

Annual Report 2004



Working together since 1983

*AIDS Vancouver exists
to alleviate individual and
collective vulnerability to HIV and
AIDS through care, support,
education, advocacy and research.*

Message from the Chair of the Board of Directors

Looking back at the past year at AIDS Vancouver, it is easy to recall many of the challenges that we have faced. The major funding changes we have experienced continue to require us to seek out new and innovative ways of ensuring that we have the resources necessary to offer effective and sustainable services. Rising infection rates and the diversity of those impacted by HIV and AIDS continue to compel us to respond with renewed energy and creativity. The sometime harsh reality of the relationship between social factors such as poverty and discrimination and health remains undeniable and thus central to both our support of those living with HIV/AIDS as well as our prevention efforts.

“...we are well equipped to handle whatever challenges may lie ahead.”

However, it is also easy to recall many of the successes that we have had, successes that clearly demonstrate AIDS Vancouver’s unwavering commitment to alleviating collective and individual vulnerability to HIV and AIDS through care and support, education, advocacy, and research. From the countless direct services accessed by our clients to the many community development and prevention education initiatives undertaken, we have shown our resolve in taking a comprehensive approach to addressing HIV/AIDS and related issues.

Of course, none of this would have been possible had it not been for the hard work and dedication of countless individuals – staff, volunteers, and community partners alike. In particular I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our staff and management team, whose exceptional commitment to our clients and mission guided us tirelessly through an entire year without a permanent Executive Director. I hope that they are as proud of all they have accomplished as I am.

I believe strongly in the mission of AIDS Vancouver. However, it is my belief in the people who carry out that mission on a daily basis that gives me confidence that we are well equipped to handle whatever challenges may lie ahead.

Jamie Myrah, Chair
AIDS Vancouver Board of Directors

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Executive Directors' Report

Throughout the 2003-2004 fiscal year we have shared the privilege of being Co-Executive Directors for AIDS Vancouver, and the year was one of no small significance for the agency.

On August 1, 2003, we marked our 20th anniversary – two decades of responding to HIV/AIDS-related vulnerability in Vancouver. As one of the longest-established AIDS service organizations in Canada, AIDS Vancouver has a proud history of responsive service delivery. The agency's many and varied programs and services have been developed to meet needs specific to the complex nature of HIV disease, the populations that have been most profoundly affected by it, and the environmental and psycho-social factors that fuel the epidemic locally.

Consequently, our services evolve as the HIV-related landscape changes. At times this takes the form of minor adjustments to programming; on other occasions, emerging trends necessitate substantial changes in the way services are offered. An example of the latter approach from the 2003/04 year is the expansion of Gay Men's Health services at AIDS Vancouver into the larger, more vibrant Gayway program, a change informed by increases in HIV infections and related STDs among gay men in Vancouver.

AIDS Vancouver has settled into a secure and productive relationship with Vancouver Coastal Health – our principal funder – and we have continued to nurture our connection with key Health Canada leads and programs. With our core funding stable, we experienced increased access to resources through a number of successful funding proposals and put more effort into expanding our rate of community support.

2003/04 was also a period of significant organizational change, and innovation and successes. We were able to successfully turn around an operational deficit, streamline the administrative structure of the agency, and research and implement methods to reduce agency overhead.

The coming year will bring many new and exciting opportunities for AIDS Vancouver as we welcome a new Executive Director, embark on the creation of a new strategic plan and continue our quest to provide responsive HIV-related programs and services. We continue to welcome your support as we look for ways to make AIDS Vancouver an even better organization.

Finally, we would like to commend AIDS Vancouver's staff and volunteers for their exemplary efforts and dedication. Their abilities, commitment, creativity and diligence continue to be the most significant factors determining the overall effectiveness and efficiency of our operations.

Kim Hiebert and Stephen Smith
A/Co-Executive Directors

Gay Men's Health and Wellness



The past fiscal year was a highly significant one for Gay Men's Health Programs at AIDS Vancouver. A program goal from the past few years was finally

realized when a storefront location called Gayway was opened on Davie Street with drop-in space for gay men to come together and share their experiences.

