



Newsletter

" MY DOCTOR AND I "

or Learning to take care of one of your best friends.

by Kevin Brown

I have now been living with AIDS for 33 months - not a record by any means, but I'm proud of it, considering the odds. It's hard to know what keeps me going. I feel like that Timex commercial, sometimes - " takes a lickin' and keeps on tickin' ". I'm sure that my success to date comes from my positive attitude, treating my disease aggressively (but not obsessively), remaining focused and active, and, undoubtedly, my relationship with my doctor, Brian Willoughby.

My doctor and I, over these past 33 months, have certainly developed a close bond, forged by this disease. He has experienced some pretty intense scenes, both in his office and at the hospital, when the " Drama Queen " in me felt so inclined to act out. I sometimes wonder if we sound less like doctor and patient, and more like two old lovers going at it. It is a bond of mutual respect, admiration, trust, loyalty, heartache, laughter and love.

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INSIDE THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER

A report on the recent trip to Seattle.

An update on our next retreat.

Information about our new monthly members meetings

WHERE WE STAND : reports from the Standing Committees :

Our four standing committees meet every week, and is an excellent opportunity for you to share your skills with the Coalition. Full members are invited join a committee, or come as observers, and Associate members are invited to be involved at the committee level. As the Coalition grows, it is important that we get as much volunteer help as possible. To volunteer contact the chairperson of the individual committees,

Kevin Brown : Advocacy
Warren Jensen : Finance
Benoit Lanthier : Program

A message can be left with the office at 683-3381.

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE : report by Kevin Brown

Three delegates from the Coalition had a successful meeting with Dr. David Jones, President of the B.C. Medical Association, over Coalition concerns. Re : Doctor burn-out ; doctor recruitment to the AIDS field ; doctor education in both the clinical and social aspects of AIDS ; lack of clinical trials investigating experimental AIDS therapy. Dr. Jones was quite receptive to our presentation and promised to investigate solutions to our concerns.

A major letter was sent to Jake Epp, Federal Minister of Health, regarding the lack, in Canada, of clinical trials to investigate experimental drug therapy for PWA/PWARC's. No response from the minister yet. Also :

- Lobbying with the B.C. Civil Liberties Assoc. has been fruitful. They are now committed to join the fight for increased access to experimental drugs and increased research into the AIDS therapy field. Member of Parliament, Margaret Mitchell, NDP Health critic, is also interested in the situation, and will fight for us. Allies at last!
- The Canadian Public Health Association, with the help of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters is putting out new T.V. commercials featuring Canadian PWA's. No release date yet, but keep an eye out.
- Word back from Jake Epp on our request for PWA participation on the National Advisory Committee on AIDS. He's not interested. Pity. He could save himself alot of grief if he only asked PWA's what they thought. We will keep trying.
- New policy passed regarding public speakers for the Coalition. Check at the office. Also the committee will be running a workshop to train those interested in public speaking. It will be held in late March, early April. We'll keep you posted.

Upcoming Conferences ;

- The First International Conference on the Global Impact of AIDS. Held in London March 8-10, the Coalition is not able to send a rep, but one will be there from AIDS Vancouver.
- National Conference - " The Impact of Aids in Canada " May 15-18, in Toronto. The Coalition will try and send several delegates, but financial assistance is needed.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEE'S : continued

- International Conference on AIDS, June 12 - 16, in Stockholm, Sweden. The Coalitions intends to send two delegates, and is seeking Financial assistance.
- Second International Lesbian and Gay Health Conference and AIDS Forum, July 20 - 26, in Boston Massachusetts.

