

ellipse

THE NEWSLETTER OF AIDS Calgary Awareness Association March 2008 VOLUME 10 ISSUE 4



"Take a look around you.
We're all affected.
Share information.
Make healthy Choices."



AIDS CALGARY
awareness association

Editor: Chris Huestis
Contributors: Chris Huestis
Roseline Carter
Howie Fruitman.
Design/layout: Rare Method
Printing: Unicom Graphics

Ellipse
c/o AIDS Calgary Awareness
Association
110, 1603 10th Avenue SW,
Calgary, AB T3C 0J7
Phone: 403.508.2500
Fax: 403.263.7358
newsletter@aidscalgary.org
www.aidscalgary.org

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Calgary Cares 2008: Sweet 70's – All in Good Taste!

AIDS Calgary

After a triumphant return in 2007, Calgary Cares is back for 2008 better than every! Returning to the Jack Singer on Saturday, Mar. 29, 2008, Calgary Cares 2008, Sweet 70s, will be an evening packed with music, theatre, and dance in support of HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. The event brings together a unique cross section of the Calgary community including CEO's, students, drag queens, singles and married couples, young and old. The goal of the event is to help break down barriers, especially the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS.

The award winning Calgary Cares has grown over the past 15 years to become



one of Calgary's most unique and highly anticipated gala events. Fast Forward readers voted Calgary Cares "Top Fundraiser for 2007" in the 2007 Readers Choice Awards. Each year Calgary partakes in this unforgettable evening of energetic performances, with the overarching goal of increasing awareness of HIV/AIDS in our community through prevention, education, outreach and support services.

This year the silent auction will feature works of art from local artists. Everything from blown glass, to sculpture and fine art photography will be showcased. If your interested in donating a piece of your work in support of HIV/AIDS awareness, education and prevention in Calgary,

contact Corey at (403) 508-2500 or email cmckeown@aidscalgary.org.

"HIV/AIDS is one of the biggest catastrophes of our generation," says Susan Cress, executive director of AIDS Calgary. "Calgary Cares helps us address by engaging the Calgary Cares in a unique and fun way."

This year, the elaborate fashion gala will include high energy music, spoken word poems, fashion, and dance. The theme for 2008 is Sweet 70s, so dust off those bell bottoms and mini-skirts! Get your tickets today! Call (403) 508-2500 or purchase them online at www.calgarycares.ca.

There are also many volunteer opportunities available. If you are interested, please contact Nikhat Ahmed at nahmed@aidscalgary.org.

MRSA infection a growing concern

AIDS Calgary

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a bacterial infection caused by Staphylococcus aureus bacteria — often referred to simply as "staph." It is one of the first so-called "super bugs" that has developed a resistance to all but the most powerful anti-biotic drugs. Staph bacteria is typically harmless in healthy people, and at most can cause minor skin irritations. MRSA infection typically effects people with weakened immune systems the hardest (including people living with HIV/AIDS) and can be fatal or cause serious illness.

MRSA is typically spread through hand contact, which further emphasizes the importance of proper hand washing techniques. MRSA is most prevalent in hospitals and long-term care facilities. The young, elderly, and those with weakened immune systems are most at-risk. Infections are also increasingly common in shelters and among individuals who use injection drugs because of the increased possibility of open wounds, which aid in transmission of the bacteria.

Signs/symptoms

Staph infections, including MRSA, generally start as small red bumps that resemble pimples, boils or spider bites.

These can quickly turn into deep, painful abscesses that require surgical draining. Sometimes the bacteria remain confined to the skin. But they can also burrow deep into the body, causing potentially life-threatening infections in bones, joints, surgical wounds, the bloodstream, heart valves and lungs.1

Prevention

There are a number of precautions that can be taken to minimize the risk of infection. The single most effective action that can be taken is to ensure hands are washed properly, and often. This is most important for health care workers.

