



STRENGTH IN COMMUNITY



ANNUAL REPORT 2006-07





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VICTORIA AIDS WALK PHOTOS (BACK COVER, P3) COURTESY OF SPIKEPHOTO.CA



## Vancouver Island AIDS Society Statement of Operations

Year Ended March 31 (Unaudited)	2007	2006
<b>Revenue</b>		
Grants		
Vancouver Island Health Authority	\$1,204,141	\$ 1,412,639
Federal government	170,651	179,447
United Way	140,839	120,151
Corporate sponsorship	14,627	-
Donations	51,998	46,860
Fundraising		
Gaming Commission	149,296	154,578
Merchandising	25,546	26,164
Honoraria	1,955	6,752
Interest and other income	67,294	60,077
Rental income	37,093	10,939
Rent recovery	5,725	7,235
	<b>1,869,165</b>	<b>2,024,842</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Agency disbursements	-	(1220)
Contract services and evaluation	50,462	62,929
Equipment, leaseholds and maintenance	30,792	38,834
Financial assistance	4,748	4,900
Licences, fees, and dues	5,340	3,871
Meetings, honoraria and travel	106,138	95,202
Interest on long term debt	24,123	8,327
Office and stationery	79,105	56,071
Professional fees	32,198	16,606
Program materials	124,984	134,945
Promotion and advertising	28,362	19,397
Property tax	6,523	1,330
Rent	137,675	131,945
Salaries and benefits	1,281,946	1,113,862
Telephone and utilities	51,976	49,457
Volunteer training and recognition	1,289	4,278
	<b>1,965,661</b>	<b>1,740,733</b>
Excess of revenue over expenses before the following	<b>(96,496)</b>	284,109
Capital assets included in equipment, leaseholds and maintenance above	9,175	18,440
Amortization	<b>(17,871)</b>	<b>(36,692)</b>
Excess of revenue over expenses	<b>(105,192)</b>	<b>265,920</b>

## 21 years of service

### MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

AIDS VANCOUVER ISLAND, incorporated in 1986, has a long history of providing a place for community members, those infected with HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C, to organize, educate and provide services.

This lengthy and successful history was a tremendous asset this year as we faced a number of challenges. Key among these was the growing need for our services in the face of ongoing cutbacks in public social services across the island and steady infection rates. At the same time, our core operating budget from the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) has not increased for over 10 years. Doing much more with less is always daunting.

The board of directors planned its yearly work in October with a full day retreat. We defined priorities and actions and focused on several major activities: improving knowledge of program outcomes, fundraising for the Access Health Centre and a permanent home for AVI's Victoria programs, a recruitment plan for a new executive director, and improving communications between AVI and the broader community.

Yet events often get in the way of strategic plans. The outcome of the contracting process with VIHA, evident in early January, was disappointing and unexpected. Rather than receiving funds to strengthen programs or even stand still, we were expected to operate with significantly less funding beginning in April 2007. A great deal of our effort as board

directors and staff has been directed to gaining time to challenge these cuts and to consider how to implement such a significant reduction. We now have a year extension, with the reductions slated to go into effect in April 2008.

This challenge to the integrity of our organization has demonstrated how many good friends we have in the community and has given us opportunities to present our case to the public. Even so, these efforts have taken a great deal of energy and time from a small organization, leaving less for our main purpose – delivering services.

The move of our Victoria programs to Johnson Street, hopefully by 2009, has always included plans to separate the location of the needle exchange. However, evidence that the needle exchange has outgrown its capacity was forcefully brought home by concerns from community members surrounding the facility in addition to growing media attention.



MARILYN CALAHAN

## our commitment to AIDS work

In response, we have taken measures to try to contain the gatherings outside the exchange and find the program a new home, away from residential areas. We are hopeful that Mayor Alan Lowe's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions, which is scheduled to report in October, will include some of our ideas about comprehensive needle exchanges where support, advocacy and addiction services are fully integrated.

The proposal for an integrated exchange has also been presented to VIHA and to the public at a Burnside Gorge Community Association meeting in April. We are again grateful for the public support in this complex issue, including assistance from Victoria City Hall and from Victoria Councillor Charlayne Thorton-Joe.