PERSONEL COMMITTEE : report by Fausto Ioccheli

Since the Annual General Meeting, the Personal Committee has been involved in formulating structure and policy concerning all members and paid staff. The following is an update on the activities of the personel committee:

- Membership policies have been passed by the Board
- The revised policy on the Board of Directors is ready for presentation to the Board.
- A Volunteer Workshop is scheduled for Feb. 27th at the office at 1:00 pm. This will allow all those interested in volunteering at the Coalition to become more familiar with activities and services of the Coalition.
- Job descriptions, and possible posting of positions are at this time being considered for proposal to the board. It is the personel committee's hope that the most effective and efficient structure emerges from this.
- Weekly meeting will now be held at a residence of one of the committee members. Please check the board in the office for times and locations.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE : report by Benoit Lanthier

Seven people have now joined the program committee, which meets every Wednesday, at 11:00 am in the office. Here is an update on recent activities:

- A trip to Seattle was supervised by the committee (see separate article)
- The Committee, with the help of Procreation Publishing (in Richmond) and the 12th ave Picture Company, brought five framed prints into the IDC at St. Pauls.
- On AL-721, the committee decided to provide it for B.C. residents only. Information will be made available on " how to get it " to groups and individuals in other provinces, however, the committee will consider requests from out-of-province for individuals that have no other way to get it.
- Drop-In Center ; three people have volunteered to open the Drop - In Center every Wednesday evening from 7:00 to 9:00 pm.
- The committee is currently finalizing preparation for our next retreat, and its budget for 1988.

The many areas touched by these committees are in need of your direct involvement. Please let us know of any services, or concerns you can offer.

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LIBRARY UPDATE :

The following additions have been made to the Coalition Library ;

- How to get Well : Dr. Airola's Handbook of Natural Healing : by Paavo Airola, N.D.
- Pure and Simple : Delicious recipes for Additive Free Cooking : by Marian Burros.
- AIDS: the Ultimate Challenge : by Elisabeth Kubler - Ross
- The Ultimate Secrets of Total Self Confidence : by Dr. Robert Anthony
- When Someone You Know has AIDS : A Practical Guide : Leonard J. Martelli.

The above books were all donated, and we thank those for their donations.

New Audio Cassettes :

- AIDS : A Positive Approach : by Louise L. Hay
- Love, Medicine and Miracles - Lessons about Self Healing from a surgeons experience with exceptional patients : by Birnie S. Siegel, M.D.

Suggestions ;

The library gladly accepts donations of relevant books and tapes. If you know of a good book or tape, which, in your opinion would be beneficial to PWA's, and should be purchased by the library, please let us know by placing your suggestion in the envelope next to the library. Suggestions will reviewed periodically by the Library sub-committee. Please leave your first name and telephone number in case additional information is necessary.

The complete list of Audio and Visual cassettes is being prepared, and will be included with the next Newsletter.

HATHA YOGA :

Is there anyone out there interested in regular Hatha Yoga classes? I would like to see a 1 hour session once a week (or more) somewhere in the West End. If enough people are interested, I will undertake to look for a space, an instructor and funding from the Coalition. For more information, contact Bill Ives through the office, 683-3381.

PSYCHIC OFFERS SERVICES :

Maureen McGuire, a noted local psychic, would like to work with a group of five - eight PWA's to explore the psychic connections that may exist with our illness.

I have worked with Maureen and feel it could be an intriguing and enlightening afternoon. Should there be sufficient interest, I will arrange an afternoon workshop in early March. Those of you who feel the same, and would like to participate, leave a message for Nicholas at the office, 683-3381.

MY DOCTOR AND ME : continued

With this in mind, it should follow that the doctor takes care of me, and if I acknowledge my relationship with him, then I have some obligation to take care of him.

This concept was first brought home to me about a year ago, as poor Brian and I went through a particularly "dramatic" scene.

I was sick again (as usual, suffering an assortment of ailments.) I felt so bad, I thought I would have to rally in order to die - basic shit on a stick. It was hard to remember what "well" felt like. Both my patience and temper were wearing thin. It was with cheerful mood that I entered Brian's office, wanting nothing less than my total cure for I had had enough of this disease! After all, he is the doctor, and isn't that what doctors are supposed to do? Cure people? As you might suspect, I was far from reasonable, and when the inevitable happened (he didn't cure me!), a row ensued.

