



Regional
HIV/AIDS
Connection

ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

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



NOTHING ENDURES BUT CHANGE



To say that RHAC experienced significant milestones throughout 2014/15 is an understatement.

In our quest to provide responsive services to individuals living with, at risk for, or affected by HIV/AIDS/HCV, RHAC worked toward a legal amalgamation with **John Gordon Home**. On January 19th 2015, the RHAC Board and membership voted unanimously to support the amalgamation. This watershed moment will forever change London and area for the people we serve. It feels like, on the eve of 30 years of HIV social justice work, we are just beginning!

The amalgamation was not the only milestone achieved at RHAC. We continued to experience growth in our Counterpoint Needle Syringe program and worked with many organizations including London Intercommunity Health Centre and Middlesex London Health Unit to achieve favourable outcomes for those we serve. Engagement in our various social support groups has never been higher and client feedback continues to profoundly shape the programs we deliver. In collaboration with Addiction Services Thames Valley and The Unity Project, we contributed

to the success of the award winning Housing First program - London CARES. Through the work of RHAC and collaboration, we saw more people getting housed, increased access to treatment for Hepatitis C, responsive prevention programming such as our successful “Are You Doin It” HIV testing campaign and the launch of our well attended Gay Guys’ Book Club.

The greater involvement of persons living with HIV (GIPA) continued to be a central theme in the culture of RHAC and we held a GIPA commitment ceremony in the JGH Gardens. The success of the Red Scarf Project has increased awareness that HIV is still a serious issue and helped us to expand our volunteer demographic. Volunteers are the life blood of the organization and the success of our mission is attributed to the many volunteers who choose to give their valuable time to RHAC.

We are fortunate to employ an amazing team, recruit dedicated and talented Board members and engage in partnerships that enrich the service experiences of some of our community’s most vulnerable.

Within the 2008/09 Annual General Report, we referenced a quote by Greek Philosopher Heraclitus - “nothing endures but change”. It’s still relevant to us in 2014/2105. Amalgamation, staff transition, strengthened partnerships and opportunities to build a strong future through strategic effort point to the reality that change is a constant. It is our hope that together we can and will embrace change. It is not always easy, but the willingness to evolve and change is what has kept RHAC relevant – on the eve of 30 years of social justice work.

Thanks for your continued support!



Brian Lester
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Mana Khani
BOARD PRESIDENT





John Gordon Home
London Regional AIDS Hospice

It is a bittersweet task to pen what will be the last Annual General Report for the John Gordon Home. While we strongly believe that the amalgamation with Regional HIV/AIDS Connection on April 1, 2015 is a responsible and strategic decision, it is also a time to reflect back on the outstanding accomplishments of our predecessors.

Since our incorporation as the London Regional AIDS Hospice in 1991, Board Members have provided leadership in overseeing

John Gordon Home

the establishment of John Gordon Home. In responding to the unfolding HIV/AIDS and HCV epidemics over two and a half decades, the Board has ensured that the changing needs of people directly impacted were always at the forefront of decision making. This will not change as members of the current JGH Board merge with members of the RHAC Board to ensure continuity of leadership.

In addition to Board Members, we are incredibly grateful to the thirty volunteers who have contributed their time and talents to JGH over the past year. Volunteers keep our gardens looking beautiful; maintain our website; assist with cooking and baking; support our fundraising activities and special events; and provide administrative assistance on a weekly basis. Through student placements, we have also received additional help from people preparing for careers as PSWs, Nurses, Occupational Therapists and Social Service Workers.

Our small but mighty team of thirteen employees has provided flexible and innovative supports to 25 people who came to us for

Transitional or Palliative Care this year. Our staff are not the highest paid in the sector and we know that people are drawn to JGH and motivated to work here by a wide variety of personal, political and philosophical variables. Thank you for your dedication. Our high levels of client satisfaction and the feedback we receive from residents and their families is proof that you do excellent work. The supports we provide are often augmented by our partner agencies, to whom we extend our ongoing gratitude.

Moving forward, John Gordon Home will retain its unique identity as a program under the umbrella of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection. We will continue to respond to the changing needs of people living with HIV and HCV and ensure that our service model meets these needs. We will continue to grow our increasingly successful fundraising initiatives and

IT IS NOT JUST A HOME...IT IS A PLACE WHERE YOU GET TO HAVE YOUR DIGNITY AND RESPECT

– JGH RESIDENT

nurture new relationships with community partners, donors, friends and supporters.

