

# ACT

AIDS Committee of Toronto

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monday to thursday 10 am – 9 pm  
friday 10 am – 5 pm



## newsletter

summer 2000

### Pride 2000

It's PRIDE 2000 and once again ACT will have a presence in queer communities, not to mention having some fun!

This year we will have a poster campaign that will send the message that queer communities are made up of diverse people — people whose choice to live as they are challenges the social norms of the many communities from which they come. We will highlight some of the individuals for whom living truthfully means facing walls and hurdles, people for whom living truthfully takes strength and courage. We want to name that 'PRIDE'.

Our poster this year has a range of images. There are images of people proud to enjoy leather and/or S/M, drag kings and drag queens, couples and singles. There are images of parenting, trans-people, and bears. There are older men and women, younger men and women. There are people from diverse ethnocultural back-

grounds, including the Chinese, Portuguese, South Asian, and Black communities. There are people whose cultural background derives from more than one ethnocultural community. There are images of people with different body sizes and shapes — kind of like the real world. And there are images to reflect biracial couples, as well as couples from the same ethnocultural community.

So, what do all these images have in common? ACT's poster is meant to be a snapshot of 'PRIDE'. These are all images of people who make up the gay, lesbian, transsexual, and bisexual communities, and who represent diverse ways of living in the world as queer. Their ways of living may challenge the status quo in their communities, and in the queer communities. These people embody PRIDE. PRIDE in resistance. PRIDE in the courage to live life on their own terms, not as it has been defined for them.

Of course, we've linked these themes to an HIV prevention message. You'll see a condom subtly placed on the poster, encompassed within these notions of PRIDE. Condoms have been part of our struggle as a community over the last 15 years, helping us to dramatically reduce the spread of HIV, while we build support systems for those of us who are infected with HIV.

You'll see our posters out on Church Street, and in bars and bath-houses around the city. You'll see our outreach staff and volunteers at various Pride events. You can join us at our information table or with our parade truck as we march (and dance) with our posters held high (and water guns too)!

Happy PRIDE! Make it a safe and fun one.

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### Sunnybrook HIV Clinic to Stay Open

In our last newsletter we called for your help to keep the Sunnybrook HIV Clinic open. It had been scheduled for possible closure because of the Hospital's deficit. We were gravely concerned about the loss of health care for the 750 patients who use the Clinic. We were worried about the signal such a closure would send about the future of health care for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Together with AIDS ACTION NOW! and the Ontario AIDS Network, ACT moved quickly to alert the community and mobilize support for

the Clinic. Thanks to the many people from all over Ontario who joined our demonstrations, faxed support letters, and phoned Board members! This powerful community reaction was crucially important, as was the media coverage our actions received.

On May 17, Dr. David McCutcheon, President and CEO of Sunnybrook & Women's Health Sciences Centre announced that the HIV Clinic located at the Sunnybrook Campus will remain open. His announcement came after the Minister of Health, Elizabeth Witmer,

made it clear that she would not permit the Clinic to be closed. It appears that financial arrangements have been made to ensure the Clinic's future.

After years of cutbacks and restructuring, it's great to get some good news for a change. This Pride Day we can celebrate this small but important victory for community action.

### ACTalk

#### Our Online Self-Help Forum has a New Look

The AIDS Committee of Toronto is please to announce that ACTalk, our on-line self-help forum for people living with HIV/AIDS, their friends, family members, partners and caregivers is now better than ever. It's been redesigned to be more user friendly. On ACTalk you can:

- post questions to be answered by an ACT volunteer
- talk anonymously with other people living with HIV/AIDS
- talk together about supporting loved ones living with HIV/AIDS
- post questions about safer sex or HIV testing

Check out ACTalk. You can access this on-line forum through the ACT website at [www.actoronto.org](http://www.actoronto.org)

ACT Summer 2000 Newsletter

Editors: John Maxwell and Lee Zaslofsky Contributors: Nicky Davis, Stephen Lam, John Maxwell, James Murray, Janet Rowe, Anthony Tsoumbri, Lee Zaslofsky Graphic Design: Ryan Lapidus This publication is available online at [www.actoronto.org/whatsnew](http://www.actoronto.org/whatsnew)

Support ACT by attending



# Women and AIDS Conference

In late May, Toronto had the privilege of hosting the first National Women and HIV Conference.

Co-sponsored by the Canadian Treatment Advocates Council, Canadian AIDS Society, Community AIDS Treatment Information Exchange, and The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, this conference brought together 500 people from across the country to share their personal stories, programming ideas, advocacy efforts and research findings on numerous HIV issues affecting women.

