



Talking about Community Outreach

By Walter Quan

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“Community” is a hot topic these days. I like to think of community as a circle of those folks who care—folks who are brought together through a commonality or around some catalyst. It surprises me when other folks consider community to be small in scope. Focusing on the small, the divisive or the fragmented, narrows the approach and fails to embrace the whole.

So what is community? Folks reading VOX are somehow connected to AIDS Vancouver Island and are part of its community. Where we gather together around an idea or an issue or a cause, we're a community. Sometimes we don't even have to gather physically. For example, I belong to a small community of “nerds” on the Internet who meet at IRC:#gayvictoria. Although we chat and inquire about each other's days, loves and/or sex lives(!), I've never actually met some of my favourite correspondents face to face!

One old boss who is now a friend describes his life as a series of one-on-one interactions. Although people may bring organizations with them, it's the face-to-face and person-to-person discoveries that connect aspects of his life, both personal and professional. He used to say that the organization meant nothing to him, but the individual in the interaction was the key.

Which leads me to talk about outreach. Once, a very long time ago, when I was assisting with diversity training work, someone exclaimed, “When you talk about outreach, what you really mean is gathering in. You have no intention of hearing me or really meeting me as me. How about finding out what I really want?”

The participants at that session—with all their good intentions, well wishes, and good-for-you messages—were astounded.

Why wouldn't anyone be interested in hearing what was good for them? Anyone, of course, being “the other”, “the outsiders”, and those who simply hadn't heard the good word. I think, and hope, that the kind of outreach work that is done in our communities—not just by AVI—is true outreach, not just a colonial “take this, it's good for you”, but a real meeting of folks and a building of community.

Our community, whichever scope you wish to choose, includes all kinds of folks who may choose different identifiers of gender, age, size, sexual-or-other orientation, ethnicity, ability, literacy, class, etc. etc. etc. . . . or not! We gather because we care about, are affected by, or are infected by HIV/AIDS. Let's rejoice in our community and our diversity—see you at the Walk!

In this issue of VOX, Marc Mertens, Gay Community Outreach Worker at AVI and editor of *Men's Briefs*, has been invited to include an issue of his newsletter for men who have sex with men. You will find the contribution made by him and his team on pages five through eight.

Our editorial aim at VOX is to highlight different aspects of HIV/AIDS and the impact it has had on various communities. If you want to read about groups we haven't covered contact Shelley Motz at 384-2366.

New Board of Directors for 1999/2000

By Ruthann Tucker, Executive Director

Over 35 members and approximately 25 guests attended AVT's Annual General Meeting on June 26, where Karen Muirhead, the Executive Director of ANKORS and the Vice-Chair of the Canadian AIDS Society, spoke to members about providing HIV/AIDS education and support programs within a rural setting.

1999/2000

Board of Directors

June Beattie (Treasurer)
Michael Cumes (Vice
Chair)
Ron Hollingshead
Trish McOrmond
Ingrid Olson (Secretary)
Nicole Sawka
Carolyn Showler
David Swan (Chair)

But our members did not attend the AGM only to listen to Karen. They also came to review the program activities of last year (1998/99), discuss and vote on any special resolutions and elect members to the Board of Directors and the position of Chair.

Regarding special resolutions, the membership voted in favour of reducing the number of positions on the Board from 13 to nine, including the Chair and the appointed position from VPWAS.

As for the elections, I am pleased to announce that David Swan has been re-appointed to the position of Chair/President of AIDS Vancouver Island. David brings to his work on the Board a long history of involvement within the HIV/AIDS community in Victoria. David has been a volunteer/member with VPWAS and VARCS as well as having been a staff person with AVI a number of years ago. As a person living with HIV, David brings an important focus to the Board of Directors and sees a priority in ensuring that our programs and services are accessible to those who need them.

New to the "at large" positions on the Board are Carolyn Showler and Ron Hollingshead. Carolyn has been volunteering with Street Outreach Services for a number of years and is also a member of the Education Committee of the Board. Ron Hollingshead, an active member in the Nanaimo office, brings a more rural perspective to the Board. Re-elected are Nicole Sawka (Victoria), Trish McOrmond (Victoria)

and Michael Cumes (Tofino). Members were elected to the Executive Committee (see inset) at the first monthly meeting of the new Board, which was held Monday, August 9th at AVT's Victoria office.

Thanks, WHIP Survey was a Success By Erica Williamson

There is a newly revamped women's outreach project at AVI called WHIP (Women's Health Information Project) which has a focus on sexual health issues and a desire to empower women to make positive sexual choices.

