

# Red Matters

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THE NEWSLETTER OF AIDS CALGARY AWARENESS ASSOCIATION

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"Do we accept that AIDS will be with us always – a debilitating illness that continues to steal people's health and lives – or do we redouble our efforts to stop the ravages of this preventable disease?..."

Leading Together: Canada Takes Action on HIV/AIDS (2005-2010)

On February 14th, AIDS Calgary Awareness Association launched a fundraising campaign to raise \$1,000,000 over two years. Everyone, Everywhere, Everyday is a campaign to raise money for AIDS Calgary in three critical areas: Education and Prevention, Addressing Stigma and Discrimination in the Community, and Enhancing the Quality of Life for People Living with HIV/AIDS.

Everyone, Everywhere, Everyday also represents the idea that HIV is still a presence in our community. HIV is not confined to any one segment of the population. Men, women, youth, gay, straight, rich, poor, HIV does not discriminate.

The impact of this campaign can be seen and felt by its supporters and the community at large. By supporting this initiative our outreach workers can engage Calgary's most vulnerable populations. That support will help prevent future cases of HIV. By supporting this initiative our clients learn to be better advocates for themselves. That support will help people defend their basic human rights. By supporting this initiative our clients have access to the bare neces-

sities that many of us take for granted. That support will help people support themselves.

The campaign also represents a shift in focus for the agency. In previous years, ACAA has focused on fundraising solely through events. Events can be an important component of fundraising but they are also a great deal of work and frequently a high risk endeavor. Though you will still see the Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life happening (stay tuned for more

details on this year's walk happening on September 20th), the end has come for Calgary Cares. This popular event will be sorely missed by the Calgary community; however, the increased focus on straight annual giving will ensure a lower risk and higher rate of return for ACAA.

Everyone, Everywhere, Everyday has already received a very positive response from the commu-

nity. To date the campaign has reached 25% of its goal, raising just over \$250,000 in cash and pledged dollars. We still have a ways to go to reach our goal of \$1,000,000 but with the support of the community behind us we are confident that we will meet that target.

To find out more about the campaign, to get involved with AIDS Calgary, or to make a donation please give us a call at (403) 508-2500 or email us at [info@aidscalgary.org](mailto:info@aidscalgary.org).

**HIV is not confined to any one segment of the population.**

## EVENTS CALENDAR

**Core Training** – April 8, May 9, and June 11. Time: 9:00am – 4:00pm. Location: AIDS Calgary Training Room. Increase your knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS in this free workshop. Topics covered include: safer sex & HIV/AIDS, living with HIV/AIDS and challenging stereotypes. To register, call (403) 508-2500 or email [info@aidscalgary.org](mailto:info@aidscalgary.org).

**Volunteer Open House** – April 22nd. Time: 3:30 – 6:00. Location: Calgary Cares Centre.

AIDS Calgary is excited to announce the launch of our revamped volunteer program. Join us and your fellow volunteers and donors as we introduce our new volunteer program, unveil new volunteer opportunities, and show you how to get involved with AIDS Calgary.

**CATIE HIV Treatment & HIV Transmission Workshop** – April 20th & 21st. Time: 9:00am – 4:30pm. Location: AIDS Calgary Training Room. This workshop aims to increase basic knowledge of HIV treatment as well as introduce participants to CATIE (Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange) and other HIV treatment information resources. It will also provide accessible information about recent research, in order to better inform counseling and educational messages about the biology of HIV transmission. This session is free but registration is required. Call 403-508-2500 to register.

**Friday Lunch** – April 3 (Easter Lunch), April 17, May 8 & 22, June 5 & 19. Time: 1:00pm. Location: Calgary Cares Centre. Friday lunches are an opportunity for those living with HIV/AIDS to share in a hot, nutritious meal in a safe non-judgmental environment. For registered clients of AIDS Calgary.

**Coffee Connection** – April 10 & 24, May 1, 15 & 29, June 12 & 26. Time: 2:00pm. Location: Calgary Cares Centre. Drop-in support for people living with HIV/AIDS. Coffee and light snack provided. For registered clients of AIDS Calgary.

## Save the Date!!

### 2009 Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life

September 20th, 2009

Come walk with us to raise awareness and funds in support of AIDS Calgary's prevention, education and support initiatives.

# The Laramie Project

A reaction to the murder of Matthew Sheppard, *The Laramie Project* is a play that speaks to people from all walks of life as it presents a series of monologues based on interviews with citizens of Sheppard's hometown.

