

THE UPDATE

 AIDS Vancouver Island

FEBRUARY/MARCH 1995

Count down to Valentine's Day! Many of you have been out selling *Artists For AIDS Lottery* tickets. Many of you have also received tickets from us in the mail.

Most members of the Vancouver Island AIDS Society (that's us) received 5 tickets by mail. Please sell them if you can! Remember that the ticket stubs and payments need to be received by our downtown office *no later than 13 February!*

On behalf of the Victoria AIDS Respite Care Society, the Victoria Persons With AIDS Society, and AIDS Vancouver Island, let me thank you for making the lottery a success.

Currently there are almost 3000 tickets outstanding, which means \$30,000 of potential revenue for the three participating organizations. Many of those tickets are in your hands! So, in early February, expect a call from a volunteer who's phoning to ask how you're doing with sales, and to remind you to return your tickets as soon as possible. Those of you who've sold all you can, or who have tickets and don't feel comfortable selling them, for whatever reason, *please return them so that others can have a chance!*

What follows is a run down of Lottery logistics and events that will take place between now and Valentine's Day. If you've questions, or are interested in helping us with ticket promotional

Artists for AIDS LOTTERY 1995



activities, please call JoAnn at 384-2366.

- Paintings are on display at The Ginger Group, 733 Johnson Street, until Valentine's Day, so if you've not seen them yet, come down and have a look!
- Lottery promotional spots are running on CHEK 6, The Q, and in the Times-Colonist.
- Volunteers are selling tickets every weekend in the Victoria Eaton Centre. Tickets will also be sold in Mayfair Mall during the last week of the Lottery. If you're interested in helping, we need you!
- Rumour's Night Club is promoting tickets during a February 1st drag show. BJ's is also selling tickets.
- Tickets are also available for sale at the following locations:

Benetton, The Barton Leier Gallery, the Sally Cafe, the Ginger Group, Starbucks Coffee stores, the Fran Willis Gallery, The Body Shop, Herald Street Art World and at AVI, VARCS and PWA.

- On Valentine's Day (14 February), an accounting firm will draw the 12 winners at AVI's office at noon. Winning ticket holders will be contacted by phone that day.
- Media releases will be broadcast on the day of the draw, informing the public, and participating businesses of the list of winners, the revenue, and thanking Victoria for its support.

For more information, please call me!

Erik Ages / Coordinator, Communications & Public Affairs

HELPLINE: 384-4554 (GR

Reference Material
NOT FOR LOAN
AVI Resource Centre

NE: 1-800-665-AIDS (2437)

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

The commentary, "THE BIG PICTURE" by Kobe ter Neuzen on page 5 of the previous UPDATE, compels me to pose a few rhetorical questions to the author and offer an even bigger picture.

I disagree that HIV is a "beautiful magnificent life form," even for a brief moment. In fact, microbiologists debate whether the term "life" is applicable to viruses. HIV only gets "switched on" (a better term) after expropriating your own cellular DNA factory. Then, it becomes a lean, mean, perpetual reproduction machine whose sole mission is copying itself (with your equipment) for all eternity or until it kills the host...whichever comes first.

It doesn't give a flying fig about you, your life, or your offer of a cup of tea.

Have you watched your best friends slowly transformed into living skeletons wrapped in discoloured, rotting flesh, looking like the former residents of Auschwitz? Do you seriously believe this is "magnificent"?

Have you seen a lifelong friend with a passion and talent for art suddenly go blind, fall into the lowest pit of depression, then go insane?

Please don't ask me to consider this sequence of events as "beautiful."

Have you been with a partner tortured with pain to the point where he spends his few remaining weeks in a morphine delirium and, during a rare lucid moment, asks you to kill him?

And you have the appalling bad taste to suggest that I "LOVE" the causative agent?

Have you seen your best girlfriend, doubled up with cramps, spending 10 hours a day, seven days a week on the toilet, if she has the strength to make it there before the initial daily explosion.

Do you understand the implications of asking us to "nurture" this death machine?

