

ACT

AIDS Committee of Toronto



newsletter

spring 2001

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monday to thursday 10 am – 9 pm

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City Budget Final Decision Looms

For the past three months there has been quite a bit in the media about the budget agony at City Hall.

Namecalling, threats, and secret meetings have been highlighted in the coverage.

But behind the infighting are realities that affect just about everyone in the city. All our services, from the TTC to road maintenance, from housing to public health, from libraries to community centres, are threatened by cutbacks.

This threat has sparked broad-based coalitions that aim to ensure that the people's needs are not forgotten. ACT participates in two of these coalitions: Save Our City and Community Voices of Support (CVOS).

Save Our City addresses the full range of budget issues; CVOS is concerned with the small but crucial community grants budget.

ACT's City funding comes from community grants (\$75,000) and Public Health (\$256,000). This is not much compared to the hundreds of millions spent on the TTC or the Police. But it is essential to ACT's work, particularly among gay men. ACT believes that Toronto, with 65% of Ontario's people with HIV/AIDS, must do its share to prevent HIV.

With our coalition partners, ACT has urged City Councillors to ensure adequate funding for the serv-

es that make Toronto liveable. Speakers from ACT described how they do to reach out to gay men in parks and bathhouses to help prevent the spread of HIV. A user of ACT's services spoke of the difference ACT has made in his life. And Board Vice Chair Evan Collins pointed out that the rise in infections among gay men means that the fight against HIV is far from over.

The budget fight is not over either. On April 17 and April 24 community members will again go to City Hall to make their voices heard. ACT will be there. **Please join us in urging your City Councillor to support AIDS Prevention and other key programs.**

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FASHION CARES

15 YEARS

A BENEFIT FOR THE AIDS
COMMITTEE OF TORONTO
SATURDAY JUNE 9TH 2001

Celebrating its 15th anniversary this year, Fashion Cares M-A-C Viva Glam Garden event will be held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre on Saturday, June 9th, 2001. Don't miss out on this spectacular evening of fun and fashion while supporting the important work of ACT.

All tickets go on sale Monday, April 30, 2001.

Gala tickets, which include a cocktail reception, shopping boutique, dinner, the show and the After Party are \$300.00 per person. Call 416-340-9255 to purchase by telephone.

General Admission tickets, which include a cocktail party, shopping boutique, fashion show and After Party are \$95.00 per person.

After Party tickets are \$40.00 in advance and \$50.00 at the door.

For both General Admission and After Party tickets, please call Ticketmaster at 416-870-8000.

SUPPORT ACT BY ATTENDING

FASHION CARES

June 9, 2001

AIDSwalk
toronto

September 23, 2001



DANCERS
FOR LIFE

Fall 2001

CONTRIBUTORS | Donna Braybrook, Heart M. Lavender, Lori Miller, Lori Newman, Anthony Tsoumbis, Lee Zaslofsky

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ACT's Food Programs For People Living with HIV/AIDS

Good nutrition is especially important for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs). Yet many PHAs on low income can't afford to buy the right kind of food to maintain a healthy immune system. ACT's food programs make it possible for PHAs to get good, nutritious food and make new friends at the same time.

MEET AND EAT WEEKLY HOT LUNCH PROGRAM | Every Friday, PHAs enjoy a free, nutritious, and delicious hot meal. After coffee and informal introductions, lunch is served 'family' style. This program gives PHAs a chance to meet other PHAs in a confidential and supportive environment. Meet and Eat offers peer support, information sharing and a place to relax and connect with others. To find out more, or to register to come for lunch, please call 416-340-8484 ext.231. In partnership with Mid Toronto Community Services.

GOOD FOOD BOX PROGRAM | This program offers PHAs on a restricted income an way to buy — at low cost — a week's supply of fresh fruits and vegetables. The program is a good opportunity for PHAs to learn more about how good nutrition can help to maintain health. ACT offers the Good Food Box in partnership with Mid Toronto Community Services and Foodshare. To find out more, please call 416-340-8484 ext.231.



WOMEN'S COMMUNITY KITCHEN | A new program for women with HIV/AIDS will begin this spring. ACT is working with Women's Health in Women's Hands and other community organizations to develop a twice-a-month community kitchen. The program will bring women with HIV/AIDS together to prepare and eat a delicious meal and to support each other in living with HIV/AIDS. To find out more, please call 416-340-8484 ext. 274.

ACT's Youth & Film Project

Stumbling back to Toronto after travelling abroad for six months, I again faced the question, "Should I go to University or settle for any job I can find?" Like other young twenty-somethings facing this choice, I applied for jobs, went to masses of interviews, and hoped there were other options I did not yet know about. I found a great option with Serve Canada. Serve is a Youth Organization that connects young people with placements where they can learn through hands-on experience.