We continue to work on raising funds for the Johnson Street building renovation in partnership with the site's co-owner, the Victoria Cool Aid Society. Our plans include an integrated health centre and a home for like-minded organizations working with similar client bases. We have delayed our public campaign initiatives, however, until government funding is secured, hopefully by December 2007.

The response to our presentations on the ACCESS Health Centre to provincial cabinet ministers and staff and to federal officials have been encouraging. We give thanks to our local politicians for their ongoing support in these efforts, including Victoria mayor Alan Lowe,

provincial ministers George Abbott, Ida Chong, Rich Coleman and Claud Richmond, and federal representatives Gary Lunn, Keith Martin and Denise Savoie, and our provincial representatives Carole James and Rob Fleming. We continue to appreciate our wise and supportive partner in this initiative, Cool Aid, and its executive director, Kathy Stinson and board chair, Andrew Benson.

Our new Executive Director, Katrina Jensen, was chosen unanimously after an open competition for the job. Ms. Jensen brings a wealth of experience to the position including leading multidisciplinary teams providing services to homeless youth in Brisbane, Australia and 9 years with AVI as an educator, manager and program director. Amongst other skills, she brings a strong commitment to community work and collaborative decision-making.

Missing Miki Hansen and the enormous talent that she has brought to AVI will be one more challenge for the upcoming year. As executive director, Miki has brought imagination, perseverance, expansive knowledge and an enormous commitment to reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C.

In March, she was recognized for her contributions by the University of Victoria's School of Social Work as the winner of the Alayne Hamilton Community Social Work Award. She is an invaluable resource to our community and will find new ways to define her retirement in Parksville on Vancouver Island.

The role of chair has many rewards, including

### FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

#### Vancouver Island AIDS Society Statement of Financial Position

March 31 (Unaudited)

	2007	2006
<b>Assets</b>		
Current		
Cash	\$ 586,807	\$ 448,568
Term deposits	-	50,000
Receivables	167,146	195,587
Due from AVI Enterprises Society	86,649	72,744
Prepays	9,841	16,242
	<u>850,443</u>	<u>783,141</u>
Capital assets	624,917	630,991
	<u>\$ 1,475,360</u>	<u>\$ 1,414,132</u>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Current		
Payables and accruals	\$ 94,617	\$ 157,354
Accrued employee benefits	28,494	31,873
Deferred revenue	374,747	142,481
Due to Pacific AIDS Network	2,125	79,114
Current portion of long term debt	373,402	393,333
	<u>873,385</u>	<u>804,155</u>
Deferred contribution	267,190	170,000
	<u>1,140,575</u>	<u>974,155</u>
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Invested in capital assets	87,644	67,659
Restricted for endowment purposes	6,828	6,828
General operating	240,313	365,490
	<u>334,785</u>	<u>439,977</u>
	<u>\$ 1,475,360</u>	<u>\$ 1,414,132</u>



# donor acknowledgements

## FUND DEVELOPMENT

FUND DEVELOPMENT has continued to be a focus at AVI. A 'perfect storm' of growing demand for our services and changes in the funding priorities of our major funders means that the search for ongoing funding continues to be a challenge. Our ongoing efforts will focus on sourcing funding through traditional channels and by being creative and innovative in finding new approaches to raising money.

Part of the growing strength of our fund development practice has been the energy put into the agency's database of donors and funders. These newly organized data will enable us to more accurately track donations – from individuals, government, foundations and business – and gives us the ability to be more responsive to donor needs. With this tool in hand, we look forward to growing success in the future.

A particular highlight of 2007 was our second annual **Dining Out For Life** event across Vancouver Island on March 29. Building on last year's event, we appreciate that over **sixty restaurants** across the island signed up and made over \$20,000 in restaurant contributions and personal donations. This represents a 20% increase from 2006 in the number of restaurants, a 50% increase in personal donations from diners, and an impressive 100% increase in money raised.

Dining Out For Life is set to become a major fundraiser for AVI and something Vancouver Island diners can put in their calendars months in advance. We had outstanding support from our main sponsor, Stella Artois, who not only contributed as our headline sponsor

but also offered \$1 per bottle of Stella sold in participating restaurants that night – contributing an extra \$1,000 to AVI as a result.

Media and restaurant industry support helped us bring people out on the night to make the event a success – thanks to the Times Colonist, Jack fm, Monday Magazine, CH, EAT Magazine and the BC Restaurant, and Foodservices Association. Thanks also to all the volunteers and restaurants involved for their support and to all the Vancouver Islanders who ate out on March 29 and helped AVI raise much needed funds.