You've asked the readership "...just for a moment..." to consider your Big Picture. I would ask you, just for a moment, to step out of the Twilight Zone, and open your eyes. There are an estimated 22 million people infected with this "beautiful, magnificent" creature and 6000 new cases every day. At the present time, we know that over 95% will die within 15 years of initial exposure (faster if you live in a third world country and/or are poor). AIDS is not pretty and people dying of AIDS are not pretty either. I am neither "warmed" or "awed" by this creature; nor do I wish to "nurture" it. If I could, I would, like smallpox, have it wiped off the face of the earth. It is anti-life. It is a monster. It is our generations's Nightmare from Hell.

There are a thousand different coping strategies and magnificently ingenious variations of denial among people with HIV. Sugar-coating the AIDS pandemic does not make it taste any sweeter. Those who enjoy good health or are lucky enough to be long-term non-progressors can well afford the luxury of such grand and lofty "cosmic" sentiments. The rest of us are forced, whether we like it or not, to deal with the horror and devastation created by your warm and fuzzy, cute and cuddly, awesomely beautiful and magnificent "friend."

Sincerely,

David Hillman

Member, AIDS Vancouver Island

THE UPDATE

The Update is published monthly as a service to members. One-year subscriptions are available for \$15.00. Typed submissions and letters to the Editor are welcome, c/o AVI #304-733 Johnson Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 3C7. The Update will print no sexist, racist or homophobic copy and will cover issues and events from perspectives which will initiate positive change in the work done by and for AIDS Vancouver Island. The appearance of any advertisements, treatment information or letters to the editor, do not imply endorsement by AIDS Vancouver Island. Submissions may be edited for conciseness and grammatical correctness. AIDS Vancouver Island will not be responsible for errors or omissions.

Erik Ages (Acting Editor), Daphne Armstrong (Editor on Holiday!)

Frances H., Lois M.

EDUCATION

To the great Speakers of the AVI Bureau, here are some stats. For the period April - November '94 inclusive you facilitated approximately one hundred and eighty speaks; this was for the C.R.D. and Island Outreach combined. The busiest months during this time were April, May, June and October when we had 30 speaks a month. During this same time, we held Speakers' Bureau Training which resulted in a total of approximately 12 available, qualified speakers. We also distributed throughout the CRD and Vancouver Island approximately six thousand pamphlets/posters.

As the intake person for most of the above speaks during '94, I realised more and more people were asking not just for AIDS 101 information or ("Oh No !! Not Another AIDS Talk") but rather - what are some of the issues that a person with AIDS (PWA) has to deal with every day? What does someone do when they first learn they are infected? What are the consequences for a mother and/or child when learning of an HIV infection in one or both of them? or Where will we be in terms of HIV/AIDS in the year 2000?

Now we are into '95, and we are looking forward to another Speakers Bureau Training on the evenings of Feb 2nd, 7th and 9th. I have been able to arrange some great trainers, and hopefully we will have some fun, as well as serious moments, and have some more dynamic speakers on board.

We are also looking at the possibility of having Drama/Improvisation workshops for teens, to do a tour of Victoria high schools with healthy lifestyle/sexuality messages regarding alcohol, drugs and HIV, therefore using teens to help teens. This could possibly be done as short and sassy presentations during lunch or recess time.

The 9 poster series from Alberta is proving a great success; we now also have the Skills for Healthy Relationships (5 copies only have been reproduced, as they are huge) for anyone who needs to refer to them. We have at the moment 115 titles of pamphlets available. Thanks to Patrick and Doug for installing the new pamphlet racks to hold some of these.

I was at the Family Caregivers Network Society this week, as they are wanting to start a Speakers Bureau and they asked me to share some strategies that we use at AVI to help the Bureau work, not only for education messages, but also for the speakers and the participants involved. Having said that, the old saying, "you can't please everyone all the time, only some of the people, some of the time" is important to remember. It's a bit late to say have a great '95 but have it anyway.

Barb Chester
Education Assistant

ISLAND OUTREACH PROJECT

Needle Exchange Up & Running!

