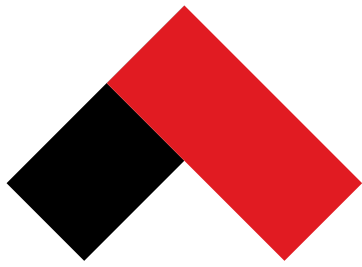


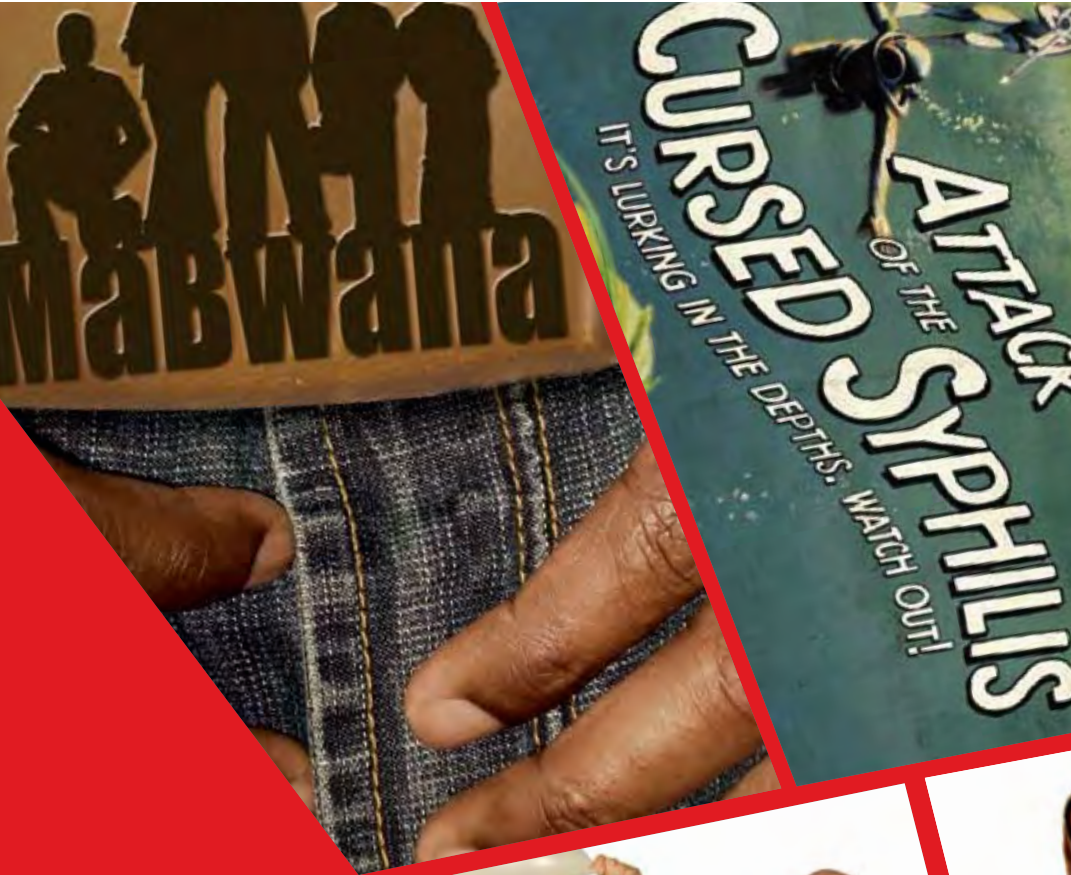
STAKEHOLDER  
SURVEY 2010!



# act News

AIDS Committee of Toronto

Winter 2010



## 20 Years of PYO

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Harm Reduction P.04

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# 20 YEARS OF POSITIVE YOUTH OUTREACH

## JUST THE FACTS

In the last six months...

**26**

PYO drop-ins were held at the ACT office, allowing HIV-positive youth to meet each other and share their evenings in a social atmosphere.

**239**

HIV-positive youth attended the PYO drop-in sessions.