This conference created an important opportunity for HIV-positive women to share their knowledge and experiences as leaders and workers in a movement where their voices are frequently marginalized. Women living with HIV were at the forefront as conference planners and participants. Women spoke with courage about being HIV-positive. They spoke eloquently about their extreme isolation. They spoke of their sense of hopelessness, their sense of loss, their fears for themselves and sometimes their children. And they spoke of the courage, strength and hope they gained from meeting and hearing the stories of other HIV-positive women.

The conference provided a forum for workers to describe the many creative and successful programs being offered across the country on

shoestring budgets. Some examples include a catering business run by and for HIV-positive women in Winnipeg, a peer-led community based research project in Vancouver, and a volunteer run needle exchange in New Brunswick.

The Local Planning Committee of Women's Outreach Network sponsored and coordinated many of the self-care events held at the confer-

activities included haircuts, makeovers and French braiding, and workshops on self-defense, aromatherapy and yoga. The most popular workshops were a 'Fun with Sex Toys' workshop and a workshop on the fundamentals of stripping.

Conference participants had 73 research presentations, workshops and discussion sessions to choose from on topics that addressed the unique and diverse treatment, HIV prevention, and support needs of women. ACT's Women's Community Development Coordinator was a co-presenter in three workshops at the conference and sat on the plenary panel. She spoke about the issues of lesbians at risk for HIV infection, advocacy, and making AIDS service organizations (ASOs) more accessible to women. Other ACT staff attended the conference as participants.

The conference was an overwhelming success. HIV-positive women gained opportunities to link with each other, women working in isolation came together to share ideas and gain support, and participants left with a renewed commitment and energy to carry on their work with women living with HIV/AIDS, and with women who are at risk for HIV infection.

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ence site. ACT's Women's Community Development Coordinator chaired and coordinated the planning and implementation of these activities. The Committee felt it was important to create opportunities for HIV-positive women to focus on their self-care and to simply have a good time. So, we organized events and activities that would enable women to feel good about themselves, their bodies and their sexualities. Some of the



## REPORT ON RAPID TESTING NOW AVAILABLE

In March 2000, Health Canada approved the first rapid HIV test for use in Canada. The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network has prepared an in-depth analysis of the potential benefits of rapid point-of-care testing, and of the concerns raised by the use of such tests.

"Rapid HIV Screening at the Point of Care: Legal and Ethical Questions" includes an executive summary and over 20 recommendations to ensure the potential benefits of rapid point-of-care testing are maximized, while the potential harms are minimized. The report also

includes an accompanying ethical commentary on the issues.

The full report can be downloaded now in English from the Network's website at [www.aidslaw.ca](http://www.aidslaw.ca). Look under "Added in March 2000" on the home page.

Hard copies of the report can be obtained from the Canadian AIDS Clearinghouse, 1565 Carling Avenue, Suite 400, Ottawa ON, K1Z 8R1. Tel.: 877-999-7740 (toll-free) or 613-725-3434. Fax: 613-725-1205. E-Mail: [aids/sida@cpha.ca](mailto:aids/sida@cpha.ca).

## Global AIDS Issues Featured at ACT Town Hall

On May 31 ACT joined the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO) to present a public Town Hall on "The Global AIDS Pandemic: Communities Around the World In Action To Break The Silence". The Town Hall drew about 60 people to hear a keynote speech from Dr. Meskerem Gruntizky-Bekele, whose role at UNAIDS is to manage that organization's participation in the International Partnership Against AIDS in Africa.

After she spoke, representatives from AIDS organizations in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe took part in a panel discussion on how communities are fighting AIDS in those areas. Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), concluded the program with some comments on current trends in AIDS around the world.

Here are some highlights from the Town Hall:

The International Partnership Against AIDS in Africa is getting start-

ed on developing plans for the diverse nations on that continent. The planning involves governments, UN agencies and the corporate sector. For the first time on a UN project of this kind, non-governmental organizations are involved in the planning — a tribute to the importance of community efforts to fight AIDS.

While AIDS has hit parts of Africa harder than anywhere else, other areas of Africa have done well in limiting the spread of HIV. There needs to be more attention to the success communities in Africa have had in fighting HIV.

Europe is usually thought of as quite advanced in responding to AIDS. This is true in many countries of Western Europe. But in the East, especially Russia and Ukraine, HIV infection is spreading more rapidly than anywhere in the world, and access to treatment is almost non-existent.