After an expected slow start, the Cowichan Valley Needle Exchange is beginning to pick up steam and clients. The Exchange operates, with help from volunteers, two evenings per week. Our method of delivery strikes many people as unusual: it runs out of my car. We sit outside a bar in Duncan where people can come by and talk to us and pick up condoms, clean syringes, bleach, water, etc. The car is marked by two magnetic signs which simply say "Outreach," a term which does not have a stigma attached to it, but still attracts people. I also have a cellular telephone that clients can call in order to arrange to meet us at a site of their convenience. In a rural and semi-rural area like the Cowichan Valley it is important for people to retain their anonymity. We provide that by going to meet people at their homes or at some other place that they (and we) agree is safe.

The Needle Exchange is guided by a community-based steering committee that meets on a monthly basis. Its members include people from the First Nations community, public health, the RCMP, and someone from the Cowichan Valley AIDS Network (CVAN), among others.

In February, Darlene Taylor (CVAN) and myself will appear on a local T.V. show on Shaw Cable to talk about needle exchange and other aspects of AIDS. In the coming months, the Needle Exchange hopes to give presentations in area schools and to community groups. Before Christmas the program offered a presentation at the Cowichan Valley Alternative School that was well received and a lot of fun. In conjunction with CVAN and members of the Nanaimo and District AIDS Collective (NADAC), we also held two successful workshops on AIDS at the Duncan United Church that were equally well received. That's all for now.

Peter MacDougall
Community Development Worker

Healing Circle

Beginning in January, Support Services, with assistance from the Native Friendship Centre, will have healing circles for all First Nations PWAs. The dates and times for the healing circles are not yet finalized, but we will have the time available after December 1st. For more information, please call Roshni or leave a message for Pat at 384-2366.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Support Services had a busy 1994. In November, we hosted a "Mom and Kids Day" for HIV+ women and their children. Six moms and ten children attended the event. The day provided an opportunity for children to meet each other with the hope that they would build safe and supportive networks of friends where they could talk about issues relating to HIV. Thanks to Hannah and Brenda of the Women and AIDS Project and to the women of the Lighthouse Counselling Group for making the day a success.

We would also like to thank everyone who joined us at the PWA Christmas Party and contributed all the wonderful food. It was the perfect way to close the year.

On to 1995. The year began with the Think Positive Workshops. These workshops are co-sponsored by the Victoria Persons with AIDS Society (VPWAS), Victoria AIDS Respite Care Society (VARCS) and the Education and Support Services departments of AVI. The workshops will be held on alternate Tuesdays between 2 & 4 pm in the Living Room at AVI. They're open to PWAs and their partners/caregivers. For an agenda of the workshops, contact any of the above mentioned agencies.

Beginning January 9, Support Services has an additional staff member. Ingrid Kuran of the School of Social Work, University of Victoria, is doing her fourth year practicum with us until March 31. She can be found (working) in the Living Room.

SUPPORT SERVICES VOLUNTEER TRAINING! Mark it down in your calendars - March 25 and 26, 1995!! Contact Roshni, Alicia or Ingrid to register. We're expecting a long line up at the office as soon as this reaches you, so register early!

The Quilting Project has started up again and meets every Monday at 7 pm. If you're interested in doing a quilt, or wish to make a lap quilt for a PWA, contact Alicia, or just drop by.

INCOME TAX PREPARATIONS FOR PWAs! If you'd like to get your income tax return completed by a professional, please drop all the appropriate papers off to Roshni or Alicia. Shirley White, an employee of H&R Block, has volunteered to get your taxes in on time!

Well, the deadline for the Update was two hours ago and this is the best my brain could come up with. Just a reminder to our PWA members to read the Victoria PWA Society's news in the Update for the many events which they're hosting. Until the next Update deadline...

Roshni Narain
Acting Coordinator, Support Services

VOLUNTEER NEWS

Happy 1995 to all! This year is gearing up to be a busy year for AVI and we will need the help of all volunteers to reach our goals. One of my goals is to have time sheets (here she goes again...) from each volunteer in 1995 (impossible you say?) Thanks to Joseph, who has been inputting hours to my new database, we now know who hasn't sent in his/her hours and a whopping 1/2+ of you haven't, on a consistent basis!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

*Fundraising Committee - volunteers required to form the core of and to help determine the future direction of AVI's fundraising activities. If you have creative ideas, experience in planning events, proven leadership and fundraising abilities and enjoy a challenge, we need you!