**20**

poz youth attended the PYO retreat, where they had the opportunity to escape the city with their peers and learn strategies to improve their health.

**52**

outreach sessions conducted by PYO staff to poz youth.

**16**

outreach sessions to other community agencies serving youth by PYO staff.

## Angel Parks

Positive Youth Outreach Coordinator

Angel Parks first got involved with PYO as a member of the program. As a young HIV-positive woman, she attended drop-in sessions at the ACT office for many years. When the opportunity came up to coordinate the program full-time, she jumped at the chance.

“I saw it as an opportunity,” she says. “We need to develop and enhance the leadership potential of young people living with HIV.”

Now entering her third year as PYO Coordinator, Angel’s passion for the program and its value to positive youth hasn’t changed.

“My favourite part of the job is seeing young people living with HIV meet their personal goals, rise to their potential, be illuminated with moments of success and become passionate about living their life well.”



In 2010, we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of Positive Youth Outreach (PYO)—a Toronto-based, peer-driven program of ACT. Its mission is to empower, support and affirm the lives of young people under the age of 30 who are living with HIV/AIDS.

Despite advances in treatment and prevention, youth living with, affected by and at risk of HIV/AIDS remain as vulnerable as ever. According to the

Public Health Agency of Canada's latest HIV/AIDS surveillance report, approximately one quarter of HIV-positive tests in Canada are among youth. Among women, youth comprise over 40% of new infections.

Regardless of our HIV status, all of us know how challenging it can be as a young person, facing struggles from education and employment to

housing and achieving independence. An HIV-positive diagnosis in these critical years can be life-altering and add much more pressure in an already tumultuous time for many young people.

That's why programs like PYO are so critical—to allow HIV-positive youth to meet each other, learn strategies to improve their health, and support each other at a crucial time in their lives.

## Jessica Whitbread

### Peer Youth Support Worker

Although she is relatively new to her part-time staff position at PYO, Jessica is no stranger to ACT or work in the HIV/AIDS movement.

Jessica has been an integral part of fundraising efforts for HIV/AIDS support services, from organizing the No Pants No Problem fundraiser to Team Jessica in the Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life.

Now she supports fellow HIV-positive youth in the Positive Youth Outreach program as a peer youth support worker, conducting outreach to poz youth and coordinating projects like the PYO zine.



## JUST THE FACTS

### In the last six months...

**28%**

Percentage of new HIV infections in Ontario among youth.<sup>1</sup>

**38%**

Percentage of newly-infected Ontario women under the age of 30.<sup>1</sup>

**35%**

Percentage of newly-infected Ontario youth who are young gay and bisexual men.<sup>1</sup>

**50%**

Percentage of Canadian Grade 9 students who think there is a cure for AIDS.<sup>2</sup>

**66%**

Percentage of Canadian Grade 7 students who think there is a cure for AIDS.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ontario HIV Epidemiologic Monitoring Unit, University of Toronto, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2002.

# OUTREACH SUPPORT PREVENTION

## JUST THE FACTS IN 2009...

**10,154**

Number of gay and bisexual youth reached through youth-specific outreach.

**2,157**

Number of "Sex from A to Z" card decks distributed with sexual health information.

**228**

Number of youth connected with community services such as HIV testing and counselling by ACT outreach.

**5751**

Number of condoms distributed by ACT at youth events like college club nights.

**5581**

Number of sexual health and harm reduction brochures distributed to youth.

