



## Summer 2018 WHAT'S INSIDE

1

Saving Lives in  
Our Community

2

Summer Festivals

2

International Women's Day

3

A Taste for Life 2018

3

Tachycardia 2018

4

RHAC and SOAHAC  
Reach a New Partnership

4

A Heartfelt Evening

4

JGH: The Home with a Heart

5

Proud, Prepared,  
and Protected

5

Celebrating and Building  
Ethno-cultural Strength

7

Our Volunteers

7

Staff Updates

### Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

#30 - 186 King Street  
London, Ontario, N6A 1C7

596 Pall Mall Street  
London, Ontario, N5Y 2Z9

Tel: 519-434-1601

1-866-920-1601

Fax: 519-434-1843

info@hivaidconnection.ca

www.hivaidconnection.ca

# THE CONNECTION

## The Newsletter of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

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

### SAVING LIVES IN OUR COMMUNITY

*In partnership with Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU), RHAC opened Ontario's first government-sanctioned Temporary Overdose Prevention Site (TOPS) on February 12th, 2018.*



At the time of publishing our last newsletter, we were about to embark on this journey with supporters, sceptics, and critics eagerly awaiting this program's potential impact—both good and bad. We can report with confidence that the impact of this intervention is remarkable. Its urgent need has been demonstrated by a rapid uptake in client access. TOPS is proving that people will access these services when they are delivered at an accessible location with staff appropriately trained to 'meet people where they are at.'

At TOPS, we have prevented 6 opioid-related deaths. As of June 11th, we have served approximately 1,300 individuals and supported 3,858 visits. We are able to facilitate safer injection practices and help prevent the transmission of HIV and HCV with every service interaction. Since opening TOPS, police have not reported an increased demand for services within our proximity. This is a good sign, and supports the evidence related to consumption sites in other areas.

Additionally, this program is making a deeper impact with the power of wrap-around supports through a variety of organizations, including: *Addiction Services Thames Valley (ADSTV)*, *London Intercommunity Health Center (LIHC)*, *London Cares Homeless Response Services (LCHRS)*, *Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Center (SOAHAC)*, *MLHU*, and *Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)*. Through wrap-around supports, we are addressing the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness, referrals have been made

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Community Inspired. Courage Driven.

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1...

to ADSTV and other services for treatment, we are providing culturally safe experiences for members of Indigenous communities and together we are all working to address health care and mental health needs for those accessing the service.

We would like to thank the members of our community who have stood by us in support of the TOPS program. TOPS is saving lives and contributing to the health and wellness of our community. As we continue working towards the establishment of permanent supervised consumption facilities, we deeply value your support.

In solidarity,

Brian Lester,  
Executive Director



## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day is a day to recognize women's achievements and respect the challenges they continue to face in the fight for gender equality. RHAC is proud to acknowledge this important day, and team of remarkable women that we are so fortunate to work with. Their passion, dedication, and commitment to our mission contributes to the health and wellbeing of some of the most marginalized communities. Our organization succeeds because of women who have the courage to do what is right.

On behalf of the women of RHAC, we made a \$200.00 donation to My Sisters' Place—an organization whose services make a profoundly positive impact in the lives of women in our community. RHAC also celebrated International Women's Day (March 8) in partnership with Anova, Réseau des Femmes, and MerryMount at Carling Heights Optimist Community City. At this event, more than 100 people came together to honour women and celebrate with musical performances, henna, Zumba, button-making, and belly dancing.

During the year, our women's programming has provided opportunities for women to come together in a social, supportive, and empowering space. Earlier this year, our women's group created works of art in a guided paint session, concocted their own luxurious bath bombs, enjoyed a female-empowerment-themed movie outing, and came together for a dinner where the group enjoyed good food and shared important feedback about the program. The RHAC women's group agreed that it has been a fantastic year, and we cannot wait to plan more of our women's programming!

Thank you to all of the incredible women who motivate RHAC's mission each and every day.

## SUMMER FESTIVALS

Knowledge is power, and RHAC couldn't be more excited to share the powerful theme of 'knowledge' at this year's Sunfest (July 5-8) and Pride (July 19-29) festivals. This year's theme will recognize and promote important advances in the prevention and treatment of HIV, from PrEP to U=U. Come visit our booths during this summer's festival season to learn more and celebrate health and wellness in our community. We can't wait to see you!