We are confident that our predecessors, both living and deceased, would

see the wisdom in the path to amalgamation and support this exciting new direction. We are and always will be **The Home with a Heart.**



Bruce Rankin
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
2009-2015

Shaila Beaudry
BOARD PRESIDENT
2011-2015



HIV SUPPORT SERVICES

2014/2015 marked many events and activities within the HIV Department. We

saw great success in our social engagement, providing twenty-four sessions to PHAs through Winner's Circle, PHA Café and our Women's programming. Additionally, clients were provided quarterly opportunities to meet with the Executive Director to share their thoughts and ideas surrounding current and future services of the organization.

Through four Lunch and Learns, clients were provided information on a range of topics such as HIV and Aging; An overview of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), and a session on RHAC's own HIV Department to ensure PHA's are well versed on the supports we are able to offer.

Country Cupboard supported a high volume of PHAs and their families this year through the generous donation of food from local

**IT ALL BEGAN
WITH A SPARK
OF FEELING LIKE
JUST MAYBE
I WAS WORTH
SOMETHING.**

– CLIENT

organizations. Through their generosity we were able to share special selections of meat and produce for both Christmas and Easter.

We held our annual GIPA/ MIPA ceremony, showing once again, our commitment to the Ontario Accord and the Greater and Meaningful Involvement of PHAs. This year's ceremony was especially poignant and beautiful as it was held on the beautiful grounds of our newly amalgamated sister facility, John Gordon Home.

Our summer picnic was a huge success, bringing over thirty clients, family and friends together to celebrate

in the summer sun! Clients often express their gratitude for these important social opportunities to simply enjoy life in the company of others who understand their daily challenges. We, at RHAC, are equally grateful for our clients and the way in which they enrich our lives – everyday.



COUNTER POINT

HARM REDUCTION SERVICES



It has been a very busy and productive year for Counterpoint Services.

We were pleased to announce the successful launch of the distribution of Safe Inhalation Kits in September 2014, with a total of 759 kits distributed in the first six months.

The Naloxone Program, our partnership with London Inter Community Health Centre, Middlesex London Health Unit and London Area Substance Users, continued to be very successful. Through this partnership we have distributed seventy kits to

clients at risk of an opioid overdose and by the end of our fiscal year - three people had been successfully resuscitated. We are now

**RHAC ALLOWED
ME TO BREAK
OUT OF MY
SHELL AND
DEAL WITH MY
ADDICTIONS**

– CLIENT PEER WORKER

able to share, that number has doubled to six successful

resuscitations – since the inception of the program. Additionally, Counterpoint now has three certified Naloxone trainers and we are working on increasing the number of trainers as well as our available training times.

Counterpoint, with assistance from two University of Western Ontario Nursing Students, developed an information poster on Endocarditis which was made available to all Needle Syringe programs in the province, through the Ontario Harm Reduction Distribution Programs website.

STATS



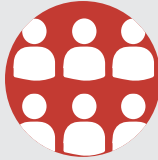
24

sessions for PHAs
this year



**over
18,000**

client interactions
through
Counterpoint



6 lives

saved through
Naloxone project



5,000

Outreach client
interactions



4 new

Lunch and Learns



118%

IDU return rate



Launch

of Safe
Inhalation Kits



91

New, Hep C
clients

The Needle Syringe Program distributed 2.5 million syringes, with 18,190 client interactions in the fixed site location and 4,717 client interactions through our IDU Outreach delivery and street outreach. The IDU Outreach program continues to increase its return rate which was 118% this year. We continue to work on initiatives to increase recovery efforts of discarded syringes in the community.

The Hepatitis C team was successfully engaged in the launch of the new, Hep C treatment medication.

With 91 new clients, a total of 104 clients accessed various services on the treatment continuum, including pretreatment, treatment and post-treatment supports. It is very good news to report, that forty individuals have either spontaneously cleared the virus, completed the prescribed course of treatment, or sustained a virologic response in the past year. With new treatment options, we anticipate this number to continue to increase!



The Education Department

2014 / 2015 was a year of transition for the Education Department, which welcomed two new members in the Gay Men's HIV Prevention and Women's HIV/AIDS Community Development portfolios. The resulting influx of new skill sets, perspectives and ideas yielded some exciting developments - such as the Gay Guys' Book Club. The Club is held in partnership with the London Public Library. The group meets every 6 weeks and focuses on literature related

to LGBT2Q+ themes. We are excited that community uptake of this new initiative has been strong thus far, with many new participants attending each session alongside book club regulars.

This year witnessed some new collaborative projects across the Women's HIV/AIDS Community Development HIV Prevention Coordinator and Multicultural HIV Prevention Coordinator portfolios that have yielded important outcomes, including a brand new outreach site that

connects us with community members that have been a challenge to reach. In addition, this 'team within a team' achieved success through the coordination of community partners to plan and deliver a bilingual event (English/French) in recognition of International Women's Day. The "Women Make It Happen!" event was extremely well-attended in its inaugural year, with more than 50 women taking part in the festivities!