## Adam Busch

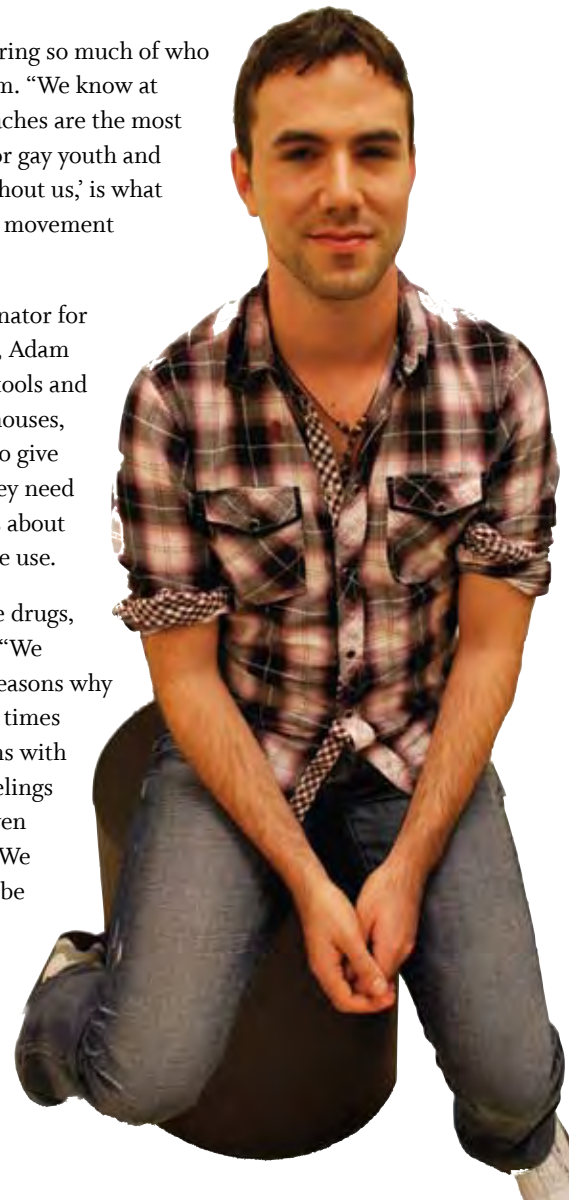
Harm Reduction Coordinator  
Gay Youth and Men

As a young gay man himself, Adam Busch has a stake in helping to educate other gay youth and men about sexual health and harm reduction.

"It's amazing to be able to bring so much of who I am to the work," says Adam. "We know at ACT that peer-based approaches are the most meaningful and powerful for gay youth and men. 'Nothing about us without us,' is what folks in the harm reduction movement like to say.

As Harm Reduction Coordinator for Gay Youth and Men at ACT, Adam distributes a wide range of tools and information at clubs, bath houses, special events, and parties to give gay youth and men what they need to make informed decisions about safer sex and safer substance use.

"It's a reality that people use drugs, including alcohol," he says. "We know that there are many reasons why gay youth and men are four times more likely to have problems with substance use, including feelings of shame and isolation — even within the gay community. We want gay youth and men to be empowered to make their own decisions that will protect their health."





## Portuguese-speaking community commemorates World AIDS Day

To mark World AIDS Day, ACT and VIVER (the Portuguese-speaking HIV/AIDS coalition) organized two events for the Portuguese-speaking community in Toronto.

At St. Christopher House, the organizations welcomed a performance by Health Action Theatre by Seniors (HATS) about HIV/AIDS and aging-related issues for an audience of more than 30 seniors. The play told the story of one divorced man who thought he would never be infected with HIV, and so he never talked about it or used any protection with his partners. When he finally found the woman he wanted to spend the rest of his life with, he fell sick and found out he was HIV-positive.

The play was an excellent opportunity for seniors to open up and discuss how HIV has been affecting their community, and how they can prevent it. Many of the audience members told us they had never touched a condom before.

Following the performance, a discussion session stressed the importance of attendees taking their new knowledge about HIV/AIDS back home to share it with their children and grandchildren.

HATS is known for integrating health issues into their performances, using them as a way to educate seniors about unfamiliar topics. Audience members told us that they felt much



more comfortable talking about sex, sexuality and HIV/AIDS after the play.

At the Abrigo Centre, an event was held for the community at large. Dozens of members of the Portuguese-speaking community came out for a dinner, and listened to a speaker talk about her experience living with HIV.

A lively discussion period followed, where audience members had an opportunity to ask questions about life with HIV in Toronto. Myths were debunked, and the reality of being HIV-positive was shared with the community.