### SAVE THE DATE



### Women's Bodies, Women's Lives: HIV and Wellness Symposium

For more information:  
[hivaidconnection.ca](http://hivaidconnection.ca)



## A TASTE FOR LIFE 2018

RHAC's 15th anniversary of *A Taste for Life* was a very special success. Across this year's 26 participating restaurants, an estimated 1,680 guests came out in support of those we serve in London and area. In total, our community raised \$45,495.64!

*A Taste for Life* is made possible by the commitment and support of our community partners and sponsors. We would like to extend a special thank you to our presenting sponsor, *TD*, for their continued support and leadership with an estimated 200 employees in attendance, including diners and volunteers. We are extremely grateful to the 26 participating restaurants, our community members, and this year's supporters for joining us in support of the unfunded programs and services we provide to those living with, at-risk for, and affected by HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C.

This year, we implemented a promotional plan that included personalized restaurant profiles and social media cards that encouraged participants to show their shared value in having '*The courage to do what is right.*' And of course, we had our supersized cutlery on hand for the perfect photo opp.

Thank you so much to our wonderful community for dining and donating in support of RHAC's programs and services. For more information, visit [atasteforlife.org](http://atasteforlife.org) and follow us at [@hivaidconnect](https://twitter.com/hivaidconnect) for more photos.



## TACHYCARDIA 2018

In April of each year, the students of *Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry* put on their annual fundraising production: *Tachycardia*. This beloved tradition has been in production since 1951! This year's show raised an incredibly generous \$22,545 in support of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection. The amount of talent we saw this year was extraordinary! We, at RHAC, are profoundly grateful to be the charity of choice for the *Tachycardia* fundraiser. Emma Ali, the show's senior producer says: "It's wonderful to be part of the legacy of *Tachy* and to be part of something that is so much bigger than myself and my class. It's very humbling and rewarding to give back in this way."

## RHAC AND SOAHAC REACH A NEW PARTNERSHIP

RHAC and *Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre* (SOAHAC) have officially signed a memorandum of understanding for operating shared services to enhance the community's response to Indigenous people who use opioids and other drugs in London and neighboring First Nations Communities: Oneida Nation of the Thames, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, and Munsee-Delaware First Nation. We are committed to a collaborative model of program delivery with a primary focus on engaging in harm reduction, health promotion, and connections to Indigenous-specific care and other clinical services. We have worked collaboratively for several years and look forward to strengthening our partnership through this initiative.



## JGH: THE HOME WITH A HEART

Hosted in support of John Gordon Home (JGH), the 7th annual *A Heartfelt Evening* was held at Winks Eatery on Tuesday, May 29th. Thanks to the generous support of all stakeholders of this event, we raised nearly \$7,500 this year! Funds raised through this event will contribute to providing essential items and services for residents transitioning out of JGH, and back into the community, based on need. These items may include linens, beds, small appliances, other common household items and related moving costs.

John Gordon Home is also happy to welcome Muneeba Shabbir and Amir Shaikh from the School of Occupational Therapy at Western University. Muneeba and Amir are completing a two month placement and have been making an impact by planning a range of activities and developing resources for residents.



### SAVE THE DATE



**John Gordon Home's Annual Summer BBQ**  
(5-7pm) Join us in celebrating 26 years of JGH! To RSVP, contact: Mary Mann-McCavitt at [marymann-mccavitt@hivaidconnection.ca](mailto:marymann-mccavitt@hivaidconnection.ca)



## PROUD, PREPARED AND PROTECTED

Kody Carlson, RHAC's Gay Men's HIV Prevention Worker, has explored new programming to support the Gay, Bisexual, and Men who Have Sex with Men (GBMSM) community, including: mindfulness meditation, individual counselling, and sex-positive events in partnership with Spot of Delight. Kody has also been working with Nurse Practitioner Mia Biondi to coordinate the launch of a PrEP Clinic. Taken daily, the medication PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is a highly effective way to prevent HIV. Launched on June 8th, the clinic will be accepting clients every second Friday from 9AM to 1PM. For more information, please contact Kody Carlson at [kcarlson@hivaidconnection.ca](mailto:kcarlson@hivaidconnection.ca) or [prep@hivaidconnection.ca](mailto:prep@hivaidconnection.ca).

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT AT OUR  
**PrEP Clinic**



Email

[prep@hivaidconnection.ca](mailto:prep@hivaidconnection.ca) or  
call 519.434.1601 (ext. 250).

Open every second Friday of the  
month at #30—186 King Street,  
London, ON.

Ask us about coverage options.

