

Thank you AVI Volunteers!

As 2006 comes to an end, we can look back on another year where volunteers have contributed their time, skills, energy and commitment to the work of AVI. The amount of volunteer support is truly staggering - over 200 volunteers working across the Island, more than 16,000 hours given freely and willingly to fight HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C in our communities.

In terms of achievements this translates into several successful events, thousands of phone calls answered, tens of thousands of sex packs made and distributed, and over a million used needles exchanged for new ones. Workshops have been delivered, training sessions attended, food hampers made, hot lunches served, nutritional supplements distributed, and extensive contributions made by our volunteer board. The list of activities where volunteers perform a central role goes on and on.

This past year has seen several important shifts in Volunteer Services. We have welcomed Leslie to our organisation and continue to be delighted with her passion and commitment. With Leslie on the team we have been able to broaden our commitment to volunteers and branch out into new areas.

The hot meal program has temporarily adopted a more

professional structure for food preparation, but volunteers have stepped into support roles - bussing the drop in, distributing fruit and Ensure, and putting hampers together. Volunteers have also been developing a database to keep track of all things volunteer - a system that will help us better serve the needs of our volunteers and to more accurately capture the volunteer contribution to the agency. Plans for the future include a strengthening of our Rig Dig project - a project aimed at clearing the downtown core of discarded needles and drug using paraphernalia. Volunteer Services is looking ahead to a vibrant and exciting 2007.

Our two big events of the year owe much to the work of volunteers. **Dining Out For Life** saw over 50 restaurants up and down the Island supporting AVI with 25% of the food take on the night of March 24. The buzz around town has carried into 2007 and we have high hopes for the event - remember to eat out on March 29!

AIDS Walk 2006 in Victoria was a scaled-down event focused on memorialising those we have lost to this terrible disease. In keeping things simple we tried to leave space for reflection and thought. Well over 100 walkers took part and we believe we have laid the foundation for the event's future growth.



North Island

Courtenay

AVI Courtenay lost a dedicated volunteer in September. Dean Ryane was an HIV peer support volunteer, HIV activist, and AVI supporter. In true AVI style, the staff, volunteers, and clients came together to comfort each other in this time of loss. We will dearly miss this great volunteer and friend!

Winter seems to have hit hard and fast up here, and due to the lack of any affordable housing we are seeing increasing numbers in our drop in. Our Tuesday hot lunch program has been a big hit, thanks to the hard work of Holly Lacasse and donations from Portuguese Joe's fish market and private donors. Holly has now taken a leave of absence to have her baby and Anne Taylor has agreed to take on this essential program. Thanks to both women for their dedication!

We have secured cold weather funding for December and January from the United Way and on December 3 we were back on the streets doing emergency outreach. We are still looking for donations of emergency candles, tents, sleeping bags, waterproof ponchos, and footwear.



1601 Blanshard Street
Victoria, BC
V8W 2J5

250-384-2366 Phone
240-380-9411 Fax

1-800-665-2437 Toll Free
Infoline

Info@avi.org
www.avi.org

AVI has offices in Nanaimo, Courtenay and Campbell River, and mobile needle exchanges serving the Cowichan Valley and the Port Hardy/Port MacNeil areas. Contact info can be found at www.avi.org

Editor and layout:
Andrea Langlois



We held an open house on World AIDS Day and approx 35 people attended. On December 2nd we hosted a table and held a presentation at North Island college's AIDS Awareness Conference. The presentation was on making the connections between what's happening in Africa and here in order to increase awareness of the problems locally and globally.



Rick Seniuk, AVI Campbell River volunteer, with Catherine Bell, MP for Vancouver Island North.

Campbell River

Our partnership with Public Health is expanding. On top of the public health nurse's regular Friday shift, nurses have also been in the office 3 days a week doing a hepatitis B screening & vaccine blitz and providing flu inoculations to PWP and SOS clients.

AVI and other community service providers have rallied together to address the lack of affordable housing and increased homelessness in Campbell River. As a result, a Committee on Homeless has been created and spearheaded by Claire Trevena, MLA for North Island. The Committee has come up with numerous solutions which they will provide to City Council in December.

Our GLBT support group is growing so quickly that we had to move our meetings from the AVI office to a larger location. The move may not have been possible without the generous support of John Howard Society, who is absolutely thrilled to provide assistance for this much needed support group.

AVI partnered with North Island Liver Services and the Holmalco Band to present a day-long presentation on sexual health, HIV, HCV, and diabetes to band members.

In the week leading up to AIDS Awareness Week, red ribbons and information cards were distributed throughout Campbell River, including medical centers, First Nations Band offices, the community centre, social service groups, restaurants and bars. Our December 1 events were cancelled due to poor weather. Yet Campbell River TV, partnership with AVI, screened a compelling documentary about HIV/AIDS entitled *Damaged Goods*.