When asked what she would do if she were in a powerful position within government, the speaker replied, “I would make HIV and sexual health an obligatory part of the curriculum of every school across the country, so young people would not make the same mistake I made for lack of information.” She added that she would also make HIV treatment accessible to developing countries.

*ACT, in partnership with VIVER, offers education, prevention and support services for people who are living with and affected by HIV/AIDS in the Portuguese-speaking community.*

*For more information, visit: / Para mais informação, consulte: [www.actontario.org/portugues](http://www.actontario.org/portugues)*

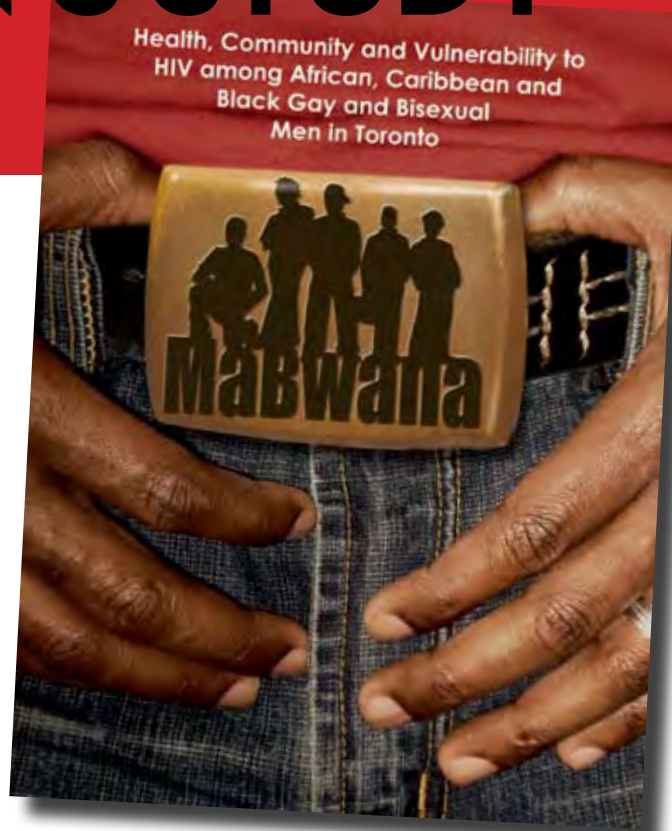
# MABWANA

## BLACK MEN'S STUDY

The MaBwana Black Men's Study is a research project that was initiated by the African and Caribbean Council on HIV/AIDS in Ontario (ACCHO). The purpose of this research was to understand the factors that may contribute to Black gay men's vulnerability to HIV. MaBwana was housed at ACT and the research team included researchers from ACCHO, ACT, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, University of Windsor, University of Toronto and the Hospital for Sick Children. The MaBwana research was funded by the Canadian Institute for Health Research and a seed grant from the AIDS Bureau, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

The study had four objectives: to characterize the social demographic profile of African, Caribbean and Black gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men; examine their sexual relationships and behaviour; understand their decision making associated with HIV risk; and understand how Black gay men assess current HIV prevention campaigns.

The research included three phases of data collection namely key informant interviews, a survey and indepth interviews. A community advisory committee (CAC) was composed of eight Black men who were knowledgeable about the networks of Black gay and bisexual men, through their volunteer, activist or professional affiliation. The CAC offered guidance about the content, implementation, recruitment, interpretation of results, and knowledge transfer activities.



The MaBwana survey was launched at Toronto Pride in 2007, and recruitment also took place through networks and places socialized by Black gay men. A total of 168 men participated. In-depth interviews were conducted with 24 participants. In order to participate, men had to be over 18 years of age; self identify as African, Caribbean or Black; and live in Toronto. The participants were asked questions about their ethnic and sexual identity, sexual relationship and behaviors, HIV testing, HIV prevention campaign, community involvement, and affiliation with HIV/AIDS issues.

The community report — *MaBwana: Health Community and Vulnerability to HIV among African, Caribbean Black, Gay and Bisexual Men in Toronto* — is the first step of a series of dissemination activities that will unfold over the next 6 months.