At the recent Pride festival in Victoria we had a safer sex display and handed out over 200 sex paks. We also surveyed over 120 women about the types of services they would like to see WHIP provide and about their attitudes towards safer sex.

In the future, based on the

results of the survey, WHIP will be holding workshops and forums on women's health issues. We will also be developing a resource library devoted to women's health issues and publishing information on support services and activities available to women in Victoria and

surrounding communities.

WHIP would like to thank Eden Guest House on Salt Spring Island which generously donated a two-night stay as an incentive for

women to fill out the survey. The lucky winner, Veronica Thompson, will enjoy naturally landscaped gardens, breathtaking scenery and an amazing view across Fulford Harbour. Thanks to Paul and Tim at Eden for helping to make the survey such a success.

VOX - The Voice of the Victoria HIV/AIDS Centre

VOX is published bi-monthly by AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI). Typed submissions and letters to the editor are welcome c/o The Victoria HIV/AIDS Centre Attn: VOX #304 - 733 Johnson St., Victoria, BC, V8W 3C7, or via email at sleblanc@avi.org. Letters to the editor should not exceed 200 words and must include name, address and telephone number. Your name can be withheld by request. VOX will print no sexist, racist or homophobic copy and will cover issues and events pertaining to the lives of those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. The appearance of any advertisements, treatment information or letters to the editor does not imply endorsement by AVI. Submissions may be edited for conciseness and grammatical correctness.

AVI will not be responsible for errors or omissions.

Editorial Committee

Sian Miller, Cheryl Price, Walter Quan, Shelley M. Motz - Editor

Calendar of Events September 1999

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat./Sun.
Stop by the Drop-In & ask about programs not listed here. Hours: 9am-5pm Monday-Friday 5pm-8pm Wednesday noon-1pm lunch is served (unless otherwise noted)		1 Video Night @ the Centre Drop-in art 7-9pm @ SOS	2 Gay Men's Discussion Group 7pm @ AVI Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	3 Free Tai Chi 7pm @ SOS	4 5 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS
6 Christian Support Group 7-9pm @ SOS	7 Noon Group 12-1 @ the Centre Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	8 Drop-in art 7-9pm @ SOS	9 RAW: A Forum for Gay & Bi Men, 7:30pm @ Open Space Gallery Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	10 Free Tai Chi 7pm @ SOS	11 12 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS
13 Christian Support Group 7-9pm @ SOS	14 Noon Group 12-1 @ the Centre Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	15 Drop-in art 7-9pm @ SOS	16 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	17 Free Tai Chi 7pm @ SOS	18 19 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS
AIDS Walk Volunteer Orientation. 20 Call Tathra for details. Monday Night Dinner @ the Centre Christian Support Group 7-9pm @ SOS	21 Noon Group 12-1 @ the Centre Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	22 No Lunch @ the Centre AIDS 101 6-8pm @ AVI Drop-in art 7-9pm @ SOS	23 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	24 Free Tai Chi 7pm @ SOS	25 26 AIDS Walk 9am Fisherman's Wharf, Victoria or 12am Pioneer Plaza, Nanaimo Acupuncture 7pm @ SOS
27 Christian Support Group 7-9pm @ SOS	28 Noon Group 12-1 @ the Centre Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	29 Drop-in art 7-9pm @ SOS	30 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS		

Calendar of Events October 1999

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4 Christian Support Group 7-9pm @ SOS	5 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	6 Core Training Call Tathra to register Video Night @ the Centre Drop-in Art 7-9pm @ SOS	7 Gay Men's Discussion Group 7pm @ AVI Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	8 Free Tai Chi 7pm @ SOS	9 10 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS
11 Christian Support Group 7-9pm @ SOS	12 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	13 Core Training Call Tathra to register Drop-in Art 7-9pm @ SOS	14 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	15 Free Tai Chi 7pm @ SOS	16 17 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS
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Men's Briefs

The Newsletter of the Men's Wellness Program

Volume 2

August 1999

In This Issue

- ✚ RAW gets raw on Sept 9th
- ✚ A panelist reflects on being *Queerly Incorrect*
- ✚ Relationship aplenty
- ✚ Time to change your Men's Briefs



Keep your eyes open for a new look as we transform the former Men's Outreach Project into the Men's Wellness Program.

More news to come...

The Men's Wellness Program
(formerly the Men's Outreach Project)
304-733 Johnson Street
Victoria, BC V8W 3C7
250.384.2366
1.800.665.2437
email: men@avi.org
www.avi.org/men

The Men's Wellness Program is AIDS Vancouver Island's health promotion initiative aimed at reducing the rate of HIV infection among men who have sex with men (MSM). The Program involves outreach and prevention education to MSM focusing on reducing the risk of contracting HIV. MWP is funded by Health Canada.