When I started at Serve Canada, I knew I wanted to continue my education, but I wanted some work experience first. The varied work that I do now, at the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) and in a junior public school, is helping me clarify my interests and develop my skills. Working at ACT has shown me that the fear and frustration people often feel when they find out they have an incurable disease can be balanced by the realization of who their friends really are.

In my placement at ACT, my team is creating a short video on HIV/AIDS with a message of positivity and self-affirmation. In our research for the project, we've discovered the wealth of information available at Toronto's AIDS organizations. We had the good fortune to speak with people living with HIV. Their frankness, self-reliance, and belief in the fight against discrimination and ignorance were intensely moving.

To create our video we first had to educate our-

selves. We hope to use the video to pass this knowledge on from a fresh angle. ACT's Youth Community Development Coordinator, Humberto Carolo, guided us through discussions on anonymous HIV testing, the legal issues surrounding disclosure, and cultural sensitivity. We continually challenged the accuracy of our own information on HIV transmission and harm reduction. It has been exciting to learn about filming,

editing, scriptwriting, and post-production. We have full control over theme, genre, visual style, soundtrack — the entire package.

The inclusive, direct, energetic approach to spreading information that I've discovered over the past six months has prompted me to volunteer in ACT's fundraising department and library.

I have been giving my time and gaining lots of knowledge. I have seen how crucial the human touch is

to building good working relationships among staff, volunteers, and supporters. I was pleasantly surprised at how quickly staff recognized me and called me by name. Data entry work showed me the versatility of software programs. From watching selections from ACT's video library and writing synopses for them, I have been exposed to wide variety of viewpoints. The videos I watched were fascinating, and they were a great help to my Serve Canada team in deciding on a target market and a style for our video.

— Heart M. Lavender

We hope to use the video to pass this knowledge on from a fresh angle



A Holistic Approach Can Empower Women to Prevent HIV/AIDS

Andrea Gilpin, ACT's Women's Outreach Coordinator, has found that a holistic approach is what works best when she is doing HIV/AIDS prevention work among women. "The AIDS 101 approach, where you present facts about HIV transmission right away, might be good for some people. But for the women I work with, HIV/AIDS relates to a whole series of social and health issues," she said.

Andrea works 17.5 hours a week. She's been with ACT for just under two years. Most of her time is spent away from ACT, in places like the Massey Centre, a residence for young mothers, at the St. Joseph's Hospital Women's Health Centre, or at English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. "It's important to offer HIV/AIDS prevention out in the community. It's the only way to reach women who are dealing with poverty, recent immigrants, and others who wouldn't be likely to approach ACT directly," she said.

Andrea has spoken with many women who are facing a combination of economic and sexual issues. "It's all very well to talk about safe sex. But you have to be aware of the pressures many women are under because of poverty and loneliness. These issues make it more difficult for them to avoid risky behaviours," she said.

As HIV/AIDS becomes more of an issue for women, approaches like Andrea's are a realistic way to empower women to protect themselves and their loved ones from infection. ACT is committed to supporting women in developing strategies that work for them.



Employment Action
is now online at
www.employmentaction.org



Plan Ahead Making a planned gift to ACT

One of the most thoughtful ways you can help ACT is through planned giving. By making an informed decision, you can ensure that ACT — or the charity of your choice — receives the benefit of your gift now and in the future. There are many ways to make a planned gift:

BEQUEST | Creating a will is one of the most responsible acts you can do during your lifetime. This ensures that your final wishes are carried out. You may also include a gift to a charity, known as a bequest, in your will;

CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY | You can donate an irrevocable gift to ACT in return for guaranteed income for the rest of your life; the unused portion of the annuity will be used to support ACT's work;

GIFT OF APPRECIATED SECURITIES | Due to recent federal budget changes, it is much more attractive for you to donate stocks, bonds, mutual

funds, and other publicly-listed securities in return for substantial capital gains reductions; or

GIFT OF LIFE INSURANCE | You can make a substantial gift to ACT without taking on a large expense.

Your planned gift will secure the long-term future of ACT through our Legacy of Hope Fund, an endowment fund that is housed at the Toronto Community Foundation.

There are significant tax advantages associated with the above-mentioned gifts. We encourage you to seek advice from an advisor to discuss which tax incentives work best for you.

We are pleased to provide detailed planned giving information upon request. For further information, please contact: Lori Newman, Development Officer (416-340-8484 ext. 265; LNewman@actoronto.org).

EMPLOYMENT ACTION

A unique, free service for all people living with HIV/AIDS to explore employment options

Since it began in September 1999, Employment Action — developed by ACT in partnership with the Toronto People With AIDS Foundation — has been a great success. More than 275 people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs) have attended information sessions. 227 of these clients participated in the job exploration program. 76 clients have been placed in jobs.

