

HIV/AIDS Education and Bereavement Support Project in Libode, South Africa

This winter, Miki Hansen, Executive Director of AVI, and Heather Ferris, a consultant, went to Libode in South Africa's Eastern Cape to carry out an HIV/AIDS education and bereavement support project with two local organizations - DELTA (Development Education and Leadership Teams in Action) and Khululeka: Grief and Loss Support for Children & Youth.

While in Libode, trained facilitators ran workshops for



Facilitators on graduation day (from left to right): Zanelle, Kyakazi, Funeka, Mccemia, Phluma, & Dynsewa.

adults to help the community deal with the emotional needs of children who have been orphaned because of HIV/AIDS. These workshops were facilitated by women in the community who were also trained to run culturally sensitive, age appropriate bereavement support groups for children in order to build resilience and educate about HIV/AIDS. "The women we trained were absolutely inspiring," said Miki.

In the adult workshops, some participants reported that they were HIV+, some stated that they were going to get tested as a result of the workshop, and others expressed a new awareness of the needs of orphans and street children.

Miki also worked with DELTA and Khululeka to build sustainability for the project. This included discussions with the Ministries of Health and Education. Subsequently, a submission was made to the Ministry of Education for funding to provide support services for orphans.



The long walk home from downtown Libode

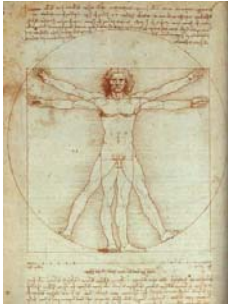
The goal of the project was also to compare the possible similarities and needs of rural, indigenous communities in Canada and South Africa given the common colonial history and trauma and their high rates of HIV. AVI will build on this project and work towards developing similar partnerships on Vancouver Island.

This project was funded by Health Canada's International Affairs Directorate, BC Hydro, WHEAT Canada/Victoria International Development Education Association (VIDEA), and some individuals.

Thanks to the generosity of the South Island Classics Soccer Association, Lower Island Soccer Association, and Soccerworld in Victoria, AVI was able to bring soccer balls and pumps to 15 schools in Libode.



Children playing soccer with balls donated by Victorian soccer leagues.



Men's Wellness Discussion Group in the Comox Valley

A fact recently recognized in the field of medicine is that that men's and women's health issues are unique. With this in mind, along with a sense of feeling lost in BC's health care system, a group of men in the Comox Valley began a Men's Wellness Discussion Group in January.

While many thoughts and ideas were brought forward at the group's initial meetings, their first project will be to compile a list of health care professionals between Parksville and Campbell River.

The group is also developing simple survey that will be sent to medical and health care professionals in the near future. Among other questions, health care

providers will be asked if they are accepting new patients, if they have a specialty of any type, and if they consider their practice to be gay friendly. Once the surveys are back, the information will be entered into a database and the information will be available for anyone in the region.

Beyond the inaugural project, the group has looked at several different issues for discussion and possible action. As the group is member-driven, plans for future work will be de-

termined by consensus. All members are welcome to bring up any topic at any time for discussion, particularly if they are seeking the support and experiences of others in a similar situation.

For more information about the Comox Valley Men's Wellness Discussion Group, please contact AVI's Courtenay office at (250) 338-7400 and leave a message with Phyllis Wood.



Walking Away from Homophobia in Campbell River on May 17


In June 2006, AVI began a GLBTQ support group in Campbell River, which now meets on a weekly basis.

Shortly after the group started meeting, members began talking about wanting to get the word out to the community. After discussions with other groups in town, such as the Multicultural Society and Youth 4 Diversity, the group decided to tackle homophobia in their community.

The GLBTQ group is now organizing the first annual "Walk Away from Homophobia" in Campbell River. The walk will take place on Thursday, May 17th 2007, at 5:30pm. It will begin in the Campbell River Community Centre parking lot and proceeding through downtown ending in Foreshore Park.

There will be public speakers, including the Mayor of Campbell River, and entertainment for everyone. The group invites support from the community. Come out and join Campbell River in walking away from homophobia!

For more information, contact Leanne at (250) 830-0787 or leanne.cunningham@avi.org.