RAW — a forum for gay & bi guys on rubberless sex

by Marc Mertens, Gay Community Outreach Worker

Guys, we need to have a conversation about sex without condoms. For more than two years now there have been controversial stories and opinions in the mainstream and gay press about unprotected sex, "raw sex", and "barebacking". It seems each story and opinion comes from a unique perspective, making it harder to figure out what to believe. Definitions seem to change from article to article, and many are pissed off saying fags should "know better" and be more "responsible". We want to talk openly about sex without condoms, and to stop feeling guilty about sex in general. Some think that just by talking about rubberless sex, we're promoting it — we disagree, and have scheduled a community forum to have this discussion.

Before we can have this discussion, we need to reach some agreement on definitions and terms, so that we can all speak the same language. To accomplish this, we reviewed numerous articles, books and websites. We spoke with our colleagues at Gay City in Seattle who hosted a community forum called "The Rubberless Fuck" in April, and read of similar events produced by leading prevention programs

like the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) in New York, and the STOP AIDS Project in San Francisco. We also considered the opinions of writers such as Dan Savage, Michaelangelo Signorile, Eric Rofes, Tony Valenzuela, and particularly Michael Scarce, who has interviewed more than 700 "barebackers", and is currently writing a book on the subject. You can read the **glossary** in the sidebar, and we'll certainly have

opportunity to review them at our forum.

Is all this talk about unprotected sex promoting "dangerous" sexual practices? Does sex education in schools encourage teens to become sexual at an earlier age? No. Numerous studies have proven that, though many parents probably shudder at the thought. Similarly, talking about sex without condoms is not a call to gay men to jump from the community bridge, though

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

unprotected sex (rubberless sex)

✚ anal intercourse without using a condom, whether *intentional* or *unintentional*

✚ *intentional* could mean partners of the same HIV status deciding to stop using condoms together; also called "negotiated safety"

✚ *unintentional* could mean not using condoms because the passion, situation, drugs and/or alcohol made it hard or impossible to use condoms (*some call this 'slipping' - we call this being human*)

✚ most people have experienced unprotected sex in their lives

"barebacking"

✚ actively and intentionally seeking out unprotected sex with partners of known or unknown HIV status.

✚ refers to a small but immeasurable group of people

many of our community

See RAW continued on page 2

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Keep an eye out for our NEW & IMPROVED newsletter - FRUIT FLY
Coming soon!

Men's Briefs

*The Newsletter of the
Men's Wellness Program*

Men's Briefs is published as often as possible by the Men's Wellness Program of AIDS Vancouver Island. Typed submissions and letters are welcomed, but must include name, address and telephone number. Your name can be withheld by request. *Men's Briefs* will print no sexist, racist or homophobic copy, and will cover issues and events pertaining to the lives of gay & bisexual men in Victoria and on Vancouver Island, including those living with HIV/AIDS. The opinions expressed are those of the writers.

The appearance of any advertisements, treatments information, or letters does not imply endorsement by AIDS Vancouver Island or Health Canada.

Written by Jayson Junge, Matt, Gilles Baxter & Marc Mertens
Designed by Marc Mertens



Editorial

Welcome to this special double issue of *Men's Briefs* and *VOX*, the newsletter of AIDS Vancouver Island. As you'll read, *VOX* is focusing on the guys this month and profiling AVI's highly successful Men's Wellness Program. We decided to have some fun and give everyone a shot of both, so we piggy-backed the two newsletters together for your reading enjoyment...let us know what you think.

Men's Briefs, now in its second year of production, is undergoing some radical changes. A full on facelift, manicure, and even pedicure to boot, if you will, are all being planned. Beginning this issue, several people have joined together in producing this newsletter, which was previously written, edited and produced solo.

So, starting next issue, *Men's Briefs* will become *Fruitfly*. Some of the changes taking place in these pages reflect changes occurring within the Men's Wellness Program (formerly the Men's Outreach Project), which along with getting a new name has been funded for *another four years!!!*

This issue's cover story is on a topic which has become quite controversial lately — rubberless sex — and which is coming soon to a forum near you. On Thursday, September 9th, at 7:30 pm at Open Space Gallery, RAW will focus on sex without condoms, to be explored by Jim Wilton and guest Eric Hildebrandt of Gay City in Seattle.

Also in this issue we have a follow-up article on the Queerly Incorrect forum, a fiesta of talk on sex, love, relationships, butch/femme, gender, and, of course, interior decorating.

