

Youth Community Development

BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS WITH YOUTH AND YOUTH SERVICE AGENCIES

Among the many priorities in the AIDS Committee of Toronto's (ACT's) 1998-2001 strategic plan, the need to increase outreach to youth was identified. Earlier this summer, ACT stepped up its commitment to address HIV/AIDS in young people between the ages of 15 and 26 by bringing on board the Youth Community Development Coordinator. This position will help us build on the success of past youth initiatives and increase the profile of future youth programming at ACT.

The need to address HIV infection among young people requires a broad community approach due to the complexities of AIDS. Not only do we need to continue our efforts in the prevention of HIV infection with youth, but we also need to strengthen the support systems for

youth living with, or affected by, HIV/AIDS. Consequently, we have joined forces with some of the leading youth and AIDS service organizations in Toronto to develop a network where the sexual health and HIV/AIDS concerns of young people can be identified and addressed.

Although still in its developing stages, this network already includes the participation of staff and youth from organizations such as Positive Youth Outreach, Voices of Positive Women, Youth Substance Abuse Program of the YMCA, Asian Community AIDS Services, Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, Planned Parenthood of Toronto, Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention, Central Toronto Youth Services, East Metro Youth Services, Toronto Public Health, Ontario Federation of

Indian Friendship Centres, and Students About Safer Sex.

Together, network members will have an opportunity to share resources, experience, and expertise. As a network, we will strive to identify and address the emerging needs of youth in diverse communities (i.e. street-involved youth, young women living with HIV/AIDS, young substance users, immigrant youth, and many other underserved or marginalized youth). We also hope to strengthen collaboration and partnerships between youth serving and AIDS service organizations in order to develop culturally meaningful and effective strategies that address diverse needs.

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Social Recreational Programming at ACT

Over the past year and a half, ACT Support Group facilitators and counsellors have been hearing from many people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs) who are feeling healthier due to anti-HIV drug treatments. These people speak of their desires to visit new places, reconnect with their community, and meet new people — in particular PHAs like themselves who have started to think about living, instead of dying.

In January 1999, several ACT staff discussed ways that we might support PHAs in their desire to become more socially active. In the Spring we conducted a survey of Toronto area AIDS service organizations to determine the range of social recreational programming offered. The results were telling: very little programming of this nature was available. As a result, PHAs with limited financial resources who wanted to become more active (specifically during daytime hours) were limited by what was available. Responding to this need ACT created two new programs — the Hot Lunch program and the Social Support Network. Both programs were developed to help reduce the isolation and depression often experienced by PHAs while at the same time recognizing that financial limitations often contribute to these very problems.

ACT began exploring the possibility of partnering with Mid-Toronto Community Services (MTCS) to develop social recreational programming for PHAs. MTCS is the primary provider of Meals on Wheels to PHAs in the downtown core and were very interested in working with ACT to look at ways they might expand their services to PHAs. After several meetings it was agreed that MTCS and ACT would work in partnership to further develop and implement these two new programs.

The "Meet and Eat" Hot Lunch program was launched in mid-September and has proven popular. Every Friday from noon until 2:30 pm PHAs can come together to enjoy a free, nutritious and delicious hot meal. After coffee and informal introductions, lunch is served "family" style. This program is intended to provide PHAs with an opportunity to meet other PHAs in a confidential and supportive environment. It offers peer support, information sharing and a venue to simply relax and connect with other PHAs. After almost 3 months we are averaging 8 to 10 participants weekly, with new participants always welcome. There are plans to further develop the program to include more structured social recreational activities such as card games, meditation exercises and art appreciation classes. Comments from participants in the Hot Lunch Program speak to its need: "It's really nice to have a place to come and just relax and enjoy a meal — it's like a meal out without having to worry about paying for it" commented one person, while another stated that "It's great to have somewhere to go — especially when the weather is bad and you don't get out much".