Other actions that can be taken1:

- **Keep personal items personal** – avoid sharing personal items such as towels, sheets, razors, clothing, athletic equipment and needles. MRSA spreads on contaminated objects as well as through direct contact.
- **Keep wounds covered** – keep cuts and abrasions clean and covered with sterile, dry bandages until they heal. The pus from infected sores may contain MRSA, and keeping wounds covered will help keep the bacteria from spreading.
- **Shower after athletic games or practices** –

shower immediately after each game or practice. Use soap and water. Don't share towels.

- **Sit out athletic games or practices if you have a concerning infection** – if you have a wound that's draining or appears infected — for example is red, swollen, warm to the touch or tender — consider sitting out athletic games or practices until the wound has healed.
- **Get tested** – if you have a skin infection that requires treatment, ask your doctor if you should be tested for MRSA. Doctors may prescribe drugs that aren't effective against antibiotic-resistant staph, which delays treatment and creates more resistant germs. Testing specifically for MRSA may get you the specific antibiotic you need to effectively treat your infection.
- **Use antibiotics appropriately** – when you're prescribed an antibiotic, take the entire dose, even if the infection is getting better. Don't stop until your doctor tells you to stop. Don't share antibiotics with others or save unfinished antibiotics for another time. Inappropriate use of antibiotics, including not taking all of your prescription and overuse, contributes to resistance. If your infection isn't improving after a few days of taking an antibiotic, contact your doctor.

Health Canada's ban on gay organ donation

AIDS Calgary

In December of 2007 Health Canada quietly revised their guidelines surrounding who may become an organ donor to exclude men who have had sex with men within the last five years. This has raised concerns across Canada that Health Canada is actively discriminating against men who have had sex with men, instead of focusing on behaviour that may make organ donation unsafe, regardless of sexual orientation.

AIDS Calgary believes that Health Canada should reverse the policy banning organ donation from men who have sex with men. The focus should be on individuals who engage in high-risk activities, regardless of sexual orientation. Hospitals have the technology to properly screen organs, so the newly implemented policy is ignorant and impractical, and could have the potential to reduce that number

of available organs to the nearly 4,000 people in Canada currently on wait lists for organ donation.

AIDS Calgary strongly urges Health Canada not to identify groups – identify behaviour. For more information on organ donation, please visit Health Canada's website at www.hc-sc.gc.ca, or the Organ Donation and Transplant Association of Canada's website at www.organdonations.ca.

AIDS Calgary response to possible federal funding reduction

AIDS Calgary

AIDS Calgary encourages the Federal Government to fulfill its \$84.4 million dollar commitment to the "Leading Together" initiative. Money for new vaccine/microbicide research should not come at the expense of a reduction in funding for existing community-based support, education, and prevention programs.

"Funding for community-based organizations has the largest impact in HIV/AIDS prevention and education in Alberta," says Susan Cress, executive director of AIDS Calgary. "We know that the direct/indirect cost associated with HIV infection is \$750,000. By preventing as few as three new HIV infections, funding for community-based programs becomes cost-effective. As the complexity and cost of caring for people infected with HIV increases, so does the cost effectiveness of funding community-based responses."

A healthy population is essential to sustain Canada's current economic growth. With a very real labour shortage across many industries, ensuring a healthy and vibrant human resource is critical. Community-based organizations such as AIDS Calgary are often the best equipped to meet the needs of at-risk and marginalized populations because we are more familiar and connected with them. By connecting with these populations, we can address prevention and educational needs effectively.

"I encourage the Federal Government to increase funding for vaccine/microbicide research, but not at the expense of community-based programs," continues Cress. "A reduction in funding for community-based programs could result in Canadians infected with, affected by, and living with HIV/AIDS not having access to the support services they need. A

reduction in funding will limit community-based organizations ability to respond to this increase."

"I implore the Federal Government to, at a minimum, fulfill its \$84.4 million commitment, and would suggest that they increase funding to \$100 million as recommended by the All-party Standing Committee on Health in June of 2003," says Cress.