Looking back I can see the "Little boy" in me (that little boy that is in all of us), was angry and in pain. All my little boy wanted was for someone to hold him and kiss everything better - like mother used to in those distant Donna Reed like days of my childhood when life certainly seemed easier. The reality of the situation is that there are no easy solutions, no magic bullets from any doctor. I'm in this fight for the duration, and I have the responsibility to accept and get on with it.

That day in the doctors office alot of crap came out that was directed at Brian. He was the easiest target to lash out at - representing that sacro-sanct medical authority that couldn't do a damned thing for me. He became my whipping boy without a thought for his feelings. This was not a role that Brian accepts willingly, and I was soon set straight. He was prepared to accept my misguided rantings that I dished out so freely, only as long as he thought they were of some benefit to me - to let me get it off my chest so it won't hurt so bad. Only I had to realize that he, too, was human. There was only so much shit he could take which he felt wasn't justified. He is more than a doctor, but also my friend. I didn't want to, or like hurting him. The scene finally ended with mutual tears and hugs, followed by my exit.

Since then, I have been thinking about the strain on all the AIDS Care team doctors. The above little scene in Brian's office was hard enough on me, and I'm sure, one that repeats itself constantly, creating an accumulative effect on these doctors that must be devastating. Doctor burn out becomes a very real problem, one that PWA's might also have to face. What do we do if our doctor has to leave because of the strain? Dr. Hilary Wass left partly because of burn out, proving the problem is real.

What I need to know is, who gives care to the caregiver? And once I have identified the problem, how can I effect a solution? I must first change my attitude - to see my doctor as a human being with similiar needs as I, not as some medical God. I need to say thank you more often, give hugs, smiles, send flowers even. Any one of a thousand things that might make his day easier. Maybe you should too.

TELL US YOUR STORIES : Gay Writers asked for submissions

Gay writers across Canada are being asked for submissions to an exciting new project coming out of Toronto. This project, an anthology called " Valley of Fire ", will use fiction, poetry, essays, and journal entries to express the rich diversity of Gay culture today - post AIDS. More than news stories, this collection will offer a view of our world beyond the superficial media view, the statistical information and the rhetoric to explore how it feels to live with AIDS, to continue our struggle for political freedom, and to develop a loving, caring community. The pandemic of AIDS has had a profound impact on every aspect of our culture. With this book it is hoped to help gay writers find a voice to articulate our strength, our compassion and our courage.

Submissions can be made to : Valley of Fire Project ; 82 Spence St. Winnepeg R3B 1Y3 or Valley of Fire Project ; 10 Walmer Rd. #508 Toronto, M5R 2W4. A token payment of \$100.00 will be made for each item accepted for publication, with all remaining royalties to be donated to Emergency Relief Funds for PWA's in Canada.

PERSONAL NOTES :

HAIRDRESSER : Hairdresser with 18 years experience will cut your hair at home any evening for \$6.00. Coffee and visit included. Inquire about perms, etc. For more information, call Terry at 685-6551.

ROOM MATE WANTED : Compatible, non-smoking room mate sought for large two bedroom apartment in the West End. Large bedroom, dishwasher, and other conveniences. Rental share \$345/mo. plus utilities. Take occupancy May 1st. Call Bill Ives, 684-3586. (You don't like my place? How about yours? I must either fill this vacancy or find other accommodation myself.)

A.A. AND HIV : Alcoholics Anonymous meets weekly in the Coalition lounge, on Thursday at 7:00 pm. These meetings are open to all ; PWA/PWARC's, HIV positive, friends, lovers and supporters.

FREE LECTURE : Rex Rundle , of " Good for You Products, Canada " and Vernon Cook a colon therapist will be holding a free lecture concerning their products and services at the Sandman Inn on March 9th at 7:30 pm.

INSPIRATIONAL CORNER :

The butterfly finally emergeth from the cocoon....

only to realize he will live but seven days.

This doesn't seem to hinder his radiance, though, or his quest to taste all that is beautiful. He flaunts his own beauty, knowing it is short lived, but hard won- in that cloistered place of his own design.