ACT's other new social recreational program, The Social Support Network, began in July with a trip to a local berry farm northeast of the city. Each month a day trip to a location outside of the downtown core is offered. Using transportation provided to us at reduced cost by MTCS, ACT is able to offer PHAs the opportunity to get out of the city for the day. Groups of up to 15 PHAs meet at ACT and travel together on a mini bus to various venues. Weather permitting, a picnic lunch is part of the outing and the group returns by mid afternoon. Our aim is to plan interesting and entertaining trips at minimal cost. Many attending trips through the Network have made comments such as

"It's so nice to get away from downtown — all I ever see is concrete!", and "the (Royal Botanical) gardens are amazing, it's so nice just to wander around taking it all in."

Both the Social Support Network and the Hot Lunch program provide participants with opportunities to meet other PHAs for both support and social interaction. As the cold weather approaches, it is comforting to know that ACT is able to offer these and other programs that aim to reduce isolation and increase the health of people with HIV and AIDS.

For more information about the "Meet and Eat" Hot Lunch Program, or the Social Support Network, please contact Donna Braybrook, Practical Assistance Coordinator at 416-340-8484 ext. 231 or e-mail dbraybrook@acttoronto.org

Support ACT by attending

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April 29, 2000



September 24, 2000

**DANCERS
FOR LIFE**
Fall 2000

ACT Community Partners Fund Grants \$243,030.00

AIDS ORGANIZATIONS BENEFIT FROM ACT'S FUNDRAISING SUCCESS

Funds from ACT will go out to thirty-four agencies and community groups working to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS or providing services to people living with HIV/AIDS. About half of the grants will help organizations with their overall services; the rest will help fund specific projects.

"We at ACT are glad to join with our partners in the fight against AIDS to raise funds and share the proceeds. People from many of Toronto's diverse communities took part in ACT's fundraising events. We're pleased to share some of the proceeds with the organizations that serve those communities," said Charles Roy, Executive Director at ACT.

The funds for the Community Partners grants come from ACT's major fundraising events: Fashion Cares, AIDS Walk Toronto, and Dancers For Life. Each year ACT, in cooperation with partner agencies, conducts a process under which agencies and groups may apply for funds. Applicants must show that they are registered charities which do work in AIDS prevention or support for people living with HIV/AIDS in Toronto, and that their work is consistent with ACT's mission of "support, education and advocacy for people living with HIV/AIDS and those affected by HIV/AIDS".

This year, the allocations were made by committees that included ACT Board and staff members as well as representatives from Fife House, CATIE, Casey House and Asian Community AIDS Services. ACT ensured that any possible conflicts of interest were avoided. Grants were made in two categories: the first went to organizations to assist them in providing their regular services — each grant in this category was for \$10,800. Grants in the second category will help finance specific projects — most of these grants were for \$3240. The committee's decisions were made in September, and cheques were issued in October. (In some cases grants have been put on hold pending confirmation that the organization has charitable status.)

"I'm pleased that there is so much interest in AIDS work around the city — it shows that Toronto has not been taken in by the myth that AIDS is over — that people in our city are still determined to keep Toronto in the forefront of the fight against AIDS," said Roy.

The following community-based AIDS organizations received funding through the AIDS Committee of Toronto Community Partners Fund:

127 Isabella Charitable Organization
2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations
African Community Health Services
Africans in Partnership Against AIDS
AIDS Action Now!
Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention
Asian Community AIDS Services
Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (BlackCAP)
Community Research Initiative of Toronto
HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario
Hassle Free Clinic
HIV-T Group
Prisoners with HIV/AIDS Support Action Network (PASAN)
Positive Youth Outreach
Positive Straight Men
The Teresa Group
Toronto People With AIDS Foundation
Voices of Positive Women

The following organizations received funding for HIV/AIDS related projects through the AIDS Committee of Toronto Community Partners Fund:

Abrigo Centre
Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre
AIDS Candlelight Vigil
AIDS Memorial
Anishnawbe Health Toronto
Deaf Outreach Project/Ontario Association of the Deaf
Gay Men's Education Network (G-Men)
Immigrant Women's Health Centre
Meal-Trans HIV/AIDS Prevention Outreach Project
Metis Nation of Ontario
Northern Lights Alternatives Canada
Toronto and Central Ontario Regional Hemophilia Society
United Caribbean AIDS-Education Network (U.C.A.N.)
Women's Health In Women's Hands Community Health Centre
Women's Outreach Network
Youthlink Inner City



Thanks for voting us number one!