We wish to work with the Federal Government to take ownership in leading the way in HIV/AIDS prevention, education, and treatment. Bold leadership is needed in order to address the HIV/AIDS crisis in Canada. While vaccine development is essential, it must not come at the cost of a reduction in funding for community-based programs and services. To do so is irresponsible, and will not solve current crisis.

Event Calendar

Western Cup XXVI – Mar. 20-22, 2008. Apollo Friends in Sports presents Western Cup XXVI – the longest running annual GLBT tournament in North America. For more information, or to register, visit www.westerncup.com.

Calgary Cares 2008: Sweet 70's – Saturday, Mar. 29, 2008. Calgary Cares returns to the EPCOR CENTRE'S Jack Singer Concert Hall. Doors at 7:00 pm. For more information, or to order tickets, visit www.calgarycares.ca.

Casino Fundraiser – May 22-23, 2008. In support of AIDS Calgary. Taking place at the Elbow River Casino.

Pride 2008 – June 7-14, 2008. Various events planned throughout the city. For more information, visit www.pridecalgary.ca.

15th Annual Bud Light Canadian Rockies International Rodeo – June 27-29, 2008 – Presented by the Alberta Rockies Gay Rodeo Association (ARGRA). For more information, visit www.argra.org.

Core Training Workshops – Mar. 15, Apr. 9, May 10, June 10, July 12, Aug. 13, Sept. 13. Increase your knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS in this free workshop. Topics covered include safer sex and HIV/AIDS, living with HIV/AIDS, and challenging stereotypes. To register, call (403) 508-2500 or email info@aidscalgary.org.

2008 AIDS Walk for Life – Sunday, Sept. 21, 2008. Details coming soon.

AIDS Calgary Programs and Services

ADVOCACY AND REFERRAL

Helping clients access appropriate services through links to other organizations. Referrals include food, shelter and counselling, along with support in getting through red tape.

COMPLEMENTARY HEALTH SERVICES

Yoga, chiropractic services, and therapeutic touch offered some Friday afternoons.

COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT

Drop-in, by-phone, or scheduled appointments.

GREENBOUGH FUND

Provides clients in need with emergency financial assistance. Includes financial assistance for transportation and child care expenses.

HEAT – HIV EDUCATION AND PREVENTION TODAY

Outreach, education and prevention resource for men who have sex with men, topics including coming out and homophobia.

SHIFT

Works with adults involved in the sex trade to assist in improving quality of life and reaching individualized goals.

HIV/AIDS INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTRE AND HOTLINE

Information on HIV/AIDS, STI's and Hepatitis C. Community resources and telephone support.

OUTREACH SERVICES

HIV education and prevention with high-risk groups. On the street, in shelters, addiction centres and more.

PRISON PROJECT

Support services and information sessions in the prison system.

NUTRITIONAL PROGRAMS

Including Coffee Connection, Community Kitchen, Good Food boxes, Holiday Hamper program, and the Positive Living lunch program.

Calgary Cares Centre

AIDS Calgary

The past several years have involved tremendous growth and transition for AIDS Calgary. As Calgary has experienced unprecedented growth and confronted new pressures in many sectors, AIDS Calgary has expanded to meet the unique needs of this diverse city of over a million people.

The number of people we continue to serve who are at risk for, affected by and living with HIV/AIDS is growing. In 2006 AIDS Calgary had 1661 contacts with registered clients in the form of counseling sessions, phone conversations, referrals, and various other counseling services. This number is a 44% increase of client contacts since 2005. Following this trend, our numbers have continued to increase in 2007.

Many people who are at risk for, affected by, and living with HIV/AIDS in Calgary have come to rely our easily accessible programs and centrally located location. Their well-being is a priority to AIDS Calgary Awareness Association. The Calgary community requires these accessible services and programs.

As Calgary's population grows and the urbanization of downtown continues, it has become increasingly difficult to secure an affordable, safe and accessible location that will allow AIDS Calgary to provide these important programs and services to our clients. With this understanding – and growing need – the Calgary Cares Centre project evolved.