The MaBwana community report describes research methodologies used, highlights the results of the survey and in depth interviews and draws some implications for future research and program development for Black gay men.

Three salient points emerged from the study results: First, MaBwana participants were profoundly affected by experiences of social oppression (homophobia, heterosexism, racism) but are not necessarily burdened by those experiences. Second, MaBwana participants cared about their health, and the health and well being of other Black gay men and their ethno-racial communities. And finally, despite an apparently strong commitment to safer sex, some participants struggled with specific issues that challenged their ability to maintain safer sex practices. In general, the implications support a greater focus on HIV education and interventions to reinforce Black gay men's commitment to safer sex and HIV testing, and greater emphasis on HIV prevention efforts that draw on the assets and strengths (e.g., commitment to safer sex, strong attachment to HIV as an issue for Black communities) articulated by MaBwana.

The MaBwana community report is available in the ACT library, the ACCHO website and on the ACT website research page. We continue to design community events to discuss the outcomes of the MaBwana Black Men's research study and the implications for program and policy development, and HIV prevention for African, Caribbean, and Black gay men living in Toronto.

## Strategic Plan Stakeholder Survey

Strategic Plan Stakeholder Survey: It's coming!

Starting in January 2010, ACT will be conducting stakeholder surveys to seek input from the community for our next strategic plan.

Community engagement is key in ensuring that our next strategic planning process will be informed by the needs, opinions and feedback of our community partners, clients, volunteers, and people living with HIV/AIDS – whether they have used our services or not.

Starting January 2010, please visit [www.actoronto.org/strategicplansurvey](http://www.actoronto.org/strategicplansurvey) to participate in a confidential online survey.

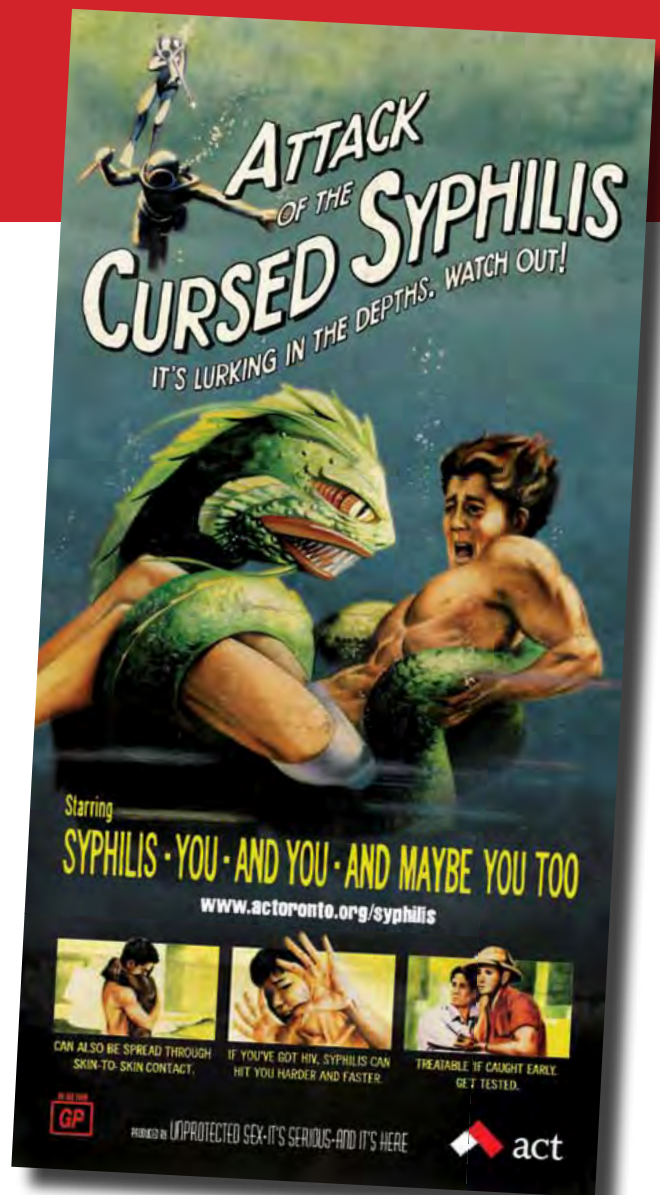
For more information, please contact John Maxwell, Director of Policy and Communications at ACT: [jmaxwell@actoronto.org](mailto:jmaxwell@actoronto.org) or 416-340-8484 ext. 245.