On-going direct employer contacts have resulted in current job vacancies for Administrative Assistants, Bookkeepers, Office Clerks, Customer Service, Research, Information Technology, Hospitality, Travel and Retail Industries.

New computer training workshops for MS Word and Excel are available at ACT offices and run every week, facilitated by ACT volunteers

Employment Action offers benefits counseling, employment planning, job trials, employment skills development, job placement assistance and other employment support services.

For more information about this service call Employment Action at 416-340-2437 and ask to speak to an Employment Consultant.

Major HIV/AIDS Prevention Campaign Coming Soon

Watch for a major HIV/AIDS prevention campaign! ACT and partner agencies will soon be creating an information campaign that will appear during Pride Week and run throughout the summer. The campaign will use a variety of approaches designed to address the recently observed increase in HIV infections among men who have sex with men.

We need you!

ACT is in need of motivated and creative individuals to help out with our activities. Among them:

HAVE A GREEN THUMB? | The 15th annual Fashion Cares is fast approaching (Saturday 9 June 2001 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre) and we need volunteers for every aspect of this year's event;

BE PART OF THE AIDSWALK TORONTO STEERING COMMITTEE! | This year's Walk will be taking place on Sunday 23 September 2001 at Nathan Philips Square in Toronto and positions are available for entertainment chairs, registration committee co-chair, Pride day committee co-chair, and various other positions;

JOIN THE AIDSWALK COACHING TEAM! | Help support some of the 200+ corporate and community AIDS Walk teams.

Interested in lending a hand? If so, or if you have other inquiries about volunteering at ACT, please contact Jim Billing, Development Volunteer Co-ordinator (416-340-8484 ext. 255; jbilling@actoronto.org).



It's so easy!

www.actoronto.org/donations

There are many convenient ways to support ACT ... all of which are a click of the mouse away!

Make a single gift to ACT through our Web site: it's quick, it's easy, and it will save you a postage stamp.

Join more than 1500 people in the community and **become a monthly Partner in Caring.** With a

small donation to ACT of \$5 or more each month from your bank account or credit card, you will provide for the ongoing needs of people affected by HIV/AIDS.

Commemorate a milestone in the life of someone you care about (like a birthday, anniversary, holiday, or the passing of a someone) by making a gift to ACT. We

will acknowledge your gift by sending a personalized message to the person or family in whose name the gift was made.

ACT has recently partnered with two **Web portals:**

www.charity.ca

www.canadahelps.org

so that you can make Internet donations and receive an electronic tax receipt (E-receipt) immediately!

Please ACT now! If you have any questions about how you can make a difference in the community, please contact Anthony S. Tsoumbis, Development Officer (416-340-8484 ext. 279; atsoumbis@actoronto.org).

T H A N K Y O U

ACT would like to thank the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) for its very generous multiyear contribution to support ACT's HIV/AIDS prevention efforts in the Portuguese-speaking community. OTF's grant will enable ACT and its partners to provide practical assistance and compassionate support to Portuguese-speaking people living with HIV/AIDS, their friends, and families. Thanks to the OTF, ACT will also be able to increase awareness of HIV/AIDS in Toronto's Portuguese-speaking community.

ACT would also like to thank Daniel J. Turko for his generous contribution to our Employment Action Program. Thanks to Mr. Turko, ACT can continue to empower people living with HIV/AIDS with the tools and skills necessary to (re-)enter and thrive in the workforce.

For further information, please contact Lori Newman, Development Officer (416-340-8484 ext. 265; lnewman@actoronto.org), or Anthony S. Tsoumbis, Development Officer (416-340-8484 ext. 279; atsoumbis@actoronto.org).

Yes, I want to support ACT !

\$600 \$300 \$100 \$60 \$36 Other \$ _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ POSTAL CODE _____

PHONE _____ - _____ - _____
AREA CODE

E-MAIL _____

I have included my cheque, payable to AIDS Committee of Toronto

I prefer to use my credit card:

VISA MasterCard American Express

CARD NO _____

EXP _____ SIGNATURE _____

I prefer to make monthly gifts of \$ _____ on the 15th of each month

I have included my signed, voided cheque

I prefer to use my credit card as indicated above C-201 A-RRP/ND11APR F-4240-201

PLEASE RETURN TO AIDS Committee of Toronto, Attn: Anthony S. Tsoumbis, 399 Church Street, 4th Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5B 2J6.

TEL 416-340-8484 ext. 279 TTY 416-340-8122 EMAIL atsoumbis@actoronto.org WEB www.actoronto.org

Charitable Registration Number 11877 9024 RR0001. Tax receipts will be issued for all donations of \$20 and above, or upon request. Thank you for your support!