## CELEBRATING AND BUILDING ETHNO-CULTURAL STRENGTH

Museum London formed an ideal venue for two important ethno-cultural events held in London over the past 6 months. The first was the 16th Annual Opening Ceremony for Black History Month, which brought a diverse range of community members together in celebration and recognition of the rich history which frames many of the successes and challenges faced by members of our African, Caribbean and Black community today. RHAC's educational booth at the event focused on promoting healthy sexuality and African, Caribbean & Black Canadian HIV/AIDS Awareness Day which is recognized annually on February 7th. With the aim of building greater awareness, 25 hand knitted scarves designed specifically for this Awareness Day were created and distributed to guests through a partnership with Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU).

On April 24th, *Museum London* hosted RHAC's first African, Caribbean and Black Health Fair: 'Building Health and Wellness with Diversity' funded by the Government of Ontario. This event engaged members of the community with a session focused on mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing, and how social determinants of health tie to race and cultural identity. The day also featured on-site HIV testing, wellness activities, and promotion from eleven participating agencies. Thanks to students from *Western University*, the *WeSpeak* Research Team, and ACB community members for helping to make it such a successful event.

Regionally, Dev Magendo (Ethno-cultural & Rural Sexual Health Outreach Coordinator) has been doing an incredible job of building effective connections with migrant workers, sexual health services providers and other allies in the six counties we serve. To date, he has met with over 80 workers to share and gain insights on sexual health and well-being.



## OUR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the heart and soul of our organization. We are so grateful to those who contribute their time and efforts to making our mission possible, year after year. In 2017, our volunteers contributed more than 10,000 hours—which is equivalent to the work of 6 full-time staff members!

Our Coordinator of Volunteer Services, Fran McKeown, had the pleasure of accompanying five of our volunteers being honoured at the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards in March. The volunteers recognized for their outstanding hard-work and dedication included:

- **Sue Parkinson** 15 years
- **Matthew Reid** 5 years
- **Nancy Griffiths** 5 years
- **Rihard Berzins** 5 years
- **Cindy Fillion** 5 years

In March, our volunteers also had the opportunity to have a personal development day with lunch and a guest speaker. Our special guest, Janet Frood—a local motivational speaker and consultant—spoke to us about resiliency. The feedback for this event was overwhelmingly positive. "Thanks again for hosting this event for us," said one volunteer. "There is always opportunity for education in life, whether it is HIV-related or not. Transferable skills are always ideal."

Our Couch Crew drop-in sessions continue on Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm. This is when our volunteers are busy making harm reduction kits for the Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) and the Temporary Overdose Prevention Site (TOPS). We have enjoyed seeing lots of new faces this year, and we encourage anyone interested in giving back to our community to join us!



**The Red Scarf Project** needs your help to craft handmade scarves to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in our community! At RHAC, we accept the donation of hand-knit scarves year-round. If you would like to knit or crochet red scarves in support of AIDS awareness, contact Fran McKeown at [fmckeown@hivaidsconnection.ca](mailto:fmckeown@hivaidsconnection.ca).

## SUE PARKINSON

After 15 years of dedicated volunteering service, Sue Parkinson has moved to her newly built home in the counties, leaving a great volunteering legacy behind her. While she has fulfilled a wide variety of volunteer roles over the years, her longest and most memorable contribution has been as one of our regular front desk reception volunteers. Over the past several years, Sue has contributed over 600 hours greeting all of our visitors with dignity, compassion, and a brilliant smile. We are grateful to Sue for all of her service and for her ongoing connection to our mission. We miss you Sue!



## STAFF UPDATES

As we work to expand our Harm Reduction efforts, we welcome Nancy Antone, Jessica Greig, Erica House, Melanie Shannon, and Chantelle McDonald as Harm Reduction Support Workers. These roles have a huge impact in our harm reduction efforts and we look forward to having them all on the team.

A few months back Glenda Robillard (Director of Operations) announced that she will retire from RHAC end of June 2018. While we are sad to see Glenda move on we are thrilled for her in her milestone decision. At the same time Emily Marcoccia (Director of Community Relations) has determined that she will not be returning from her leave of absence. Both Glenda and Emily joined RHAC in the first quarter of 2014 and, within their leadership roles, have made significant impacts on the health and positive positioning of this agency in our community and sector. In recognizing the tremendous strength and value of their individual contributions over the past 4 years, we extend a fond farewell and best wishes to each of them as they go on to write their next chapters. We are pleased to announce that Mike Joudrey has accepted the position of Director of Operations with RHAC. Mike is a long term employee having spent 8 years at JGH as the Office Manager. We are thrilled to share the good news that Martin McIntosh has moved from the acting role into that of Director of Community Relations.