Matthew Sheppard was a young, openly gay man who was attacked, beaten and left for dead by his attackers. His subsequent death from this violent, hate-motivated crime sent shock waves through the small community of Laramie, Wyoming.

Since its debut in 2000, *The Laramie Project* has been performed worldwide, raising awareness of homophobia and homophobic acts of violence. The Miscellaneous Youth Network and AIDS Calgary Awareness Association have partnered to present a staging of *The Laramie Project* in Calgary running from May 14 to 16.

"AIDS Calgary became involved with this project because we recognize the importance of addressing stigma and discrimination, including homophobia, in order to do effective HIV/AIDS relat-

ed work" remarks Client Services Team Leader, Capri Rasmussen.

The production coincides with the International Day Against Homophobia which occurs on May 17th. This year's theme is Homosexuality Knows No Borders. The International Day Against Homophobia encourages everyone to take "a moment to remember that homosexuality is a universal fact and cannot be restricted by borders."

It was just 11 short years ago that Matthew Sheppard was murdered for simply being himself. To this day, homophobia

is still a reality in our community. Take a moment this May to remember that homosexuality isn't a choice. Take a moment to remember that everyone should be able to safely walk home. Take a moment to pay homage to the life of Matthew Sheppard.

**What:** The Laramie Project

**When:** May 14 – 16, 2009

**Where:** Engineered Air Theatre  
EPCOR Centre for the Performing Arts

For more information and to inquire about purchasing tickets, please call 403-282-0127.

# To Test or Not to Test

*The following was the first article featured on The A Word, launched on December 9, 2008. To read more check out [www.aidscalgary.blogspot.com](http://www.aidscalgary.blogspot.com).*

After 25 five years of prevention, education and support work, several questions remain about community engagement and the efficacy of community based prevention initiatives. Central to this conversation is the issue of HIV testing.

Testing has always been a critical component in the fight against HIV, however, community based groups and mainstream medical professionals have struggled to normalize the HIV testing experience. HIV testing is unique as it is surrounded by a litany of public health recommendations and legislation.

HIV is criminalized in Canada which means that someone who is HIV positive is required to disclose their status to

their sexual partners. If they do not disclose their status they can be charged under Canada's criminal code. The litany of issues surrounding the criminalization of HIV is far too deep to dive into here. A critical element in regards to testing is how criminalization contributes to the ongoing stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV. People living with HIV today still face discrimination, fear, and sometimes even anger once they go public with their HIV status.

The best way to prevent HIV is by ensuring the health and wellness of those who have it and promoting a rights-based approach to sexual health and wellness information. The issue of testing has become more complex with many factors weighing in such as: confidentiality, onset of rapid testing, opt out screening instead of informed consent, and the movement of some provincial

governments to remove the necessity of pre and post test counseling.

To respond to these issues, AIDS Calgary is beginning a process to push out testing to normalize the process. Major health programs such as breast cancer or diabetes have successfully used screening processes. Although we acknowledge important differences between screening programs and HIV testing, the end product should be the same. A person undergoing testing should have no fear of stigma, discrimination or reprisals from their friends, family or community.

To begin the process of spreading information about accessible testing we are working in collaboration with ASO's across Canada and Bristol-Meyers Squibb Canada with the One Life Campaign ([www.luvU2.ca](http://www.luvU2.ca)).

We are ultimately working towards ACAA becoming a rapid testing site. With testing on site we can ensure the highest quality testing practices including anonymous testing, pre and post test counselling and additional sexual health and wellness counselling.

Welcome to the AIDS Calgary blog and I hope to see you back for more articles on important issues around HIV/AIDS. We have upcoming articles around treatment as prevention, HIV in the Aboriginal community, and the use of female condoms for anal sex. Please come back and visit each Thursday when we post a new article or sign up for our RSS feed to get our content delivered straight to your inbox.

Sincerely,

Susan Cress  
Executive Director  
AIDS Calgary Awareness Association

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

**Editor:** Amanda Chapman **Contributors:** Amanda Chapman, Susan Cress, Capri Rasmussen **Design/layout:** Rare Method **Printing:** Unicom Graphics

Red Matters c/o AIDS Calgary Awareness Association 110, 1603 10th Ave. SW, Calgary, AB T3C 0J7

**Phone:** 403.508.2500 **Fax:** 403.263.7358 **Email:** [newsletter@aidscalgary.org](mailto:newsletter@aidscalgary.org) **Web:** [www.aidscalgary.org](http://www.aidscalgary.org)



**AIDS CALGARY**  
awareness association

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