We have the first installment of our Relationship and Dating column and other fruity morsels. Contributions are always welcome. Please drop off submissions to Marc at AVI.

Fruitfully,

Matt

RAW continued from page 1

elders might believe so.

You know, we at the Men's Wellness Program are guys just like you. We face similar problems. Sometimes we struggle with condom use, or using drugs and alcohol. It is not our place to police or judge anyone's sexual activity, or tell them what to do. We'd be hypocrites if we did. We are here to provide information, education, and the spaces and means for us all to talk about our sex and relationships openly and honestly so that we can make informed decisions.

So let's do it! Let's get together and get RAW. Let's make a date for Thursday, September 9 @ 7:30pm at the Open Space Gallery. Let's talk.

It won't be an easy discussion, and some might wonder what to expect. A lot more opinions, probably. Some heated discussion and debate, to be sure. We've also invited our friend Eric Hildebrandt from Gay City in Seattle to bring us some insight on the topic. We've developed some interesting exercises, as well.

We expect that at the end of the evening there will still be disagreement. Our experiences with sex, relationships, and HIV are quite varied. We are HIV-positive and negative. Some of us lived through the original crisis of AIDS and lost many friends, others grew up with AIDS education from grade school. These are all valid and equal experiences. We are all sexual beings living in a time when just having sex can still kill you, and that sucks! But we have to put it on the table, so we don't

have to whisper or be silent when we don't use condoms. No more guilt trips about wanting raw sex, no more 'bad fags' who should have known better, and no more blaming gay men for AIDS.

See you September 9th...

The Men's Wellness Program has a good selection of recent articles on sex without condoms and "barebacking" from various gay media. If you'd like to get copies, call us at 384-2366 or email us at men@avi.org.

From Unconscious to Conscious Relationships

by Matt

One year ago, my relationship with my partner came to a sudden and confusing end. My coming out as bi certainly precipitated it, but there were other underlying problems whose roots I could not put my finger on. I felt strangely dull and unalive. I was bored, but what was I bored with?

This event began my journey towards understanding and controlling the invisible forces that pushed me around without my comprehension: the journey from unconscious to conscious relationships.

And that made me radically rethink my ideas about relationships and love.

One of the first things that happened on this journey was that I began to explore the idea of open or non-monogamous relationships. This forced me to change my thinking about the way relationships

"should" work, and made me realize that there really are no rules.

I began to look at my past relationships, the good and the bad, and look for my part in it all. I used the problems in my relationships to consider how they reflected my personal problems. The way we act with our partners can tell us a lot about ourselves. Our relationships often serve as pressure cookers where issues not yet dealt with or unresolved are allowed to simmer. Struggles we had with our parents over control of our lives come back as power struggles with our partners. Experiences of abandonment make us clingy, or afraid to get close. In my personal instance, experiencing my parents' crumbling relationship and their sudden divorce left me feeling that relationships are inevitably fragile, making stable, lasting relationships

impossible.

There have been many stops along the journey, including loneliness, looking at my ideas of what love is and the way it should be, and examining what I want. At the latest stop my current partner and I go to counseling together, searching for what will make our relationship work.

Searching around the dark for answers, I have now, at least, a candle by which to light my way.

This relationship and dating column will be a regular feature of Fruit Fly. In it, we hope to explore the joys and challenges of queer relationships and dating, and share our experiences together. Everyone is welcome to submit and share his or her personal stories.

Whenever possible, we would prefer digital submissions on disk or via email. Send to: men@avi.org

A Queerly Incorrect Perspective

by Jayson Junge

"We are all at different places in our lives, and we want different things and our opinions can cause us to judge others"

~audience member at Queerly Incorrect: a coffeetable discussion on sex, love & relationships

Hosted by Marc Mertens, Queerly Incorrect (QI) was based loosely on the television show *Politically Incorrect*. Held at the Herald Street Centre for the Arts during Pride Week, and produced as a joint venture by the Men's Wellness Program and WHIPS, the new women's health initiative at AIDS Vancouver Island. QI brought together six members of the community with different perspectives, two of whom filled in at the last minute when the scheduled panelists were unable to attend.