Additional changes within the Community Relations team, saw us bid farewell to one of our most beloved teammates, Melissa Whaling, who made a lasting impact in her role as Fund Development Coordinator. We have welcomed Zena Currie to the team as our Fund Development Coordinator and Adriana Berardini as Regional and Digital Engagement Coordinator.

### SAVE THE DATE



**World Hepatitis Day**  
Event details coming soon  
to [hivaidsconnection.ca](http://hivaidsconnection.ca)

### SAVE THE DATE



**RHAC'S Annual  
General Meeting**  
Civic Garden Complex  
6-8pm





Regional  
HIV/AIDS  
Connection

Community Inspired. Courage Driven.

519-434-1601 • 1-866-920-1601

### SAVE US THE POSTAGE!

If you are currently receiving The Connection by postal service and wish to receive it by email instead, please write: [info@hivaidconnection.ca](mailto:info@hivaidconnection.ca)

## RHAC - JOHN GORDON HOME PROGRAM

Bruce Rankin  
Senior Director  
RHAC/John Gordon Home  
519-433-3951 ext. 237

Troy Speechly  
Resident Care Coordinator  
John Gordon Home  
519-433-3951 ext. 224

Mary Mann-McCavitt  
Nutrition Services Coordinator  
John Gordon Home  
519-433-3951 ext. 225

## ADMINISTRATION AND ASSOCIATES

Brian Lester  
Executive Director  
ext. 243

Mike Joudrey  
Director of Operations  
ext. 234

Samantha Radley  
Administrative Assistant  
ext. 227

## HIV AND HEP C SUPPORT SERVICES

Kelly Wright  
Director of HIV Support Services  
ext. 237

Rob Newman  
Peer Support Worker  
ext. 253

Carin Fraser  
Case Manager  
ext. 228

Tasha Anderson  
Case Manager  
ext. 235

Lisa Bourque  
HCV Support Worker  
ext. 231

Lila Desjardine  
HCV Support Worker  
ext. 236

Marsha Milliken  
Outreach Worker  
ext. 226

## COUNTERPOINT HARM REDUCTION SERVICES

Sonja Burke  
Director of Counterpoint Harm Reduction Services  
ext. 244

Karen Burton  
Needle & Syringe Program Coordinator  
ext. 224

Blair Henry  
Harm Reduction Case Manager  
ext. 260

Mike McGregor  
IDU Outreach Worker  
ext. 238

Lily Bialas  
Harm Reduction Community Capacity Building Coordinator  
ext. 223

Chelsea Phelps  
Harm Reduction Support Worker  
ext. 239

Andy MacLean  
Harm Reduction Support Worker/ IDU Outreach Worker  
ext. 263

Anna Chamberlain  
Harm Reduction Support Worker  
ext. 263

Elaine Hamm  
Harm Reduction Support Worker  
ext. 263

Jessica Greig  
Harm Reduction Support Worker

Nancy Antone  
Harm Reduction Support Worker  
ext. 232

## EDUCATION

Meredith Fraser  
Director of Education  
ext. 230

Kody Carlson  
Gay Men's HIV Prevention Worker  
ext. 250

Mercy Nleya  
Multicultural HIV Prevention Coordinator  
ext. 222

Holly Taylor  
Women's HIV/AIDS Community Development Worker  
ext. 249

Victor Feunekes  
Youth & GBMSM Sexual Health Educator  
ext. 231

Dev Magendo  
Ethno-cultural/Rural Sexual Health Outreach Coordinator  
ext. 245

## COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Martin McIntosh  
Director of Community Relations  
ext. 229

Zena Currie  
Fund Development Coordinator  
ext. 257

Fran McKeown  
Coordinator of Volunteer Services  
ext. 252

Branden Raue  
Communications Coordinator  
ext. 258

Adriana Berardini  
Regional and Digital Engagement Coordinator  
ext. 254

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David Smith, **President**  
Nuno Da Silva, **Vice President**  
Mariam Hamou, **Secretary**  
Shaun Brown, **Treasurer**

Daniel Oudshoorn  
Nimish Shukla  
Michelle McKay  
Kelsey Adams  
Cynthia Hove  
Kimberley Burnard