### OUR DONORS

AIDS Vancouver Island appreciates the support of the following agencies and funding bodies that have enabled us to continue providing quality programming across Vancouver Island.

- VIHA
- Public Health Canada
- MAC AIDS Fund
- United Way – Greater Victoria, Comox Valley, Campbell River
- Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance
- BC Gaming
- Victoria Foundation
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Vancouver Foundation
- Vancity Savings Credit Union
- WHEAT Canada/VIDEA
- Health Canada – International Affairs Directorate
- BC Hydro
- SHAW
- Belfry Theatre
- 884 individual donors

the opportunity to work with the members of this particular board of directors, a dedicated, eclectic and capable group. We do not always agree, but our debates are spirited and respectful. I welcome Dr. Joan MacNeil who joined us this year, and will miss those who have left: directors Patrick Corrigan, David Desmarais and Denise Skipp. I have also had the chance to appreciate the depth of talent in staff members and volunteers who have performed well beyond expectations over the past 21 years.

I would also like to pay tribute to our sole surviving founding member, Grant Sullivan,

whose vision and energy in establishing AVI will always be valued.

I look forward to the coming year, when we hope to obtain funds for programs that have been lost or are in jeopardy, to strengthen connections throughout the island, and to expand the tremendous support we receive for our work in the community.

MARILYN CALLAHAN, CHAIR  
AIDS VANCOUVER ISLAND



MEMORIAL AIDS WALK (VICTORIA) 2006





# community support for AVI

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



MIKI HANSEN

AIDS VANCOUVER ISLAND'S 21<sup>ST</sup> YEAR of operation has been filled with many twists and turns. The journey has been worthwhile, serving to strengthen our commitment to provide caring, quality services to those affected by HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C on Vancouver Island.

In July of last year, after three years of 6-month contract extensions, the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) finally issued a call for proposals. We were excited to make a submission, as we hoped that this was an opportunity to deal with a structural deficit and to start building much needed additional services across the island.

We were stunned and mystified to learn that VIHA was going to be shifting \$450,000 out of southern Vancouver Island and into the central and north island, to be spent according to VIHA's perception of the needs in these regions. This was done under the guise of "equity." Furthermore, they have broadened the focus

of their funding from HIV/AIDS to also include hepatitis C, stretching the 1.5 million that has previously funded HIV/AIDS to also address hepatitis C.

Yet every cloud has a silver lining, and with this cloud there were several.

Firstly, we were uplifted by the response of members of the Victoria Downtown Services Providers Committee (DSPC), a group made up of representatives from social services, the police, the City, the business community and funders. To date, the DSPC has held a large press conference, made a presentation to VIHA's Board of Directors, and has been extremely clear on its commitment to continue to fight until there is a sane resolution.

Secondly, the proposal of cuts by VIHA has led to the building of a new type of relationship between AIDS Vancouver Island, Victoria AIDS Resource & Community Service Society (VARCS) and the Vancouver Island Persons with AIDS Society (VPWAS). We have been meeting regularly to support each other through dealing with the potential cuts, which has been a wholly valuable experience.

A third positive outcome of the struggle to maintain our funding has been that our profile in the community has been raised. The numerous media articles, the public support of municipal, provincial, and federal politicians and of community members have reinforced the fact that AVI is an essential component of the health and safety of this community.

this year include:

- A broadening of our volunteer syringe pick-up program. We have worked hard with the Street Outreach Services team to identify hotspots and to recruit and train volunteers from the client base of the needle exchange.
- An expanded training program for volunteers has enabled more volunteers to take the core training modules of HIV 101 and Volunteering at AVI in a shorter timeframe. With input from the education team and feedback from volunteers, we offer comprehensive and informative sessions that provide a foundation of knowledge and skills to volunteers thereby enhancing their volunteering and broadening their understanding of the issues around HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C.
- The Outspeak youth team has given 129 presentations to over 2,000 people this year, ranging from other youth to health care providers and police. Using forum theatre and interactive games and discussion techniques, the team offers their audience a chance to learn about sexual health, harm reduction, and queer youth issues.
- Courtenay volunteers have enabled us to increase condom distribution in the region by 200% and to respond to calls regarding abandoned needles in the community.
- The donation of new database software that allows us to be more effective in our tracking of volunteer hours and

assignments. We are currently inputting all the necessary data and already find the software invaluable, as we acquire training sessions or log the over 20,000 volunteer hours.