Programming was shifted towards an asset-based approach to health promotion that focuses on the skills, experience and resources that exist within the gay male population. These assets will continue to be tapped into and utilized to address important health issues in the gay communities.

Gayway was launched in conjunction with AIDS Vancouver's twentieth anniversary celebrations on August 1, 2003. Two days later, at the Vancouver Pride parade, the Gayway entry impressed viewers and established a significant interest in the newly launched program.

Peer Counselling was introduced, through training provided by Bob Martel. Volunteers enhanced their communication skills and began providing support to gay men both online and face-to-face. In addition, the Gayway Programs Facilitator began providing workshops and discussion groups for men in the new space.

In November 2003, the Gayway Outreach Educator revived the Victor Vancouver cartoon serial in a six part series. Using Victor Vancouver cartoons as a way of sparking discussion on important issues some gay men are facing, the Educator began outreach to gay social spaces, introducing Gayway and re-connecting with men in their environments.

In January 2004, the Gayway team was joined by a practicum student from the University of Quebec at Montreal studying sexology. The student developed and delivered a five week workshop series that focused on sexual health, self-esteem and communication and the resulting response from gay men was overwhelming.

With the launch of the *Gay Is Good* promotional campaign, interest in volunteering at Gayway increased significantly. As a result, and building on past successful volunteer involvement, the program structure at Gayway has shifted to allow for greater volunteer input into decision making. This is a work in progress but it appears to be significantly influential in establishing a meaningful and stronger connection to gay communities.

In 2003 AIDS Vancouver was contracted by Health Canada to conduct a three year, national, community based social marketing campaign with the goal of re-invigorating gay men's HIV prevention. With partners in six cities across the country, this will mark the first time in the history of the HIV epidemic in Canada that a national campaign for gay men has been produced and launched. This is a valuable opportunity for AIDS Vancouver to work with other AIDS organizations across Canada to help to strengthen the HIV prevention infrastructure for gay men.

Finally, Gayway launched a new quarterly publication called *Gayze*. This new magazine examines issues of interest and of importance to gay men. *Gayze* was launched at a very well attended and received Spring Fever Cabaret at the Odyssey Gay Bar. *Gayze* will continue quarterly publication into the current fiscal year.

Women's Programs

In the fall of 2003 a workshop that the Women's Program designed in conjunction with the New Dawn Recovery Society was presented at the Aurora Centre's fall conference, *Women's Substance Use Treatment: Celebrating and Moving Forward*. The workshop was designed to explore the ability of service providers to speak with their clients about sex and sexuality, and was based on the theory that women struggling with addictions are at particular risk for contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. The training was well received and there is interest in the community for further development and implementation.

HIV prevention-based sexual health workshops and trainings were conducted at various

treatment centers and recovery houses, the women's prison, women's shelters, youth centers, agencies that provide service for immigrants and community colleges.

Organizations served included: Pacifica Treatment Centre; Aurora Treatment Centre; New Dawn Recovery House; Charlford Recovery House; Life Recovery Society; BCCW; The Broadway Youth Resource Centre; Family Services of Greater Vancouver; Immigrant Services Society; Mosaic; Capilano College; and Langara College.

Women's Programs Statistics	
Number of Workshops Provided	82
Number of Participants in Workshops	1,333

Communications & Community Development

A primary focus of AIDS Vancouver's Communications programs is to initiate and coordinate opportunities that facilitate an integrated approach to HIV/AIDS service delivery and harm reduction. To this end, AIDS Vancouver continues to be active in a number of community coalitions working in the areas of prevention, care and treatment and harm reduction, often taking an administrative or coordinating role.