Best
Community Organization

ACT
AIDS Committee of Toronto



Best
Fundraising Event

**FASHION
CARES**

Youth Community Development *continued from page 1*

Much of the work of the Youth Community Development program involves the participation of youth in all stages of program planning, development, delivery and evaluation. An example of this approach is the Peer Outreach Project. This project aims to decrease the rates of HIV infection among lesbian, gay and bisexual youth and to promote healthy sexualities. Once again, ACT is working collaboratively with various youth service and AIDS service organizations in the development of this project. Some groups involved include Lesbian Gay and Bisexual Youth of Toronto, the Playground (Dufferin Mall Youth Services), Asian Community AIDS Services, Positive Youth Outreach, Youth Substance Abuse Program of the YMCA, the Lesbigan Youthline, Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention, Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, and the University of Toronto Sexual Education and Peer Counselling Centre. Together with youth, we hope to recruit and train volunteers between the ages of 15 and 26 to provide outreach to youth in places where they

socialize — youth groups, on the street, in coffee shops, on the internet and chat lines, in dance clubs, and at youth events. To date, over twenty youth have responded to our call for volunteers for this project.

The Peer Outreach Project will undertake a variety of approaches to outreach such as individual contacts in social spaces, information tables, education through popular theatre, and web site development. The next stages of this project will be the development of a training program in conjunction with the youth and further refinement of the content and locations of the various outreach strategies. This work will be based on information collected from focus groups.

One of the many benefits of this project is providing the peer youth with much-needed connection to the community. As one of the peer youth commented, his coming out has been somewhat less than fulfilling "partly because I came out full of false expectations, but mostly because I'm finding it very difficult to get into the community and get involved,

particularly given that I don't have many gay friends." It is this sense of isolation coupled with the many pressures of being young and gay that often places young people at risk for HIV infection.

This is only the beginning of a long road to truly address HIV/AIDS and sexuality among youth. However, as long as we continue to develop healthy and meaningful partnerships with diverse youth and youth service agencies, we can provide a strong front in the support of HIV positive youth and in further reducing the rates of HIV infection among young people.

For more information about the Youth Community Development program at ACT or if you would like to volunteer or get involved with any of the initiatives described above, please contact Humberto Carolo, Youth Community Development Coordinator, at 416-340-8484 ext. 254 or e-mail hcarolo@actontario.org

Volunteer Training at ACT

A WORK IN PROGRESS

When I first began working at ACT in 1991 it was customary for new staff to attend the Volunteer Orientation Program. The program was designed to prepare volunteers for working at ACT by giving them an introduction to the culture of the agency, philosophies and approaches to working with clients and communities, essential information about HIV/AIDS and ACT's programs and services. At that time, the format was six evening sessions and a full weekend — a total of forty hours of training. And that was only the beginning. Volunteers would then complete training in their specific area of interest in direct services and education — things like being a buddy, working on the Hotline, doing outreach or facilitating a support group. Sessions in the initial orientation included the basics of HIV transmission (safer sex), the progression from HIV to AIDS, homophobia, holistic health (a fairly new and radical concept at the time), dealing with grief and loss, and a session to help participants try and identify with the experience of someone living with AIDS. Historical files indicate that with the exception of a few changes and additions this was essentially the volunteer training program for the first ten years of ACT's existence. And it was a good one. Evaluations, anecdotal stories and my personal experience all indicated that it was a very powerful experience for the people who participated. Anywhere from twenty five to forty people went through the program each time, and it was offered three times a year.

In 1993, the program was revamped to reflect the changes in ACT — particularly in relation to our move to 399 Church Street and the creation of our Public Access Centre. Again in 1995 we adapted our volunteer training sessions in recognition of the ways that our programs and services were changing and expanding. Women's issues were addressed more fully as we expanded our outreach to women. ACT's advocacy work and the concept of health promotion were beginning to be better integrated into our work, and a session titled "working with diversity" was incorporated to facilitate a broader understanding of the barriers people face in accessing services. We talked

more about the psycho-social issues related to HIV transmission and the complex health and social needs of people living with HIV/AIDS.

