

AIDS Calgary lends a hand to Tsunami Relief

Local non-profit gives back with disaster-related HIV/AIDS issues in mind

CALGARY – In the two weeks since the devastating tsunamis struck South and South-East Asia, the world has responded with an immense show of support. This outpouring of support can also be seen in our own community, as individuals and businesses rally together. Today, a local non-profit organization announced that they would also be pitching in; a poignant effort from a group that is usually on the receiving end of donations than the giving end.

“Given what we know about the impact of war and natural disasters on HIV risk and support efforts, we felt that we needed to get together as a staff to make a contribution,” said Susan Cress, Executive Director of AIDS Calgary, “Our agency has been fortunate to have some great support from the community over the years, and our staff wanted to take this important opportunity to give back.”

According to reports, the tsunami death toll stands at over 150,000, with tens of thousands missing, 500,000 injured, one million displaced, and two million in need of food. The World Health Organization warns that such disaster-related displacement has a profound negative impact on the sexual health of women, men and adolescents. Poverty, loss of livelihood, disruption of services, breakdown of social support systems, and acts of violence combine to destroy health. The spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections are fastest in the conditions of poverty, powerlessness and social instability that accompany conflict and displacement. In addition, mass migration may bring a population of low HIV prevalence, with little knowledge of these infections or how to protect themselves, into contact with populations of high prevalence. Care and support services for people living with HIV/AIDS are also jeopardized in areas of conflict or disaster.

AIDS Calgary, which offers support for Calgarians living with HIV/AIDS and provides prevention education throughout the city, raised nearly \$700 through staff donations. The agency plans to donate these funds to UNICEF Canada, which is one of many Canadian non-governmental agencies that qualify for the Government of Canada’s tsunami disaster donation matching program.

“As a non-profit agency, we understand how every contribution counts – small or large,” explained Cress, “The HIV/AIDS epidemic has demonstrated that we are all connected in this global society, and its important for all of us to give back where and when we can.”

For more information about AIDS Calgary, call (403) 508-2500 or check their website at www.aidscalgary.org.

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AIDS Calgary Awareness Association

AIDS Calgary is a local non-profit AIDS Service Organization that offers support services to individuals who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS and provides prevention and education throughout the Calgary region. AIDS Calgary’s mission is to reduce the harm associated with HIV and AIDS for all individuals and communities in the Calgary region.