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AVI's Executive Director Wins Community Social Worker Award

AIDS Vancouver Island's Executive Director Miki Hansen has been awarded the inaugural Alayne Hamilton Community Social Worker Award. Miki received the award "in recognition of her passion for social work education, inspirational organizational leadership, and continued contributions to the legacy of social justice symbolised by Alayne Hamilton's remarkable career."

The University of Victoria's School of Social Work presented the award at a ceremony on March 28. The award is named in honour of the late founder of the Family Violence Project, the BC Violence against Women in Relationship Committee and the Ending Relationship Abuse Society of BC. Hamilton died in August 2006.



Miki Hansen (left)
and Tomoko Okada
(right) at the award
ceremony.

"I was humbled to be a part of the accomplished group of people nominated for this award and totally surprised to be chosen as this year's recipient," said Miki.

Other award nominees included: Tomoko Okada, UVic Family Centre; Brenda Macevisius, Esquimalt Neighbourhood House; David Turner UVic School of Social Work professor; Jani Cardinal, Alzheimers Resource Centre; and Sandee Mitchell, Camosun College First Nations Program.



Dining Out for Life 2007 a Success!

A big thank you to everyone who had a hand in **Dining Out For Life** this year. To date, we have raised over \$20,000 for HIV/AIDS services from restaurant and public donations, and they're still coming in!

With over 60 restaurants involved, we relied on the help of our volunteers. As always, they stepped up and put their energy and commitment into every aspect of the event - from recruiting new restaurants, to planning the event, to filling boxes and working hard late into the night of March 29.

We also had great support from this year's sponsors

AVI
Volunteer Don
Boulding (left)
and Doug
Bamford
dining at
Ferris's on
March 29.



- especially Stella Artois - and we look forward to working with them all next year. The whole team did a great job and we are confident that Dining Out For Life will become a key yearly event for Vancouver Island.

Thanks again to everyone who made this fabulous event possible. **We'll see you next March!**



AVI Victoria's Positive Health Project

AVI Victoria's Positive Health Project will wrap up this May with a weekend retreat at the Cowichan Lake Education Centre, thanks to funding from the M.A.C AIDS Fund.

Most Positive Health Project participants are low income and as a result do not often get a chance to leave the city limits or to engage in recreational and self care activities that they might view as luxuries. The Wellness Retreat will also give participants a chance to be social with other people who are living with HIV and/or hepatitis C and to get a kind of support and camaraderie only found amongst peers.

The Positive Health Project is a partnership project between AIDS Vancouver Island and the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. It is made up of two groups: the Women's Wellness Program and the Men's Positive Health Project, which have had two series of sessions during the past year, both funded by the United Way. The upcoming retreat is funded by the M.A.C AIDS Fund.

The purpose of the Positive Health Program is to increase the knowledge and skills of HIV and hepatitis C positive women and men and to increase the public's awareness of what it means to live with HIV and/or hepatitis C. Participants of the groups are involved in all stages of project planning and have a role in upholding the rules outlined by the group.

The program has been successful because it works at the grass roots level and addresses the needs of the AIDS community. It fills a gap in addiction ser-



Past and current participants and program coordinators of the Women's Wellness Program after a performance of the *Viral Monologues* — a theatre performance of the stories of women living with HIV/AIDS.

vices for HIV positive people not addressed by traditional harm reduction programs. Participants learn skills in socializing and trusting their peers as well as how to interact respectively in a group setting.

This is the fourth year the Positive Health Project has operated in some capacity. It started as the Women's Wellness Program, a volunteer-run project with no budget and has since grown to include the Men's Positive Health Project and four employees. Unfortunately, the future of the Project is insecure, as funding has not yet been secured for the coming year.

For more information about this project please contact Erica Williamson, Health Promotion Educator at AVI at (250) 384-2366.



Did you know? AVI's education team provides a variety of workshops for free or by donation. There are over a dozen workshop topics that covered by education staff and volunteers. Workshops available include:

- **Abandoned Needles 101** - What You Should Know (for community groups, recreation centres, schools, businesses, etc.)

- **"Stop and Go"** - What Kids Should Know About Finding Needles on the Playground (for children, parents and their service providers).
- **Hep C 101** - Canada's Hidden Epidemic.
- **HIV/AIDS 101** - Challenging Stigma and Discrimination.
- **Understanding Drug Addiction** - Myths and Misconceptions Revealed.

To schedule a workshop, contact Heidi Exner at (250) 384-2366 or heidi.exner@avi.org.