The new facility has the potential to improve our existing programs and service through the following



Street-front access: increasing agency visibility and allowing clients to access our services without any barriers in a more welcoming and inviting environment.

AIDS Calgary could not provide all of our current programming and services without the generous support from our friends. With the Calgary Cares Centre project, comes a new challenge for support.

Although the new space has many excellent features, including an industrial kitchen, there is still a lot of work to be done. As the building previously housed

a day-care, significant renovations must be made to transform the location into a community-friendly space appropriate to the people we serve.

Sponsorship of the Calgary Cares Centre will allow AIDS Calgary Awareness Association to provide support and education to the Calgary Community, while ensuring that AIDS Calgary can continue to meet the growing needs its clients and staff.

The Calgary Cares Centre will help to increase the quality and level of services

provided by AIDS Calgary and will foster an environment of understanding and inclusion. Opportunities for sponsorship are offered at varying levels, and include valuable benefit of exposure to the Calgary Market.

As a sponsor of the Calgary Cares Centre, you will receive a naming opportunity for one of the new areas within the Calgary Cares Centre. These areas include kitchen, common area, board room and training rooms. To find out more, please contact Corey McKeown at cmckeown@aidscalgary.org

Call (403) 508-2500 or visit www.aidscalgary.org for details.

SAFER SEX SUPPLIES

Free condoms, lube, dental dams, gloves and information.

TRANSPORTATION AND CHILDCARE SUBSIDIES

For families with children accessing our services.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

AIDS Calgary offers volunteer opportunities in client support, HIV prevention, outreach and fundraising.

YOUTHXCHANGE

YouthXChange is an outreach program that connects with youth where they are at, at various locations in Calgary.

WOMEN'S PROJECT

Support, information and resources for women living with HIV/AIDS and women at-risk.

SPEAKERS NETWORK

HIV/AIDS prevention and education program for schools. AIDS 101: Facts about HIV, and AIDS 201: Living with HIV/AIDS.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND ADVOCACY

Support and resources for people living with HIV/AIDS who experience discrimination and human rights issues.

WORKSHOPS

Development workshops on various issues around HIV/AIDS open to all interested parties including health professionals, community partners and volunteers.

Donor profile: GlaxoSmithKline in partnership with Shire Canada

Reprinted with permission from GlaxoSmithKline

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) is a research-based pharmaceutical company devoted to discovering and developing new and innovative medicines, vaccines and health care products for Canadians and people around the world. Every day, our employees strive to improve the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer.

GSK has been recognized as one of the 50 best companies to work for in Canada

for the last six consecutive years and is a top 15 investor in Canadian research and development, contributing more than \$176 million in 2006 alone.

Our key products target five major disease areas – respiratory illnesses, diabetes, viral control, infections, and central nervous system disorders. GSK is also a leader in the important area of vaccines and we are developing new treatments for cancer. We are Canada's leading flu vaccine manufacturer and supply 75 per cent of Canadian government seasonal flu vaccine purchases. Our Consumer Healthcare

division includes dental health products, over-the-counter medicines and nutritional drinks.

GSK is designated a Caring Company by Imagine Canada, contributing more than one per cent of pre-tax profits annually through The GlaxoSmithKline Foundation and other channels to initiatives in health, science education and local community organizations.

The company maintains divisional headquarters in Mississauga, Oakville and Laval, with regional offices in Halifax, Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver. GSK employs



in partnership with



approximately 3,300 people who work to discover, develop, manufacture and market medicines, vaccines and healthcare products in Canada.

**calgary cares
Sweet
70's**



All In Good Taste !

Calgary Cares 2008 - In support of AIDS Calgary

Saturday, March 29 2008 7PM

EPCOR CENTRE'S Jack Singer Concert Hall

205 - 8th Ave SE

Tickets: \$150

Purchase your tickets online!

www.calgarycares.ca

or by calling (403) 508 2500

www.aidscalgary.org

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HOST SPONSORS