*Volunteer Profiles -our volunteers outnumber staff 10 to 1 and make AVI the vibrant organization that it is. I invite you to put pen to paper to describe your experience as an AVI volunteer or perhaps those of you with interviewing/writing skills would like to profile another volunteer for the next edition of The Update.

*Artists for AIDS Lottery - our thanks to those you who have been selling lottery tickets. In February we will continue to staff a table at Victoria Eaton Centre each weekend until February 12 and Mayfair Mall February 9 - 12. The shifts are 2 1/2 - 3 hours.

*Volunteer Fair at Hillside Mall February 12 - Volunteer Victoria's annual volunteer fair where we can promote the work of AVI and our volunteers. Take a shift or just drop by to say hello.

National Volunteer Week in Canada is April 23 - 29 this year. Stay tuned for details of our Annual Volunteer Recognition Night!

JoAnn Reid
Coordinator of Volunteer Services

OVER 40?

Prime Timers Victoria is a social, recreational, and educational organization for gay and bisexual men over 40. We meet on the third Sunday of each month at James Bay United Church, 511 Michigan Street, starting at 3 PM.

Come on down and check us out, or feel free to contact us at 727-6669.

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Port Alberni begins new community group

Local health unit nurses, hospice volunteers, family members, and students recently met at the Port Alberni Health Unit to address the growing needs of their community in preparing for HIV/AIDS.

Mary Heatherington, Palliative Care Coordinator with West Coast General Hospital, is one of the driving forces behind the new group, working with a team of volunteers who have developed a committee known as PASTA - the Port Alberni Support Team Association on HIV/AIDS. Mary has worked with a number of PWAs and their families in recent years and knows that this is just the beginning for Port Alberni.

At a planning meeting & potluck on January 17th highlighted by AIDS 101 by Shari Dunnet, Dale Weston, and volunteer Daniel from the Speakers Bureau, AVI met with more than 20 people to draft goals & objectives for the new group. Common to many communities across British Columbia, support and education are the key ingredients for their first endeavours.

PASTA is a unique group of individuals with strong representation from Social Services, Hospitals, Health Units, and People affected by HIV/AIDS. Melanie Maloney, a recent high school graduate, has also been selected as a participant in the Canadian AIDS Society Youth Issues Committee which plans to host a series of consultations with youth across British Columbia in the spring of 1995.

The Update welcomes the chance to follow the progress of PASTA in the coming year. Welcome Aboard!

Increased involvement in CAS Working Committees.

A number of staff and volunteers at AVI have joined forces with colleagues from across Canada in working with the Canadian AIDS Society on national committees dealing with issues ranging from income assistance to youth to board policies and procedures.

Over the past six months several individuals have been recruited from Vancouver Island to sit on national working committees. Beginning with John Hancock, [AVI volunteer and Prime Timers member extraordinaire] who was recently selected to attend a national working meeting on the future of fundraising Walks For AIDS. His work on the Victoria Walk committee has been instrumental in helping schedule this fall's walk in collaboration with other centres across Canada.

As well, Dale Weston has been working with the CAS Nominations Committee as Pacific regional rep in helping develop a process for recruiting board and committee members

with CAS. Strong, representative, and skilled leadership is crucial for a national board such as CAS and the work of the committee will hopefully provide a framework for this to happen each year.

Roshni Narain is also involved with two committees dealing with Income Security and Housing Issues for PWAs - her experience in working with PWAs in a smaller urban centre and rural communities has been an important contribution to the make-up of this committee.

Finally, Melanie Maloney of Port Alberni currently sits on the CAS Youth Issues Committee as the lone rep from Vancouver Island. As a young woman who recently graduated from high school, Melanie brings an upbeat blend of voices from a rural fishing/logging community to this national work.