NANAIMO & VICTORIA STAFF: CAPTAIN, JEANETTE, CLAIRE, DANA & MOLLY



VOLUNTEER COORDINATING TEAM, LESLIE & JAMES

### VOLUNTEER HOURS ACROSS THE ISLAND

Victoria:	14,700 hours
Campbell River:	1,248 hours
Courtenay/Comox:	4,660 hours
Nanaimo:	517 hours

**An incredible 21,125 hours**





## the central role of volunteers

Straight School Conference for teachers and Sexual Health Awareness Days at two middle schools in the north island.

The Men's Wellness Program continues to make progress providing island-wide support and community building to gay, bi and transgendered men. Social activities such as coffee groups and drop-in discussion groups, health forums, the regular publication of the program's newsletter, Men's Briefs, and website/hotline support form the program's core activities.

The Hepatitis C Project created new links with several high-risk support services, including Pembroke Detox, Wilkinson Road Correctional Facility inmates and Mental Health and Addictions service providers. Through this project, the agency trained new speakers from the north island to provide peer support and information, while also strengthening existing relationships the Youth Detention Centre and Victoria Native Friendship Centre.

### VOLUNTEER SERVICES

WITH THE ADDITION OF LESLIE to Volunteer Services, we have been able to shift responsibilities around and focus resources more effectively, build on past successes and achieve new depth in our support for volunteers.

The positive impact of our new approach is reflected in our statistics, as well as in the spirit of volunteerism that is visible every day at AVI offices up and down the island.

As always, AVI is deeply grateful for the support we receive from our volunteers. Much of what happens at the agency relies on a large number of committed and enthusiastic individuals, all of whom bring energy, compassion and a wide range of skills to their volunteering at AVI.

Everybody who has come into contact with our agency and our work feels the presence of volunteers – from the strategic direction provided by the board of directors to the swept street outside the downtown Victoria office, from the sex packs distributed throughout communities across the island to the friendly greeting of reception volunteers.

Volunteers add value to all the programs run at AVI. Clients benefit directly from the support of volunteers daily in the Positive Wellness drop-in and nightly in the needle exchange. Fundraising efforts and events are greatly enhanced by the support of the many volunteers who contribute their time.

Some of the highlights for Volunteer Services



VICTORIA EDUCATION TEAM, HEIDI (TOP), ERICA, ERIN, CAPTAIN & MOLLY

## strength in partnerships

Lastly, the most heartening part of this struggle has been the support of the staff at AVI. Their day-to-day commitment to the clients we serve and their professionalism in a time that could be incredibly stressful, have been invaluable. To hear words of encouragement from up island, to see people gathering to eat together in Victoria and to hear laughter in the halls says a lot about the mental and emotional strength of the people who work at AVI.

In the past year we have also covered some ground with the ACCESS Health Centre project. Although AVI and Cool Aid did not win the Vancity \$1 Million Award, the process brought clarity to the project that continues to pay dividends.

We're currently working to secure capital funding from the provincial and federal governments. Politicians from all parties have stepped forward to assist us in this effort.

The partnership between AVI and the Victoria Cool Aid Society in this project is one of shared values and visions; I have especially enjoyed the ease of working with Kathy Stinson, Cool Aid's executive director. The next year will be full of challenges and I have faith that members of both societies will see the dream of the ACCESS Health Centre come true.

Also in Victoria, we now have a Good Neighbour Agreement in place. The Agreement was developed with representatives from the City of Victoria, the police and the North Park Neighbourhood Association in order to further

improve conditions in the area.

Rig Diggers continue to do an excellent job of cleaning up needles and other paraphernalia in hot spots around downtown Victoria. Pacifica Housing, one of our neighbours on Cormorant Street, now has a needle drop box on its property, which has resulted in a 75% decrease in found needles in the immediate area.

Furthermore, we have developed a model for an integrated needle exchange program, which we have given to VIHA, presented publicly at a community forum at the Burnside Gorge Community Center, and made available to the public. I have also been encouraged by the leadership of Mayor Lowe's taskforce that is charged with examining issues of mental health, addictions and homelessness.