# SYPHILIS OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

Since 2002, Toronto has seen a dramatic increase in documented syphilis cases, with the overwhelming majority occurring among gay and bisexual men. According to Toronto Public Health, there were 30 reported syphilis cases in 2001. This number jumped to 195 in 2002 and to 328 in 2003. Despite declines in 2004 and 2005, new cases are once again on the rise. In 2008, 331 cases were identified. Ninety-five percent of infections were among men, with gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men comprising 83% of the infections among men. An increasing number of men diagnosed with syphilis are also HIV-positive — almost one-half in 2008. While syphilis is treatable, it can result in severe health issues if undetected, especially for those living with HIV/AIDS.

ACT has been raising awareness about syphilis since the outbreak began, by talking to men about syphilis during outreach and also promoting testing and treatment. Unfortunately, there have been limited funds to mount a large-scale awareness campaign since the last one in 2003.

In response to a request from ACT, Toronto Public Health and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care have provided funding to roll out a new multi-faceted awareness campaign in print, online and in community venues. Thanks to the pro bono design work of Due North Communications, this new campaign is set to roll out in January.



With illustrations and graphics that remind us of a 1950s movie poster, the campaign will encourage gay and bisexual men to learn more about syphilis, get tested for it, and — most importantly — get treated.

For more information about syphilis, visit:  
[www.actoronto.org/syphilis](http://www.actoronto.org/syphilis)

ACT members at the 2009 Annual General Meeting



ACT volunteer Robert Nemeth receives an award for 20 years of service.



ACT Executive Director Hazelle Palmer announces award recipients.

# Years of Service Awards

## 20 Years of Service (1989 to 2009)

### Volunteer

Robert Nemeth (Buddy Program, Library, Support Group Facilitation)

## 15 Years of Service (1994-2009)

### Volunteers

Tim M. (Development)  
Jim W. (Development)

## 10 Years of Service (1999 to 2009)

### Staff

Don Phaneuf  
Robin Rhodes  
Sergio Martinez  
Jim Billing  
Frederick Freake

### Volunteers

Mort M. (Buddy Program)  
Nadia T. (Library)

Glen W. (Buddy Program and Development)  
Diane B. (Development)  
Glenella D. (Development)  
Dante G. (Library and Development)  
Amy I. (Development)  
Joyce I. (Development)  
Paul McC. (Development)  
Almeida Q. (Development)  
Julie-Ann T. (Development)

## 5 Years of Service (2004 to 2009)

### Staff

Grace Chiutsi  
Peter Stephenson  
Janet Caswell  
Jessica Gelberg  
Miguel Cubillos

## Volunteers

Tim H. (Gay Men's Outreach)  
Vicente L.F. (Furniture Bank and Gay Men's Community Education)  
Eugene McD. (Good Company Lunch)  
Don M. (Good Company Lunch)  
David T. (Buddy Program and Good Company Lunch)  
Stephanie T. (Access Centre/Front Desk and Furniture Bank)  
Ken T. (Support Group Facilitation and Board of Directors)  
Christina B. (Development)  
Lydia E. (Development)  
Andrew V. (Development)

## Departing Board Member

Camille Orridge (November 2003 to October 2009)

# VOL NTEER

We're missing something. Are U?

Come to one of our Volunteer Information Sessions in 2010 and find out some of the ways you can fill the gap:

Thursday, January 21, 2010

Thursday, February 18, 2010

Thursday, April 15, 2010

Thursday, May 20, 2010

Thursday, August 19, 2010

Thursday, November 18, 2010

**All the Volunteer Information Sessions take place at ACT (399 Church Street, Room 220, second floor). The sessions begin at 6pm.**

No advance registration required.