A project which grew out of ACT's reexamination of volunteer training was the development and production of new training manuals. With sup-

A total of forty hours of training.
And that was only the beginning.

port from a National Reference Group and funding from Health Canada, ACT produced The National HIV/AIDS Volunteer Training Kit. This kit is being used by countless AIDS organizations throughout Canada. And, it has played an important role in the most recent evolution of volunteer training at ACT. Early in 1998 ACT's Volunteer Management Team (comprised of staff who work most closely with volunteers) took on the task of reevaluating the orientation program once again. Taking into account emerging issues and the expanding face of HIV/AIDS, as well as ACT's changing role in the community, the training was redesigned to include

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issues of harm reduction, values and attitudes (and how these impact on our ability to provide service) as well as incorporating a newer understanding of the changing realities of people living with HIV/AIDS. More skills-development was included in the initial orientation in the areas of

communication and appropriate assessment and referral while at the same time ensuring that time was spent addressing the impact of volunteering on individuals (self care, boundaries, grief and loss). In the Spring of 1999 ACT offered its first newly developed and renamed Volunteer Core Skills Training and just last month we offered a second round.

There has been very positive feedback about ACT's volunteer training and the efforts of the many volunteers and staff who have participated in its development and delivery — both staff within ACT and from our community partner agencies who have shared their expertise and resources with us. But a big part of the credit for its success has to go to the many volunteers who have participated in various training programs over the years. We have always acknowledged as we train volunteers that there is a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience in the room and that we, as facilitators, are not "experts" on HIV/AIDS. The real power of community development becomes apparent when a group of twenty or thirty individuals come together for thirty hours and share with each other parts of themselves and their lives, support one another in learning and developing skills, build alliances and make a common commitment to work with individuals and communities infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

We have more work to do. And the Volunteer Core Skills Training will continue to evolve, expand and change along with the issues we face in our agency and the communities we serve. As ACT continues its organizational change process to address diversity, nondiscrimination, access and equity, we will need to ensure that our volunteer recruitment and training process reflects these values. And we will need to continue to look at partnerships and shared training with other agencies.

The HIV/AIDS movement has a long history of passionate volunteer involvement. And ACT is committed to ensuring that volunteers receive the support they need to continue their work of building healthy communities.

Betty Ann Rutledge, Program Volunteer Coordinator

ACT Welcomes New Board Members

At our Annual General Meeting held October 19, 1999, five positions on the ACT Board of Directors were open. A total of eleven candidates ran for these five positions. New Board members elected by ACT's membership were: Dean Behrens, Evan Collins, Trevor Gray, Madhur (Muddy) Ramrakha, and Dalton Truthwaite.

In addition, the new ACT Board met to elect its Executive Committee. The 1999/2000 ACT Board Executive is: Dalton Truthwaite, Chair; Enrico Mandarino, Vice Chair; Susan Feldman, Treasurer; and David Williamson, Secretary.

Geoff Lawrence A Dedicated Donor

In addition to being an ACT supporter, Geoff Lawrence is an extraordinarily interesting and thoughtful guy. He teaches English as a Second Language at Centennial College, is completing an M.A. in Second Language Education at OISE/University of Toronto, and is a member of the Ontario Film Review Board. He has a long history of putting his concern for the world into action, including a stint a few years ago hosting a weekly live radio program on CIUT FM (sponsored by Amnesty International and co-produced by past ACT board chair, Michael Battista) which dealt with international human rights.

When Geoff found out that he was HIV+ in 1989, he spent a lot of time researching different treatment options. He has a particular interest in naturopathic medicine and is very pleased that ACT offers a Naturopathic Clinic and other forms of alternative therapy to people living with HIV/AIDS. Geoff supports ACT as a monthly donor through the Partners in Caring program. In order to ensure that his support for ACT extends far into the future, Geoff has included ACT in his will. As a person who became HIV+ while he was still a teenager, he has a particular concern that present and future generations of young people have the means necessary to avoid HIV infection. Thank you, Geoff, for your wonderful caring and generosity!