We are hoping that the outcome of this process is that funders will see the value in comprehensive services and fund appropriately, thus making a difference to the health and safety of everyone in our community.

The offices of AVI in Nanaimo, Courtenay/Comox, Campbell River and Port Hardy have been equally busy in the past year.

A definite highlight was the creation of a GLBT group in Campbell River that, in its first year of existence, organized the first annual Walk Away from Homophobia. I was honoured to speak at this event and to walk through the streets of Campbell River with over 150 others.

In Nanaimo we continue to participate in First





Nations education outreach projects as well as various community health fairs. The annual AIDS walk has shown the continued steady support from the community.

The Comox Valley has been experiencing very serious housing shortages and a growing homeless population. Thanks to the generous support of the Comox Valley United Way, we were able to have an outreach worker and volunteers on the streets of Courtenay three days per week from November to March. The team was able to provide blankets, cold weather clothing, tarps, camp fuel, candles, tents, sleeping bags and food to those struggling during this year's harsh winter.

In Port Hardy, we have continued to provide mobile needle exchange services, have participated in numerous events and offered educational workshops in school and community settings. Thanks to a partnership with Mental Health and Addictions Services, we were able to expand our activities to remote communities, such as Sointula, Alert Bay and Port Alice.

Another exciting project this past year took place in Libode, South Africa. The opportunity to initiate AVI to its first international project was a highlight in my last year as executive director. I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to go to South Africa to work on our Canada-South Africa HIV/AIDS education and bereavement support project, thanks to funding from Health Canada. The ability of people to live with so little yet to be so full of laughter

and song will always be with me. Seeing the new sense of hope and connection between the people who participated in the groups was in and of itself worth the trip.

In closing, I would like to thank each of you who have crossed my path — for the support, laughter, hugs, kind words, honesty, openness, sound analysis and informed advice. I have appreciated the opportunities you have given me to grow, sometimes in ways I would never have imagined.

I have been fortunate to have had a rich career over the last 35 years that has always included challenging and rewarding jobs that have allowed me the opportunity to meet and serve some of the most unique people I have ever met. They have taught me about my humanity and commitment. Most importantly, they have taught me about myself, which in turn has allowed me to see the incredible potential in each person.

Thank you to the clients, staff, volunteers and board of AVI, and to my colleagues for all that you are and all that you have given me.

MIKI HANSEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
AIDS VANCOUVER ISLAND

## the skills to be healthy

University Nursing practicum students, while also giving presentations to people in the broader community, such as to the participants in a foster parents program.

Education staff did outreach to at-risk populations through such programs as Addictions Detox, local recovery houses, and Brannen Lake Correctional Facility, as well as providing in-service trainings for the staff at the Nanaimo General Hospital.

AVI also provided presentations in settings ranging from schools to community groups and aboriginal organizations on topics such as HIV, HCV, harm reduction, sexual exploitation, homophobia, stigma, and discrimination. This past year has seen a number of trained speakers play more active roles, with the goal of taking on some of these talks in the future.

This year was jam-packed with community events, as AVI participated in the Youth Fair, the World Community Development Film Festival and North Island College's HIV awareness events in December. We were again a presence at Musicfest — a large and widely known three day event — with volunteers providing condoms and information on HIV, HCV, and on AVI's services across the island.

In Campbell River, we increased our presentations to First Nations communities, and have been able to partner with two recovery centres, providing regular presentations on HIV and HCV. We continue to be regular presenters at targeted programs, such as Second Chance

Recovery and Comox Valley Recovery, as well as at a number of local middle and high schools.

At two middle schools in the Campbell River area we coordinated full-day "Sexual Health Awareness Day" programs, which included working in partnership with such programs as Options for Sexual Health. We also saw the very first Walk Away From Homophobia event happen in Campbell River, which was a great success, bringing 150 people from across the island out in support.

In the south island, several key programs made some great progress. The Positive Health Project, partnering with the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, once again facilitated gender specific peer focused weekly groups where participants connected with other HIV/HCV positive people while learning about self care and breaking down the isolation associated with living with these viruses.

M.A.C. AIDS Fund's grant to the Positive Health Project made it possible for participants to go on a two-day retreat to Cowichan Lake Educational Centre. Team building and self care activities, such as art therapy and fireside discussions were invaluable to project participants.