Collaboration also informed key successes in the GBMSMT2S and HIV Community Development Coordinator portfolio, such as the development of an advisory committee whose members dedicated their time and, expertise to the creation of a resource guide for health providers who work with gay, bi, trans, 2-spirit, and other men who have sex with men. The guide was launched in the spring and complements work by another local initiative (the HiMMM, or Health in Middlesex Men

I'M GRATEFUL TO RHAC FOR LIFE.

– CLIENT

Matters, project). The guide has garnered interest from CATIE, a national organization dedicated to knowledge translation and exchange related to HIV and Hepatitis C.

Finally, the Hepatitis C Educator initiated a new partnership with the London Community Resource Centre. This community development initiative allowed RHAC to

secure a community garden plot with the goal of creating a community garden in spring/summer 2015. Our hope is that this garden will offer skill development and capacity-building opportunities for those interested in gardening; volunteer opportunities for people who are familiar with gardening to share their knowledge; a place where people can connect while engaging in physical activity; and some delicious fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs!



125

presentations that reached more than 2422 people



30,000

condoms handed out and

800

insertive condoms handed out



15,000

brochures distributed throughout the community

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Amalgamation, collaboration, and celebration were common themes in our Community Relations work this past year.

Our 30th Anniversary plans evolved around **giving thanks and showing gratitude**, as we reflected on historical highlights, celebrated milestones, and planned special events.

For example, we took the bold step of sun-setting our twenty-five year, Scotiabank Walk for Life in 2014, but shortly after, announced plans for our pending amalgamation with the John Gordon Home.

Our 2014 Red Scarf Project reached new success as it was unveiled for the first time in five regional, cities including St. Thomas, Stratford, Sarnia, Woodstock and London. London's new Mayor, Matt Brown not only marked his first day in office, but also his first official duty as mayor – by receiving a



Red Scarf from RHAC Executive Director, Brian Lester.

Many RHAC events, campaigns, programs and services were promoted in an enhanced social media strategy this year. Government officials remarked on RHAC's ability to continue to position its programs and services, through effective social networking. This was most evidenced during our spring, **A Taste For Life** fundraiser – with title sponsor TD Canada Trust - when dozens of community partners tagged, tweeted, posted, linked and liked our messages.

We were again honoured to be the recipient of the Schulich students' year-end fundraiser and were pleased to host their Directors who volunteered at RHAC.

Additionally, we received funds from Greenshield, City of Stratford, Sisters

of St. Joes, and Gen Pop this year. From local restaurateurs to realtors, gas companies, and organizations such as faith-based groups, to private individuals – Community Relations (on behalf of RHAC) was honoured to receive donations and in-kind support in 2014/15.

In addition to clients, staff, and partners, RHAC's greatest asset continues to be its volunteers. In 2014/15 former Board Chair, **Tamara Landry**, was recognized and added to our Honour Roll along with **Lilka Young** who received our **Voice, Knowledge, Hope Award**. Ontario Volunteer Service Awards were given to RHAC recipients: **Bonita Cope, Stephen Barr, Laura Janecka, Chris Bellamy, Michael McCauley, Liam Priest and Niko Hoekstra**; in addition to JGH recipients: **Ken Runge, Lynn Baker, Loretta Wettlaufer**. Congratulations and thank you to the community that builds RHAC!



DID YOU KNOW?



8,500

volunteer hours are logged each year – that is between four and five full-time employees.



Total direct agency volunteering hours in 2014 delivered by PHAs

40%

GENPOP

Gen Pop signs off

\$7,278

for RHAC.

Winks

sponsor/host of

Heartfelt Evening



each May with proceeds to JGH.

New

restaurants to ATFL Gusto, Tuscanos, Icarus, Wich is Wich, Michaels on the Thames.

Poztalk



New blog by HIV

Peer Support

Worker, **Rob**

Newman receives

first comment from ACOL's first ED,

Betty Ann Thomas

Most successful Red Scarf campaign was a highlight of 2014

AIDS Awareness Week

1232



scarves made. A record-breaking

7766

volunteer-hours.