Does all of this mean extra dollars spent on committees with little impact on Vancouver Island? Yes but no. A very meagre budget, including shared accommodations and economy travel does provide for attendance at some committee meetings in other parts of the country. More often, the creative use of technology in using conference calls and faxes allows for one of the world's largest countries to bring together many diverse voices at a fraction of the cost of government or industry counterparts. The information which returns to our community is invaluable and guides our work in the coming years. Stay tuned for more information in the coming months on the work of these individuals at the national level.

GAY COMMUNITY OUTREACH

AIDS VANCOUVER ISLAND LAUNCHES SAME-SEX SAFER SEX CAMPAIGN

AIDS Vancouver Island began the new year with a safer sex campaign for gay men and men who have sex with men in the Victoria and Island areas. In cooperation with Brent McTavish of BAM Productions, we began producing a series of erotic postcards for distribution to gay venues on the Island. The campaign's slogan is simple: "Love safely."

The postcards are already a success. Distributed to bar and bath patrons free of charge, the cards display erotic images in conjunction with sexual health messages and HIV/AIDS helpline information for Island residents. "They're tasteful; they're really well done," says David Tillson of Rumors Cabaret. "People are taking them home."

Aaron Severs, Coordinator of Education programs, including gay community outreach initiatives, explains that the

cards are designed to be collectable. "We want men to pick them up and take them home. Too often safer sex materials remain unread. Either they're too complicated or people don't feel comfortable being seen taking them." Severs indicates that messages such as "Hard Bodies, New Attitudes" are deliberately oblique. "Gay men don't necessarily need any more details about safer sex. Rather, the gay community needs a sense of entitlement and pride to actually *practice* what we already know."

In cooperation with committed local photographers, AVI will produce and distribute four sets of safer sex postcards annually. The first set was released in time for the New Year; the second set is scheduled for distribution in time for Valentine's Day.

NEW DRUG INFORMATION LINE

A new toll-free telephone information line will be established to assist seniors across BC with questions regarding medication use, Health Minister Paul Ramsey announced recently.

The British Columbia Seniors Medication Information Line (BC SMILE) is a joint effort of the Ministry of Health, the BC Drug and Poison Information Centre, the pharmaceutical industry, the Science Council of British Columbia and the University of British Columbia faculty of pharmaceutical sciences.

"This project is an example of government, health care agencies, post-secondary institutions and the private sector working together to improve the quality of life for seniors in BC," Ramsey said.

The information line will operate from the pharmaceutical sciences faculty at UBC. Seniors, their caregivers and family members can call the line with any drug-related questions, including adverse reactions, drug and food interactions, and the misuse of medications. Inquiries will be answered by a pharmacist working in conjunction with the drug and poison information centre.

"BC SMILE will enable undergraduate students in the health care disciplines to develop important communication and research skills, and to become better aware of the needs of seniors," said John McNeill, dean of UBC's faculty of pharmaceutical sciences.

The project is expected to begin in April of this year and will cost approximately \$315,000 over three years. Funding will be provided by government, the pharmaceutical industry and other institutions. To date, 31 pharmaceutical

manufacturers have pledged a total of \$279,000. The Ministry of Health's Pharmacare program has committed to fund the balance of the program.

"We know consumers want more information about the medications they take," said Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association president Judy Erola. "BC SMILE is a valuable service that will go a long way to meeting that need."

Canadian Drug Manufacturers Association president Brenda Drinkwater said, "We applaud initiatives such as BC SMILE, which provides seniors with important information about the many prescription medication alternatives available today, including safe, affordable generic drugs."

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Why just for seniors?! People living with HIV, among others, depend on an array of medications and therapies for their well being and survival (at least this is the intent). Interested PLWHIV/AIDS are encouraged to phone the Ministry of Health's communications office at 952-1881 (a local call in Victoria) to ask pointed questions about the mandate of the new line and the scope of information such a service can responsibly offer over the telephone. When the 1-800 service becomes operational in mid-April 1995, try it out and report back to the Update. We'll provide you with SMILE's number in our April issue (it's not yet available).