The Queer Youth Community Development project reached more schools and youth than ever before over the past year, both in Victoria and across the island, and trained four new group members. Once again, the project was a leader at such events as the Queer Eye for the







## island-wide services

services, testing, inoculations, mental health services and access to our community health nurse. This program added 51 new clients this year bringing the current total to 223 active clients. In the 2006/07 fiscal year, we distributed 84,356 syringes in Courtenay with a return rate of 94%. Staff and volunteers continue to respond to calls regarding abandoned needles in the community and put countless hours into creating condom packs and distributing them throughout the community.

In Campbell River, we continue to offer needle exchange services 5 days a week, with a public health nurse coming in for immunizations and testing on Fridays. In 2006, there were 107 active clients who made 878 separate contacts with our workers. We distributed 56,849 syringes with a 93.9% return rate.

Our partnership with North Island Pharmacy has been going well, and they have seen an increase in the number of needles dispensed as well as returned. We also continue to distribute sex packs widely throughout the community.

The Port Hardy and Port MacNeil areas are serviced by a mobile needle exchange, distributing approximately 5,000 needles in 2006, with a 100% return rate.



JEANETTE & VOLUNTEER SARI AT HEP C AWARENESS EVENT IN CAMPBELL RIVER

### HEALTH PROMOTION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

THIS YEAR HAS SEEN the Health Promotion and Community Development department take on some new and very interesting endeavors, while also maintaining our efforts in established education and outreach capacities.

In Port Hardy, the program provided sexual health and HIV education to all grade 8 and 10 students in School District 85, in addition to specific education sessions provided for students in alternative programs.

We also partnered with various community groups and First Nations Health Centres to provide education to targeted high-risk youth populations. Teaching HIV and HCV 101 to each group of participants at Namgis Treatment Centre was a highlight, as was the development and operation of a Healthy Hepatitis C Kitchen with the goals of providing nutrition education, HCV education and support to those on a limited income and in remote communities.

In the North Island, we trained two new HCV Peer Educators to deliver peer-based information support groups for those living with HCV, and they continue to work on providing regular drop-in sessions. Finally, through a partnership with Mental Health and Addictions Services, we were able to expand our activities to remote communities, such as Sointula, Alert Bay, and Port Alice.

In Nanaimo, we continue to participate in First Nations education outreach projects, while also participating in various community health fairs. We provided mentorship to Malaspina

## HIV and HCV services

### POSITIVE WELLNESS PROGRAM

VICTORIA'S POSITIVE WELLNESS PROGRAM (PWP) has seen a few changes in the last year. While we continue to provide close to 200 hot meals every week, our funding for the food hamper and meal replacement drink programs ran out and consequently these programs have been discontinued. This has been a difficult transition for some, so we have been actively referring clients to other community resources and assisting them to make connections where necessary.

In addition to our drop-in and hot meal programs, PWP staff members continue to provide advocacy and counselling for persons living with HIV/AIDS on a drop-in and appointment basis.

On a positive note, both the summer barbeque and Christmas party were fun and well attended by program participants. In the coming year, PWP Victoria will be working closely with clients to complete a service evaluation that we hope will set the direction for the program for the next three years.

In Nanaimo, PWP provides services to both HIV and hepatitis C (HCV) positive clients in the central and west coast of Vancouver Island. We offer a daily drop-in for HIV positive clients with coffee and snacks, and we send out a monthly newsletter with updates in research, medications, drug interaction warnings, health and nutrition information, community services and updates on other AVI programs. There is also a weekly HCV drop-in and a monthly men's support group.

AVI Nanaimo staff members also provide assistance with processing forms in addition to providing food vouchers, short-term solution-focused counselling, peer support, access to resource materials, referrals to other organizations and medical, legal, and financial advocacy as required.

In Campbell River, we have had an interesting and busy year as we continue to adapt our services to better meet the needs of our changing client base. New clients accessing the drop-in have been significantly younger than in the past, with clients now ranging from ages 20 to 50.

We have had a steady increase of newly diagnosed HIV positive persons registering as clients and using our services; the resulting number of client counselling sessions has increased dramatically. Sessions are more in-depth and mental health related, and in response we have strengthened our relationships with mental health service providers.