Peter Piot pointed to the growth of concern in developed countries

over the catastrophic spread of HIV in less developed countries. This trend creates opportunities to move ahead with important initiatives to prevent HIV and treat AIDS. We must do everything possible to create links and mutual support between community-based organizations in different countries.

The most important element in the struggle against AIDS in any country is the existence of a grassroots movement that educates and mobilizes people to fight AIDS. Even poor countries can successfully fight AIDS if there is grassroots activism; even wealthier countries fail if this involvement is not there.

The ACT/ICASO Town Hall gave added profile to the importance of addressing AIDS on a global scale — and the key role local organizations can play in that effort.

# Peer Outreach Project Volunteers

by Stephen Lam

For the Peer Outreach Project (POP), this year's Pride is going to be extra special because it is the first time we will participate as a group. We will march in the youth contingent with our POP banner, and we will also distribute safer sex kits to youth in the parade, in the crowd, in FruitLoopz, and in other venues. We are really excited about this opportunity! If you see someone in a sexy outfit handing out safer sex kits, it is probably us. Come by and say 'hi'.

The POP is an autonomous, dynamic and cooperative group of peers from diverse age groups and experiences. We work to empower youth to learn and practice safer sex, healthy sexuality, safer drug use, and harm reduction. Wait! Don't run away! We are a bunch of fun-loving people, we are not dull and boring, and we promise we won't "lecture" you. Our mission statement says repeatedly that we want to achieve our goals while having fun. We have developed lots of ideas – fun and sexy posters, situational theatre, fashion shows, and interactive games are only some of them. My personal favorite is the "POP Safer Sex Patrols", where volunteers dress up in sexy outfits, drive an eye-catching "Safer Sex Mobile", and project fun safer sex messages onto building walls.

The POP is funded by the United Way of Greater Toronto. It started up in September 1999. Currently, it has representatives from the AIDS Committee of Toronto, the YMCA Youth Substance Abuse Program, LGBTOUT (U of T student group), Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, and Hassle Free Clinic. More importantly, it has a group of energetic young individuals that are not necessarily connected with community agencies. The POP has about 35 members, 15 of whom are active volunteers.

Besides having fun, the POP strongly believes in being open and respectful to all our peers. We strive to be against judgment and oppression towards any individual. We firmly believe in equity. We try to become aware of, challenge, and address forms of discrimination such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, ethnocentrism, ageism, discrimination against lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals, transgendered people, queers, and two-spirited people. We believe in being sex positive – that sex and related matters can be discussed openly. We empower our peers to learn about the risks involved in various sexual activities and to practice safer sex/drug use according to their needs.

## LOOK FOR US at the Pride Parade

The POP meets every two weeks for two hours. Before meetings, volunteers prepare food and drinks for all of us to share. We get right down to business – but there's time to talk about what's going on in school, at work, and in our social and personal lives. We also discuss topics like public sex, gay marriage, and other "hot issues". The POP is a warm and welcoming environment, and we're getting to know each other quite well. This might sound contrived, but I do usually have lots of fun at these meetings. If you don't believe me, just attend one to see for yourself. And the food is really good too!

Stephen Lam is a POP volunteer. He is also the External Coordinator of LGBTOUT (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgendered of U of T).

For more information about the POP or to volunteer, please contact Stephen Lam at 416-923-0476, slam@ecf.utoronto.ca; Humberto Carolo at 416-340-8484, ext. 254, hcarolo@actoronto.org; or Alex Dunlop at 416-504-1710, ext. 205.

## Leadership Donors Honoured at Reception



Ron Rosenes, ACT Honorary Director (left) displays at our donor reception a Chinese symbol representing the Ron Rosenes Health Promotion Fund.

With red roses and good spirits abound, a splendid time was had at our reception on Thursday, May 25, recognizing the outstanding commitment of our **Leaders in Caring** and our **Legacy of Hope Society**. **Leaders in Caring** are individuals who have made philanthropic gifts of \$1,200 or more in a year, and the **Legacy of Hope Society** includes those that have made a planned gift to ACT.

With some fifty guests in attendance, a featured topic at the reception was the treatment crisis in the AIDS epidemic. Almost half of all people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs) are or have become non-receptive to combination therapies and PHAs with resistance to all drug combinations face an uncertain future.

Also discussed at the reception was ACT's work with youth. Through our Peer Outreach and other youth programmes, ACT is reaching out to and educating young people about HIV prevention.