RESOURCE CENTRE

Debbie, Elizabeth, Aaron, Barb and I would like to welcome Nicole as a new co-volunteer to the Resource Centre. We are very excited to have your help and input.

Since November we have received many new videos and we are grateful to Kit for helping us keep up. Among some excellent videos are: *Skills For Healthy Relationships* (#170); *No Rewind* (#177); and *Out* (#172). *Skills For Healthy Relationships* helps make teens aware of, among other things, their feelings and AIDS awareness. It is an hour video full of strategies and survival skills for the 90s. Teens discussing AIDS awareness, peer pressure and more is what *No Rewind* is all about. Although the quality of this 24 minute video is fair to good, the message for teens is excellent: "Get real, it CAN happen to you!" *Out*, an NFB video also geared to teens, is 60 minutes in length and focuses on gay and lesbian youth and their personal stories, fears and the pressures they feel.

I am happy to write that our Resource Centre IS being USED both for personal knowledge and school projects.

Rowena Peters

VICTORIA PERSONS WITH AIDS SOCIETY

Activities for February/March

OFFICE: 613 Superior Street. HOURS: Monday to Friday 11:00am to 4:00pm. Phone 383-7494.

TOLL FREE NUMBER FOR OUT-OF-TOWN MEMBERS: 1-800-434-2959.

SUPPORT GROUP FOR MEN WITH HIV: a professionally facilitated support group for constructively processing life-issues affecting men living with HIV. A commitment to success is the only requirement. Format and direction to be set by the participants. For info or to register, call Jim at the office.

SOCIAL/SUPPORT GROUP FOR CHILDREN OF POSITIVE PARENTS: A monthly Saturday afternoon pizza/video/social alternating with a professionally facilitated support group for children dealing with emotional issues around their parents' status. For more information phone the office and the coordinator will contact you. [Parents must accompany their children].

PWA HEALTH EDUCATION SERIES #47: "FOREFRONT: AN HIV UPDATE" hosted by Dr. Catherine Hankins, Center for AIDS Studies, Montreal General Hospital. Current events and issues at the forefront of HIV/AIDS research and treatment. Survival benefits of Acyclovir/Zidovudine Co-therapy. A Yokohama Retrospective. Thursday, February 9 at 1:00.

#48: **DIAGNOSIS AND MANAGEMENT OF DIARRHEA IN HIV/AIDS** by Dr. Stan Stordy. Thursday, February 16 at 1:00. Video: 41 mins

#49: **"HOPE OR HYPE: THE DUBIOUS, THE DANGEROUS, THE OUTRIGHT SILLY AND A FEW POTENTIALLY USEFUL THERAPIES FOR HIV."** An update on popular but unproven therapies for HIV. A lecture by Mark Bray RN BSN, Treatment Information Specialist, Seattle Treatment Education Project. Metropolitan Untied Church Hall, 907 Pandora St. Friday, February 24 at 1:00 pm.

51. **"MANAGING PAIN IN ADVANCED HIV DISEASE"** By Dr. Millies Cuming. Thursday March 2 at 1:30 (video: 48 mins)

#52: **"DERMATOLOGICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF HIV/AIDS"** by Dr. Alastair McCloud. Thursday March 9 at 1:30 (video 57 mins)

#53: **"THE CHANGING SPECTRUM OF AIDS INDEX DISEASES IN CANADA"** BY Dr. Steffanie Strathdee. Thursday March 16 at 1:30 (video 32 mins)

#54: **"MEDICAL UPDATE"** by Dr. Mark Katz and **"ADVANCES IN THE PROPHYLAXIS OF OPPORTUNISTIC INFECTIONS"** By Dr. Peter Wolfe. Thursday March 23 at 1:30 pm (video 1 hr 40 mins).

RED RIBBON DINNERS PROJECT: Home delivery of a week's supply of prepared frozen meals for people too ill or exhausted to cook. Eligibility criteria available from the office. FREE.

FOOD BANK: orders in by Wednesday 4:00pm. Pick-up Thursday between 3:00 and 4:00pm.

ACUPUNCTURE CLINIC: by Dore Vanden Heuvel, DCTM. Thursday, 9:00 to 4:00 pm Openings for new clients. By appointment. By donation.