Pinpoint Publishing, Rainbow Cinemas, Sun Media, Bell Media, Downtown London



Association, City of Stratford, City of London, and others

support

for RHAC

Look for **Time** by Andy, **So You Think AIDS is Over?**

By Brian Lester,

Memories by Rob

Newman, **Black**

History Month by

Mercy Nleya, and **A**

Laugh to Brighten

Any Day by Mike

Joudrey – just a

sampling of how

you can connect

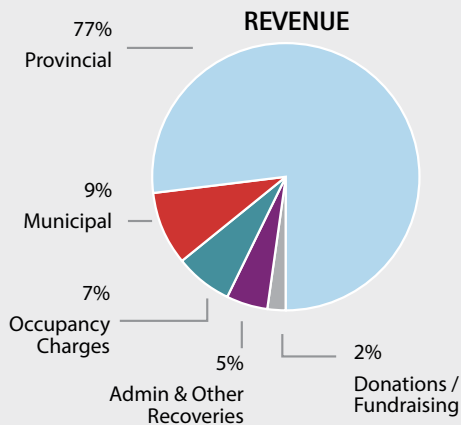
to RHAC through

Connections

hivaidconnection.ca

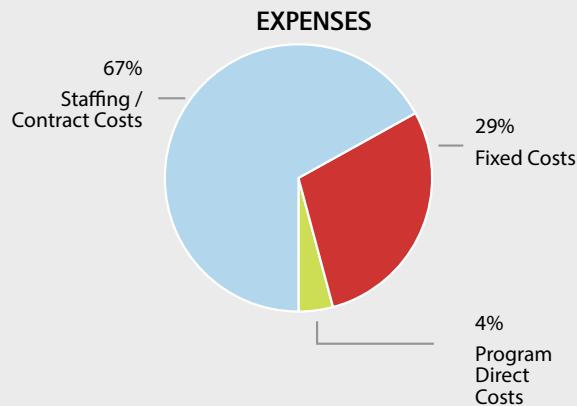


John Gordon Home



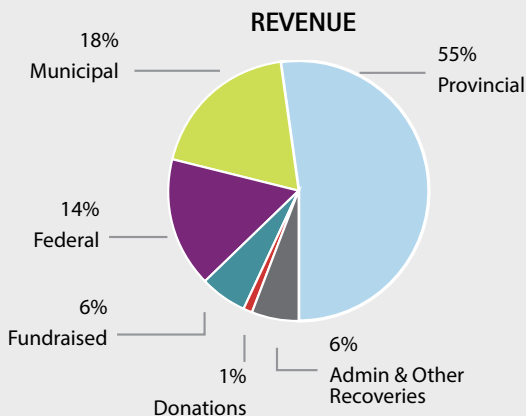
TOTAL \$799,078

Total does not include in-kind donations



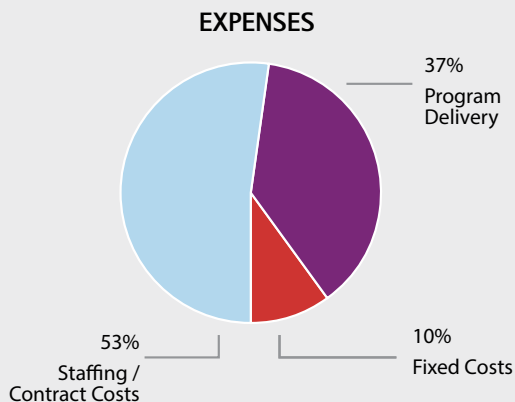
TOTAL \$784,955

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection



TOTAL \$2,264,780

Total does not include in-kind donations



\$2,261,395

Includes OODP

OUR PEOPLE

STAFF

Sonja Burke
*Director Counterpoint
Harm Reduction
Services*

Karen Burton
*Needle & Syringe
Program Coordinator*

Carlen Costa
*HIV Regional
Resource Coordinator*

Meredith Fraser
Director of Education

Wesly Heney
*GBMSMT2S &
HIV Community
Development
Coordinator*

Blair Henry
*Gay Men's HIV
Prevention Worker*

Jesse Huntus
HCV Outreach Worker

Brian Lester
Executive Director

Matt Johnson
Hepatitis C Educator

Carin Fraser
Case Manager

Emily Marcoccia
*Director of
Community Relations*

Kori McCoskey
*Administrative
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Mike McGregor
IDU Outreach Worker

Martin McIntosh
*Community Relations
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Rob Newman
Peer Support Worker

Mercy Nleya
*Multicultural
HIV Prevention
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Miriam Rivera
Case Manager

Glenda Robillard
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Nick Scrivo

Hepatitis C Peer Worker

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Ray Okeke RPN
Bruce Rankin
*Senior Director, John
Gordon Home*

Yvonne Rimbault
RPN
*Resident Care
Coordinator*

Jason Sinnicks PSW

BOARD

Lianne Armstrong

Geoff Bardwell

Stephen Barr

Shailla Beaudry

Nancy Griffiths

Vice President

Tendayi Gwaradzimba

Lynn Humfress-Trute
Secretary

Mana Khani

President

Geoff Kiddell

Heather Lokko

Michelle McKay

Matthew Reid

Treasurer

Ken G. Runge

David Smith



E.D.s Brian and Bruce, along with their respective Chairs, Mana and Shailla are shown with the last two, official Boards before they became one - in the historical, amalgamation.



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