Since we highlighted our Legacy of Hope Society bequest donors in our September 1999 newsletter, 14 new persons have told us that they have included ACT in their will. In total, 63 people have informed us of their bequest commitment to ACT. If you are interested in learning more about making a gift to ACT in your will, please contact Greg Lichti, Development Officer, at 416-340-8484 ext. 265 or Ann Rosenfield, Director of Development, at 416-340-8484 ext. 268.



AIDS WALK TORONTO

TENTH ANNIVERSARY

AIDS Walk Toronto Celebrates Ten Years of Public and Corporate Support

Thank you to everyone who took part in the tenth anniversary AIDS Walk Toronto. September 26th was a fantastic day as over 15,000 walkers, 260 community and corporate teams, 500 volunteers and our sponsors gathered on Nathan Phillips Square. AIDS Walk Toronto raised \$750,000 this year, bringing the ten year total to almost 6 million dollars!



VIVER shows why they won the Team Spirit Award

Team Spirit — 260 Teams and Better than Ever Top Teams for our tenth anniversary Walk included the **Loyalty Group**, who surpassed their personal goal by hosting two garage sales, a silent auction and dress-down days. This year, they raised over \$35,000. Other top teams included: **The Printing House**, **GAP Canada**, **CIBC**, and **Bell Canada Employees**. Team Spirit Award winner at Nathan Phillips Square was **VIVER**, the Portuguese-speaking HIV/AIDS Coalition. Teams, who were in record numbers this year, celebrated their success at the Team Awards Night on December 1, World AIDS Day.

The Heroes Victory Party featuring Kim Stockwood

Afterwards, Walkers who raised \$150 or more celebrated their achievements by attending the second Heroes' Victory Party at The Second City. With performances by rock band Radiate, The Second City Touring Company and Kim Stockwood, the evening was a terrific way for our 1,100 Walk Heroes to be recognized.



Local politicians walk the walk. Photos: Colin Nauss

AIDS Walk Toronto 2000 — Sunday, September 24, 2000

We now look forward to AIDS Walk Toronto 2000, set to take place Sunday September 24, 2000. If you are interested in getting involved, please call Lori Lucier at 416-340-8484 ext. 255 for details.

Your Generosity in ACTION

Your gifts allow us to provide more programs to people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs). For example, your generosity this year started "Meet and Eat," a weekly lunch program for people living with HIV/AIDS. Now, every week about a dozen PHAs get a hot meal and some much needed companionship and social support. Because we know that you don't want your money wasted through inefficiency, this program is a partnership between ACT and Mid-Toronto Community Services.

"Meet and Eat" is just one of the many new programs at ACT, courtesy of your financial help. Other new areas include expanded HIV/AIDS outreach services for youth and women, employment services for people considering (re)entering the workforce, and a social support network.

What happens to my money after I give it to ACT?

Want to know more about how your gift helps ACT?

Please call Ann Rosenfield 416-340-8484 ext. 268 or e-mail arosenfield@actontario.org

Core support for ACT's programs and services comes from you — Leaders in Caring (donors of \$1200 and more); Partners in Caring (monthly donors); Legacy of Hope Fund supporters (Gifts in your will); AIDS Walk, Dancers for Life and Fashion Cares supporters; and donors.



YEAR-END DONATION COUPON

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\$500 \$250 \$100 \$60 \$35 Other \$

Please return to: AIDS Committee of Toronto, Attn: Greg Lichti, 399 Church Street, 4th Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5B 2J6.

Or call ACT at 416-340-8484 ext. 235 to make a credit card donation.

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X1299

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Lori Lucier DEVELOPMENT VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Philip Hartwick SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR

ADDITIONAL THANKS TO

George Avena, Michelle Balaban & Dennis Laroche

Where's my tax receipt?!?

ACT is changing donation software which means tax receipts will be going out more slowly than usual for the next few months. If you need your tax receipt right away or need an update, please let us know by giving us a call at 340-8484 ext. 235. Our apologies for the inconvenience.