Janet Rabinovitch — A long time activist, Jannit is a member of the Victoria Police Board and candidate for Mayor this Fall

Gilles Baxter — A biochemistry student involved with the Camosun Pride Collective, Gilles is also a volunteer at AIDS Vancouver Island

Richard O'Connor — A familiar face to those who attended "He's my, uh, Roommate" last November, where he was a panelist, Richard, currently in his 60s, has been with his partner, Miss Gay Vancouver Island 1998 for 35 years

Christine Turnbull — Soft-spoken, but with heavy impact, Christine is a male-to-female transsexual, currently a volunteer at AIDS Vancouver Island

Jordana Duffy — A 17-year-old out lesbian Victoria High student, Jordana was on the organizing committee for the "Check Your Booty"

queer youth conference

I was also one of the last minute panelists. My name is Jayson Junge, and I am a bisexual and a volunteer at AVI.

This was a diverse group of people though it did not represent the older lesbian community adequately. It was a particularly interesting evening for me because Gilles is an ex-boyfriend of mine, so discussing sex, love and relationships in front of 170 people was a unique experience. It was surprising to me how much we agreed on.

Marc asked a series of questions on the different themes from "what is your definition of sex?" to "do gay men have more sex than straight men or lesbians?" When asked to define sex, Jannit brought up the issue of sex without penises. She thought that lesbians spend more time having sex less often. Gilles agreed by

QI continued on page 4

Men's Wellness Program Calendar

September 2

7pm

Gay Men's Discussion Group

Everyone is welcome to take part. Meet at AVI at 304-733 Johnson Street.

September 7

5pm

Men's Wellness Program

Volunteer Meeting

Volunteer meetings are a fun mix of socializing, planning events and ongoing groups, and brainstorming ideas for future volunteer projects. Volunteers have created a few of our more popular events, such as *Fruitfly*. So join in, and you will have your chance to shape the Men's Wellness Program's future.

Volunteer meetings are the first Tuesday of every month.

September 9

7:30pm

RAW: a forum for gay & bi guys on rubberless sex

Open Space Gallery (510 Fort St)

Hosted by Jim Wilton with Special Guest Eric Hildebrandt of Gay City.

September 14

5pm

Fruitfly Newsletter Meeting

Do you like to write, photograph, cartoon, design or edit? We'd love to have you come out and help put together *Fruitfly*.

September 21

5pm

Fruitfly Newsletter Meeting

See Sept 14.

September 26

AIDS Walk Victoria

Fisherman's Wharf Park, James Bay

Call Stacy or Shelley to sign up and walk at 384-2366.

September 28

5pm

Fruitfly Newsletter Meeting

See Sept 14.

October 5

5pm

Men's Wellness Program

Volunteer Meeting

See Sept 7.

QI continued from page 3

saying that gay men spend less time having sex more often. This raised a question in my mind, "When I'm being intimate with someone but there is no penetration, is it still sex?"

When the discussion moved to love, the role of self esteem in relationships was summed up by the statement, "If I don't love myself, how can anybody love me? It's like you are seeing yourself through the person you are with. You fear what they see."

The most contentious issue discussed was that of relationships, specifically monogamy vs. non-monogamy. I brought up the idea that one person can not meet all my needs because different people bring out different facets of our personality.

There was a lot of conflict, possibly due to the diversity of the people or the different experiences and upbringings. Which brings us back to the quote that started this editorial. We need to work on not judging others for their opinions. This forum was an important piece in bringing

our community together to work on accepting each other. These events play a key role in building up our community, but they cannot continue to happen if people don't get involved. It gave me a lot to take back to my peers and discuss.

The real star of the show was Christine, speaking so candidly about her personal experiences as a transsexual. It put many of my personal issues into perspective. We need more women like her to speak out on behalf of our community. I think it would be beneficial to have an event primarily about transsexuals and their experience. I don't think that most people understand what transgendered people go through on a personal level, and I think some education could enlighten the community.

Overall, I felt that the event charged the community. I saw people who wouldn't normally talk with each other discussing the issues. These are the kinds of events that bring us together as a community, to break down barriers such as age, gender and orientation, and unifies us as queers.

Volunteer Opportunities

Wanna check us out? Join us for our monthly **Volunteer Meeting**, the first Tuesday of every month.

Join the Education Team

Wanna have something fun to do, while helping the community at the same time? Join the Education Team...we work on Forums, set up info tables and survey the community about sex and other great stuff. Training provided. About 6-8 hours per month.

Help w/ the Newsletter — *FRUITFLY*

We meet Tuesdays at 5pm to plan, write and produce the newsletter. All writers, artists, cartoonists, astrologers & cute guys welcome. No experience required. About 8-10 hours per month.

Info Board Updates

Person with a car, bike, or bus pass to update our Community Info Boards. Mostly downtown locations, plus Fairfield, Camosun & UVic. Must be at least 19 years.

**Community Resources
&
Community Events**
returning next issue!