HEATHER, DAVID (VOLUNTEER) & ERIN AT HOLIDAY LUNCH





## higher levels of client contact

The Courtenay PWP provides services to 26 registered HIV clients and 98 registered HCV clients. Our Tuesday hot lunch program has been feeding 15 people per week, thanks to the generous donation of a community member. Other services available include a daily drop-in, vaccinations, HIV and HCV testing, community nursing care, access to resources, peer support, counselling, advocacy, referrals and access to alternative health care practitioners, such as acupuncture, naturopathic and massage therapists.

In working with our community health nurse, and in some cases our Campbell River office, we have also been able to place a number of clients directly into treatment facilities.

Since the autumn, the PWP program on the North Island has been re-invigorated. We have been working with clients to build a program that best meets their needs and addresses issues specific to this region. We have also rented an office space in Port Hardy to better serve of clients there.

We provide persons with disabilities assessor services, advocacy, health education and promotion. We also operated a Healthy Hepatitis C Kitchen project over the past year, and have been working toward developing regular meal programs in Port Hardy and Port McNeill. A lack of transportation constitutes a major barrier to health care in this region and we respond to this challenge by traveling to where our clients are located whenever possible.

### STREET OUTREACH SERVICES

STREET OUTREACH SERVICES (SOS) distributed nearly 1 million needles across the island last year. The Victoria program saw 427 new clients register and distributed 740,016 syringes with a 104% return rate, up from 97.3% last year. As well, 1,559 active clients accessed the program on 25,000 separate occasions.

Everyone is welcome at the Victoria drop-in, and we are often the sole location available for an evening coffee, food and personal contact. We make countless referrals for shelter, food, medical attention, rehabilitation and advocacy, and are a reliable source for safer sex and drug using paraphernalia and education from a harm reduction perspective.

Our 1-800 line remains busy with incoming calls, very often from hospitals and correctional facilities, allowing clients to stay in touch with significant others or arrange rehabilitation services upon release. Often an AVI Street Outreach worker may be the only visitor a client receives when hospitalized.

We continue to expand our mandate where we see a need. Our unique position of being less formal and having a higher level of client contact provides us with insights and information often unavailable to other agencies. Case conferencing with local service providers, such as Emergency Mental Health Services (EMHS), is being initiated to better combine efforts to assist distressed clients.

Another upcoming SOS project will involve training street peer educators to better address

## harm reduction services

the frequency of blood borne infections among new IV drug users. Over the past year, AVI provided training for peer educators in health and harm reduction issues within correctional institutions by means of a contract with the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre.

Our Peer Outreach Syringe Recovery program, otherwise known as Rig Dig, continues to serve the community by engaging active and former users to collect injection paraphernalia in Victoria's downtown core. Apart from the benefit of cleaner, safer streets, the program provides opportunities for dialogue with the broader public.

New to the Rig Dig program is the use of precision mapping to identify where injection paraphernalia are being found and to monitor fluctuations in the number of abandoned rigs in certain areas. If the City of Victoria decides to install needle drop boxes around the city, the mapping process will enable AVI to make informed suggestions of where the boxes will be most useful.

AVI's Victoria site continues to house the Street Nurses' primary outreach clinic, enabling anonymous testing for HIV and hepatitis A, B, and C, as well as for sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy. The drop-in space is also made available to external groups and programs. For example, it is used by a Christian drug and alcohol support group and for client dinners provided by various community organizations, churches and synagogues.

The past year has been filled with the challenges associated with running a busy service that has not seen an increase in funding or staffing levels in over 10 years. In January, AVI held a media conference to announce that we had begun to look for a more appropriate site for our needle exchange services – one that would allow us to provide a broader range of services – and for the funding to make this possible. The announcement brought our community partnerships into the public eye as representatives from the Victoria Police, the City of Victoria, the Downtown Victoria Business Association and representatives from the neighbourhood stood beside AVI and voiced their support for an expanded, integrated needle exchange.

Although no changes have occurred in terms of securing a new location or the funding required to increase and improve services, we remain optimistic that the coming year will bring positive shifts in the way we provide needle exchange services in Victoria. As for SOS services in the Central Island, the mobile needle exchange in Duncan has a steady clientele, operating Tuesdays from 4pm to 8pm and exchanging between 80,000 and 100,000 needles per year.

In the North Island, we continue to operate a successful needle exchange/harm reduction program in Courtenay. This has been an excellent opportunity to connect with folks and we have seen many people use this as a stepping stone to treatment including addiction