DEEP RELAXATION AND MEDITATION: Tuesdays at 4:00 pm Facilitated.

TREATMENT SUPPORT GROUP: (for HIV+ persons and their caregivers/partners) An informal sharing of information and personal experiences (good and bad) related to the medical management HIV/AIDS: drugs, side effects, complementary therapies and other related topics. Facilitated, confidential. Last Friday of each month at 1:00

MEDICAL ADVOCATE TO THE HIV COMMUNITY: a monthly forum for the HIV/AIDS community and their representatives. The advocate will discuss current research on HIV management, answer general questions on AIDS and act as an advocate/ombudsman and liaison with the professional community when issues arise around care.

KUDOS: a belated and sincere thank-you to Canadian Springs and Devon Property Management for the truck loads of food, and to the many others for the turkey, the cheques, the grocery vouchers etc., all making for a very fat Christmas.

HOPE OR HYPE?

Immunoquackery: it's not in the dictionary yet but it's in our neighbourhood. It's nothing new. It's a consequence of our inability to effectively control or stop the progress of HIV in those infected. Current strategies include licensed antiviral with a limited, short-term benefit and potentially very unpleasant side-effects. Many PWAs supplement their doctor-approved regime with a variety of unproven agents in the hope of either strengthening the immune system or suppressing the HIV.

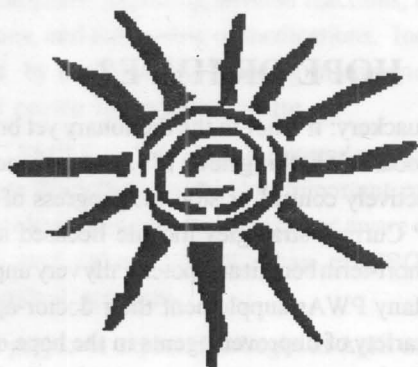
Unfortunately, there is very little reliable information on whether these therapies are doing anything useful beyond the

placebo effect. Many of them are sold based on personal testimonials and by charismatic promoters. Sellers of over-the-counter "immune boosters" offer no scientific evidence to prove the claim that their products boost anything other than profits. With few exceptions, most of these therapies have not been subjected to well designed, controlled trials that would provide some much needed answers. This does not mean that unproven treatments are useless. The Potential may be there, but people need accurate data in order to make informed decisions about which options are worth pursuing.

Desperation and gullibility can lead to some tragic consequences. Many people don't know how to assess unproven therapies nor do they understand the "red flag" warnings when they are being conned. There are documented stories of PWAs who accidentally killed themselves while administering a therapy which they believed would improve their condition; and others who have wasted thousands of dollars on useless agents.

As part of its continuing education series to the AIDS affected population, The Victoria Persons With AIDS Society is pleased to announce the return of Mark Bray, RN, BSN, and AIDS Treatment Education Specialist with the Seattle Treatment Education Project. Mark will provide the community with the latest research on what's looking useful and what isn't among the most popular of the complementary therapies. The lecture, "HOPE OR HYPE: THE DUBIOUS, THE DANGEROUS, THE OUTRIGHT SILLY, AND A FEW POTENTIALLY USEFUL THERAPIES FOR HIV" will take place at the Metropolitan United Church Hall, 907 Pandora Street, Friday, February 24 at 1:00pm. The lecture is free and open to the public.

For further information call 383-7494.



VANCOUVER Island AIDS Society

(non-profit registration # 0756957-11-28)

MANDATE

AIDS Vancouver Island shall confront Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, prevent its spread through education, support all those affected by the disease, and advocate on their behalf.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

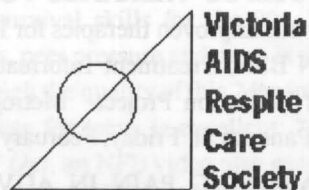
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**Victoria
 AIDS
 Respite
 Care
 Society**

611 Superior Street
 Victoria, B.C. V8W 1V1
 Phone: (604) 388-6220
 Facsimile: (604) 388-0711