Daniel Johnson

TRIP TO SEATTLE :

Several members of the Coalition recently went down to Seattle at the invitation of the local Seattle AIDS group. A number of events were planned, among which was a highly successful conference by Dr. James Vincent, a lung specialist. He spoke about Aerosol Pentamidine, and its uses in preventing the recurrence of PCP. A videotaped conference of Dr. Collier (Head of the Seattle AIDS Research team), was also shown. We will be getting a copy of this tape, and it will be available in our library.

This event was highly successful, and plans are being made to invite Seattle PWA's to a similar conference in Vancouver.

Pierre

SIGN UP NOW FOR OUR NEXT RETREAT :

Our next retreat will be held March 28th - March 31st, in a retreat center located about a 45 minute drive from Vancouver. We will leave Vancouver on Monday night at 7:00 pm, returning the following Thursday afternoon.

We have set a limit of 20 people, and there are already 10 signatures on the sign up sheet, so please call soon if you are an interested member and want to go. The retreat will be held in a more institutional setting than those in the past. Groundrules have been laid to insure the comfort of all who go. You will be asked to agree to those groundrules before signing up for this retreat.

This marks the Coalition's third retreat, and thought has gone into just what we mean by "retreat". We agreed that a retreat should be a time of relaxation, quiet time, contemplation and sharing. This is not a time for partying.

Most expenses (accommodations, transportation, meals) will be covered by the Coalition. Some activities are planned (healing circle, meditation, support meeting) but all are optional. For more information, call the office at 683-3381.

DROP IN CENTER NOW OPEN ONE EVENING A WEEK :

Starting March 9th, our Drop-In Center will be open every Wednesday night from 7:00 to 9:00 pm.

We hope this will give those unable to come by during the day, to stop by, meet other PWA's, have a cup of coffee, and check out the library. These are not meetings as such, just an opportunity to get together on an informal basis.

Our Drop - In Center is located in the Gay and Lesbian Community Center, 1170 Bute, We hope to see you there.

ONGOING EVENTS

TUESDAY SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS are now held every week. Those meetings are open to PWA/PWARCs only. Discussion surrounds concerns held by the group at the time of the meeting. There is no specific topic, just a chance to talk. Support group meetings are held every Tuesday night from 7:30 to 8:30 in Room 127, Main floor of the Comox Building, 1056 Comox St. at St. Paul's Hospital.

HEALING CIRCLE: Every Sunday night at 7:30 P.M. This one hour comprises two visualisations and hands on work. A time for relaxation, healing and getting centered. Everybody is welcome. It's in Room 113 of the Comox Building, 1056 Comox, at St. Paul's Hospital.

NEXT MONTHLY MEMBERS' MEETING: MARCH 7th, 11:30 AM AT THE
OFFICE

All members are invited to attend. The four committee chairpersons will give an update and answer questions about each committee's work. Also, an update on the activities of the Board of Directors. Members will be informed and asked to give their input on issues currently being dealt with.

We see the monthly members' meetings as an occasion for members to get information and voice their suggestions on the Coalition's projects, activities and services.

Hope to see you there.

ANYONE interested in contributing articles or information for the newsletter is asked to get in touch with Benoit or Nicholas. We also need people for the editorial committee and for monthly mail-outs.

MEDITATION CLASSES : " LIVING IN THE MOMENT " : A meditation class for PWA/PWARCs, sero-positives, friends and supporters. Insight meditation teaches us to be mindful and present in every circumstance in our lives, and helps us to develop equanimity and calm. The class includes instructions in sitting, as well as exploring the basic Buddhist principles which form the foundation of the practice. Time is spent at the beginning of each class exploring issues particular to AIDS. Class meets every Tuesday from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. For further information, please contact Kristen at 872-0431.

REIKI : Reiki is a gentle, yet powerful healing art which is excellent in the management of fear, pain, and stress in general. It is now offered to Coalition members free of charge. For further information, contact Jackie at the office.