For more information, call Sergio Martinez at 416-340-8484 ext. 224 or email [smartinez@actoronto.org](mailto:smartinez@actoronto.org)

**Volunteers truly make a difference!**



**Canada Trust** PRESENTS

A PHOTOGRAPHIC  
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THE AIDS COMMITTEE  
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**SUNDAY, MARCH 21, 2010**

National Ballet School (400 Jarvis St. Toronto)

To purchase tickets, visit  
[www.snap-toronto.com](http://www.snap-toronto.com)

**SNAP! PREVIEW**

March 12 to 14, Edward Day Gallery  
952 Queen Street West, Toronto

**PRIVATE SNAP!  
PATRON PREVIEW**

March 11



**act**

AIDS Committee of Toronto

Photo: Patrick Lighthouse, Speed





December 1st was World AIDS Day.  
At ACT, every day is World AIDS Day.  
Help shed light on the HIV/AIDS epidemic globally and locally.

By lighting a Candle of Hope, you will help us increase awareness in our community to prevent HIV infections among youth and other vulnerable communities.

With every candle we light, ACT can provide more support for people living with HIV/AIDS right here in Toronto.

Help us do our part to achieve a world without AIDS.

**Think globally, ACT locally.**

[www.actoronto.org/candle](http://www.actoronto.org/candle)

**AIDS Committee of Toronto**

399 Church Street, 4th floor, Toronto, Ontario M5B 2J6

T 416-340-8484 ext. 279 F 416-340-8224 E [ask@actoronto.org](mailto:ask@actoronto.org) W [actoronto.org](http://actoronto.org)

Monday to Thursday 10 am-9 pm Friday 10 am-5 pm



@ACToronto



[facebook.com/ACToronto](https://facebook.com/ACToronto)

The AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) delivers responsive, effective, and valued community-based HIV support services and education, prevention, outreach and fundraising programs that promote the health, well-being, worth and rights of individuals and communities living with, affected by and at risk for HIV/AIDS, and increase awareness of HIV/AIDS.

design: Raymond Heikio

**YES! I want to support**  **act**

Name  First name(s)  Surname

Address  Street number/name  Suite number

City  Pr.  Postal Code

Tel.  Area code  Email

Occasionally, ACT trades its mailing list with other progressive charities for a one-time exchange. If you'd prefer your name wasn't traded, please check off this box, complete and return this coupon, or contact us.

Please provide me with information about leaving a *Legacy of Hope* to ACT like a bequest in my will, gift of life insurance, or gift of securities.

Charitable Registration No: 11877 9024 RR0001

DM09N2

Gifts of \$20 or more are automatically receipted; others upon request. Monthly gifts will be processed on the 15th of each month, and you will receive a consolidated income tax receipt early in the next calendar year.

You can change or cancel your arrangement at any time simply by contacting us. New or renewed members: by completing this form you agree to ACT's Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles: more at [www.actoronto.org/membership](http://www.actoronto.org/membership). **THANK YOU FOR ACTING!**

To receive regular updates by email from ACT please visit [www.actoronto.org/subscribe](http://www.actoronto.org/subscribe)

**I'd like to make a one-time donation of:**

\$250  \$100  \$50  \$36  other: \$

OR

**I'd like to become a *Partner in ACTION* and make monthly gifts of:**

\$25  \$18  \$10  \$6  other: \$

I've included a void cheque for my monthly gifts.

I've included my cheque, payable to **ACT**.

I prefer to use my credit card:

VISA  MasterCard  American Express

Card no.

Exp.  /  /  Signature

**I'd also like to become a member of ACT! (Fee \$5)**

I've included the fee with my enclosed cheque.

Please charge my credit card above the additional fee.

I can't afford the membership fee – it will be waived by ACT.

I've given \$5 or more to ACT in the last year through monthly giving; please apply to my membership.