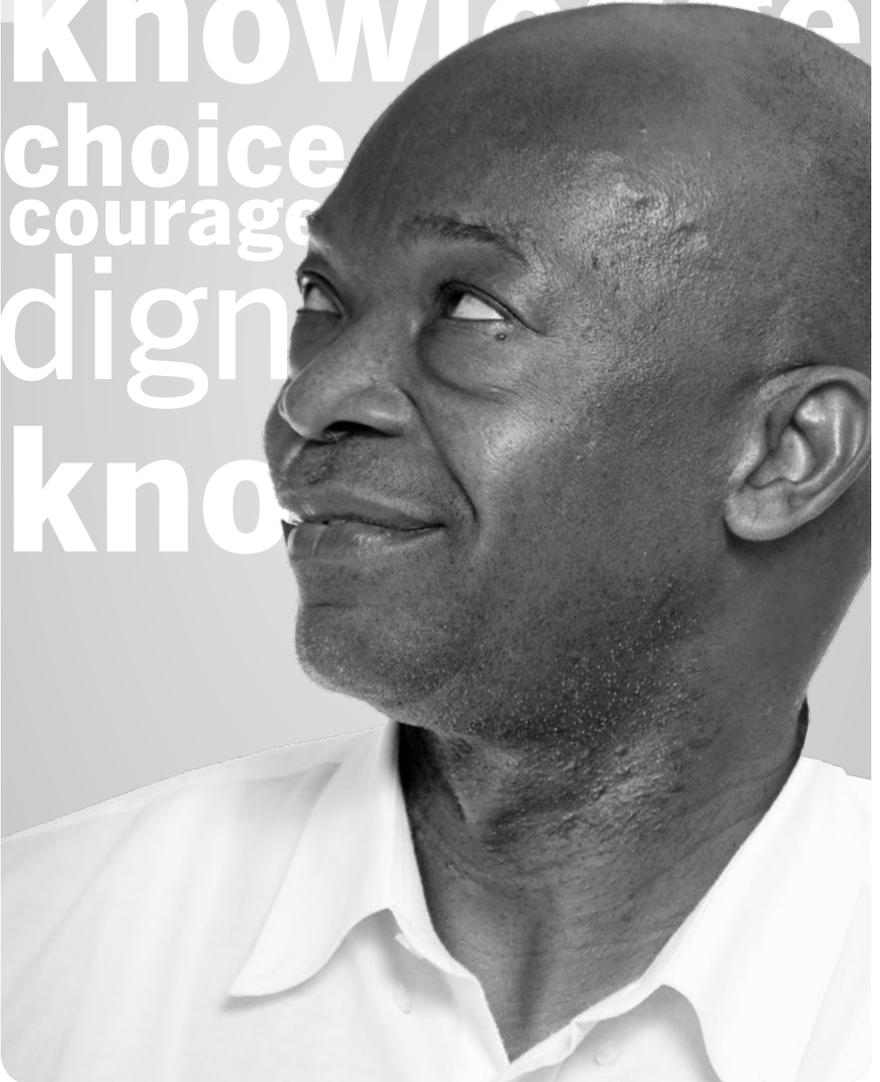
Benefits of volunteering

Learn New Skills: Volunteers bring a wide variety of skills and experiences to their work at RHAC. You may be looking to work from those strengths or explore learning something new.

Meet New People: RHAC's volunteers come from all walks of life. Our youngest volunteer is 14 and our oldest is 79! You will meet new people in a warm and welcoming environment. Not a big people person? You can choose opportunities with more individual focus.



HOPE LIVE
VOICE courage
dignity choice
knowledge
choice
courage
dign
kno



Free membership: If you volunteer 20 hours or more in a year you receive a free agency membership. Membership includes having voting privileges at our Annual General Meeting to elect board members, as well as receiving the agency newsletter three times a year.

RHAC Volunteer Awards Nominations open each year in the spring, close at the end of July and are awarded at our Annual General Meeting in September. Styled after our vision of **Voice, Knowledge and Hope**, these awards recognize exceptional contributions from our volunteers.

Recognition: Whether it is someone saying thank you at the end of your shift to attending our annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, RHAC offers a wide variety of recognition vehicles acknowledging the contribution you make to our agency.

Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection has policies in place to ensure your volunteer experience is rewarding and enjoyable. The full policies can be found on our [website www.hivaidconnection.ca](http://www.hivaidconnection.ca) under *Get Involved, Volunteer* and are written in formal language. This section will give you an overview of the areas our policies cover. When in doubt please check with your supervising staff or the Coordinator of Volunteer Services.

a. Anti-racism/Anti-Oppression

As a volunteer you enjoy the same rights as staff and clients. This includes the right to work free from racism, oppression, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and HIV/AIDS related stigma. We live in a culture that is based on inequality. At Regional HIV/AIDS Connection we strive to create a space where inequality is confronted and addressed in an anti-racism/anti-oppression framework.

b. Volunteer Code of Conduct

A Commitment to self care: RHAC expects appropriate, professional and respectful conduct from all volunteers towards clients, colleagues,

government, other community agency workers and the general public. This is achieved through a commitment to self care by:

- Working within the boundaries of the program you are volunteering in
- Seeking support from staff when needed
- Taking breaks from volunteering when needed

Responsibility to Clients: RHAC believes in the right of clients to maximize their full and unique potential for healthy living through the support of professional, effective and accountable services. Volunteers will demonstrate this within the context of their roles and position description parameters by:

- Ensuring the client's best interests are placed first within a professional relationship
- Demonstrating acceptance of clients as unique and valued individuals
- Providing a safe environment free of all forms of discrimination
- Gathering only information deemed important for service delivery and adhering to all privacy legislation
- RHAC also believes in having volunteers that provide a professional attitude & conduct at all times with clients, as well as consistently demonstrating integrity & ethics as outlined in the **Official Policies and Procedures.**

c. Confidentiality

RHAC respects the right to privacy and honours the confidentiality of current, former and prospective: service users, clients, volunteers, board members, members, donors, sponsors and employees. You are required to sign a **Statement of Confidentiality** before commencing duties at RHAC. If you have questions about confidentiality please discuss with your staff supervisor.

d. Supervision and Feedback

The work you do for RHAC is integral to our ability to deliver on our mission. Part of ensuring that clients receive the best services is regular communication with your staff supervisor on what is, and is not

working for you in your volunteer role. Identifying challenges early helps everyone achieve a high level of performance. RHAC has a coaching model for supervision and we rely on your open and honest feedback to ensure we are delivering the best services and information we can.

e. Health & Safety

As a volunteer you have the right to work in a safe environment and participate in our Health & Safety program. If you have health & safety concerns please speak with your supervising staff. You have a duty to participate in our:

- **Violence & harassment prevention programs** by reporting concerns to your supervisor
- **Incident reports:** when you witness an incident you must fill out a report
- **Security program** by leaving valuables at home and securing your personal items when on site
- **Fire drills** by following our evacuation and roll call procedures.

Resources

Ontario HIV/AIDS Treatment Network

www.ohtn.on.ca

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE)

www.catie.ca

www.hivaidsconnection.ca/partners-and-collaborators



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