DINING OUT FOR LIFE

March 29, 2007

Come and be a part of something big!

Volunteer Ambassadors are needed across the island to spend the evening in a local restaurant – meeting guests, explaining the event, and helping AVI make this a signature evening for Vancouver Island.

DINING OUT FOR LIFE

Full and fun training provided – all that is needed is commitment and a willingness to take part.

Contact James or Leslie if you are interested:
(250) 384-2366 or leslie.robinson@avi.org.

Nanaimo PWP

The Positive Wellness Program in Nanaimo is bustling this time of year. The World AIDS Day Community Open House was quite well attended, even with the nasty weather of the previous week. We had many old friends drop by to visit and met some new friends as well. It was a great opportunity to chat with our community partners in a more social atmosphere. We would like to thank the clients who pitched in to make this event a great success.

We are also gearing up for the holiday season. This year the holiday party for our registered clients will be held on December 12 and the Holiday Hampers will be distributed at that time. We all look forward to this as a time to catch up with old friends, to decorate the office, and to really enjoy the day.

Our Support Group meets the second Monday of the month and our focus is on recently diagnosed clients and fostering a mentoring relationship with more treatment-experienced clients. So far we are a small but enthusiastic group and anyone interested in attending can call Anita at (250) 753-2437 or email anita.mcleod@avi.org.

Our Hepatitis C Drop-In is open every Wednesday afternoon from 2-4pm. It is an informal drop-in where anyone looking for information and/or support around hepatitis C and treatment options can come in and chat.

World AIDS Day in Port McNeil

Students at North Island Secondary School in Port McNeill provided education, information, red ribbons and condoms to their fellow students during a week-long HIV/AIDS awareness week. A room in the school was adorned in red and named "The Love Shack" by students, who collected a variety of posters and resources related to HIV/AIDS and sexual health. The students, Kirie McMurchy, Cailyn Siider, Abi McDowell, Brendon Middleton and Alex Kitson, began meeting a month earlier to plan the events of the week. The student committee decided that the key themes of the week would be discrimination, prevention, women, and myths.

Kirie McMurchy, the key student organizer said that she was motivated to initiate the event because "we have not in the past received HIV education, and ignorance is what spreads HIV." AVI has been providing education to secondary schools on the North Island this year and aims to continue providing education in the future in this region.

Students organizing and staffing the event attended HIV 101 and received educational support from AVI and VIHA Public Health Staff. During the time AVI Client Support Worker Shane Thomas spent with students operating the event, he found them well informed, engaging and energetic with their peers. All of the students showed an interest in educating their peers. Alex Kitson, student, articulated his reasons for participating, "I wanted to learn more about [HIV]" and "if I had the knowledge, then I could tell other people."



AIDS Walk Nanaimo



Update

It was announced on November 23, 2006, that we did not win the Vancity Award. Out of the four worthy groups who were chosen as candidates for the million dollars, Quest Outreach Society received the most member votes and we are pleased to congratulate them on their accomplishment - they are an excellent organization and this boost to their project will have significant impact to it and their success, and will make a real difference in people's lives.

We owe tremendous gratitude to the members of Vancity who voted for us and also to all of the individuals and organizations that supported our campaign - it wouldn't have been as successful without each one of them.

The ACCESS Health Centre will still move forward. We are building on the momentum that participating in the Vancity Award provided us and will now turn our fundraising efforts to government and other sources. For more information on our ongoing capital campaign, visit www.accesshealthcentre.ca or to be added to our listserv, email: andrea.langlois@avi.org.

PWP Victoria

Welcome back Kristen! Kristen has recently returned to her position as PWP manager after her year-long



maternity leave. Kristen enjoyed her year off and is happy to be back at work, despite having to leave her young daughter at home. Little Zara turns 1 this month. Happy birthday Zara!

Heather Hobbs, who did a fabulous job as act-

ing PWP manager while Kristen was on leave, hasn't gone far. Heather will continue to work for AVI as a consultant. Her work will focus on policy analysis and program development. As well, Heather will continue to work with PWP as a casual employee.

Despite the unexpected flooding of the drop-in space and the harsh winter weather of late November, PWP staff has managed to maintain normal levels of service delivery. As member numbers continue to increase, the drop-in space seems to be getting more crowded as each day passes. Both PWP members and staff are excited about the Access Health Centre, and the extra space the building will provide.

PWP staff is also looking forward to an eventful holiday season. The holiday party for PWP members (and their immediate family) is scheduled for Thursday, December 14. For more information about the party, please contact PWP at (250) 384-2366.

Queer Eye for the Service Provider

A workshop for services providers to develop skills in providing culturally sensitive services to LGBT populations.

Hosted by the Men's Wellness Program.

January 26, 2007 - \$25 per participant

For more information contact Captain: (250) 384-2366
captain.snowdon@avi.org