Thanks to the generosity of our **Leaders in Caring** and



LEGACY OF HOPE

## PRIDE WEEK BOOK AND VIDEO LIST

**Parties and the Parade are great. But for those quiet times in between, here are some books and videos related to Pride Week's more serious side. All are available at the ACT Library.**

**Free your mind : the book for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth – and their allies** / Ellen Bass and Kate Kaufman.

**Generation Q : gays, lesbians and bisexuals born around 1969's Stonewall riots tell their stories of growing up in the age of information** / edited by Robin Bernstein and Seth Clark Silberman.

**It Is What It Is** [Videocassette] Shot in New York City with a multicultural cast, this video is directed at lesbian and gay youth. It provides helpful information on coming out and dealing with one's sexuality.

**Out : stories of lesbian and gay youth** [Videocassette] Using clips from interviews, comedy, high school discussions and P-FLAG meetings, this documentary investigates the lives and experiences of a diverse group of gay and lesbian youth and their families. Most of the youth are from the Toronto area / National Film Board.

**Pride and prejudice : the life and times of gay and lesbian youth** [Videocassette] The members of Pride & Prejudice, a lesbian and gay youth support group in Toronto, meet to give each other support and what they never get at school, a chance to learn more about lesbian and gay history, relationships, community, and more.

**Safe spaces : HIV prevention for gay, lesbian and bisexual youth** / edited by Elaine Lowe. Calls for communities to unite in support of gay, lesbian and bisexual youth. Shows that mental and physical health are connected: self-esteem and social support often correlate with better control over one's health.

**Sexual orientation : reading between the labels** [Videocassette] An introduction to coming out issues for gay and lesbian youth. Counselors and social workers discuss basics, gay teens and their parents share personal experiences of homophobia and its effects. The central issue discussed is when and how to come out of the closet.

**Where there's life: a gay in the family** [Videocassette] Gay and lesbian youth and their parents talk about the coming out experience in this British show. The first part of the show focuses on the liberating experience of coming out for an Australian youth and the reaction of his mother.

**Who's Afraid of Project 10?** [Videocassette] Project 10 is a counselling service for lesbian and gay teenagers. Young people who have been helped by Project 10 speak about their experience of homophobia, parental rejection, and bashing. In a moving segment, a grieving mother remembers her son, who committed suicide when he could no longer bear his parents' inability to accept his sexuality and their attempts to force him to conform to their fundamentalist way of life.

# AIDSwalk toronto



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Every day 12 more Canadians are infected with HIV	24% of new infections are among women
Over 40,000 Canadians are living with HIV Over 16,000 are unaware of it	AIDS is the leading killer of men aged 25 – 44 in Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto
The proportion of HIV infected youth (15-24) is growing at an alarming rate	<b>AIDS isn't over</b>

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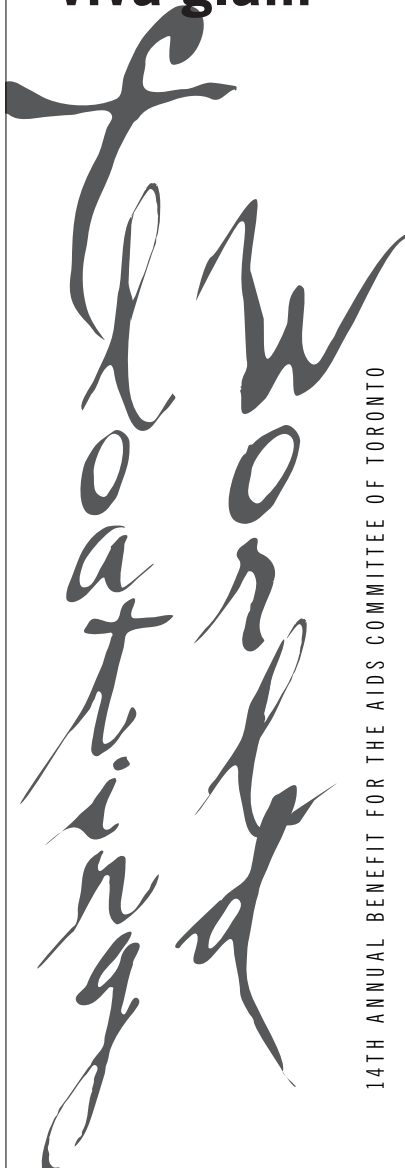
If you'd like to become a volunteer for AIDS Walk Toronto, please call Donald at 416-340-8484 ext. 255 or visit us at [www.aidswalktoronto.org](http://www.aidswalktoronto.org)



# Grin and Bare It

ACT's newest, nearly naked event  
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DESIGN AND CREATIVE DIRECTION ROBERT YOUNG ASSOCIATES

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