For example in 2003/04 AIDS Vancouver acted as the lead and chairing agency for the multi-sectoral Vancouver HIV/AIDS Care Coordinating Committee (VHACCC), which is comprised of organisations and agencies in the health, housing, social service and government sectors that provide care, treatment, support, and advocacy to and on behalf of people living with HIV/AIDS. Over the past year, VHACCC has strived to expand its membership, and has welcomed the

Fraser Health Authority, the Mental Patients' Association, BC Corrections, and the Western Canadian Pediatric AIDS Society among others into the group. AV staff chair the monthly VHACCC meetings and speak on behalf of the Committee in dealing with government and external representatives.

VHACCC member agencies worked together over the past year to begin the process of revising the Committee's strategic plan. The plan will be developed through a series of meetings and consultations held in the 2004/05 fiscal year.

In 2003/04 VHACCC also actively addressed issues of member concern in correspondence with government and other representatives, on such matters as funding, housing, and the provision of services to people living with HIV/AIDS.

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AIDS Vancouver currently acts as the agency of record for Keeping the Door Open, a coalition of groups working together to promote the development of integrated, evidence-based drug policies for Vancouver.

During the 2003/04 fiscal year, the Keeping the Door Open Speaker's Series hosted public speaking engagements with influential U.S. drug policy reform advocates, Sanho Tree, Fellow and Director of the Drug Policy Project at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., and Ethan Nadelmann, Founder and Executive Director of the Drug Policy Alliance, the leading organization in the United States promoting alternatives to the war on drugs. These events successfully involved the broad participation of such diverse audiences as: business leaders; elected officials to health and social service providers to families affected by addictions.

AIDS Vancouver has also played an active role in the work of the Safer Crack Use Coalition of Vancouver (SCUC). Through education and advocacy, the Coalition works to promote ways to reduce the harm and resulting vulnerability to disease caused by the smoking of crack cocaine. In addition, Coalition members continued to work towards the goal of producing safer crack use kits, which would contain a range of materials and information that will help with its goals of promoting the safer use of crack.

The Coalition is currently working with similar groups across the country to look at the possibility of developing an initiative with a national scope.



Print Resources

In 2003/04 AIDS Vancouver resolved to streamline its educational and promotional print materials. The agency began the process of reviewing and revising all materials, with the goal of producing new items during the coming fiscal year. The pamphlet "HIV the Basics", one of the most popular for external orders, is the first slated for reproduction. A revision of the text, including revised information on testing and HIV reportability, was completed and is available in a preliminary draft format. Additionally, the content of outreach material for the agency's Women's Programs was also revised, with the goal of streamlining the current 5 pamphlets for the program area into one or two overall publications.

Website



A thorough redesign of the AIDS Vancouver website was completed in 2003/04. The newly revamped website more closely reflects the streams of service at AIDS Vancouver, and navigation of the site follows a more logical and user-friendly layout. Many of the changes to the site were based on evidence drawn from industry standards, reflecting best practices in information provision to electronic information consumers. In addition, extensive internal usability testing was performed on the beta version of the new site before it went live. The number of individuals that access the AIDS Vancouver website continues to climb, exceeding 60,000 in the 2003/04 fiscal year. The most commonly accessed sections of the website are related to basic information about HIV/AIDS such as transmission, testing, and disease progression (approximately 22% of visits).

Grocery

The AIDS Vancouver Grocery provides supplemental nutrition to persons living with HIV/AIDS who earn less than \$20,000 of annual income. Groceries are distributed primarily out of the AV Seymour Street location. In order to further accessibility, the Grocery has developed some key partnerships with the Positive Women's Network, The Portland Hotel Society and Vancouver Native Health. These agencies have set up depots for AIDS Vancouver clients who are unable to comfortably access groceries at AV's main client services location. This year, more than 31,000 bags of groceries were distributed to 1,385 individuals and families, an increase of nearly 20% over last year.

"...adequate nutrition is critical for sustaining and prolonging quality of life.."

The Grocery has been faced with the challenge of responding to this increase in a time of diminishing resources. The ability of the program to meet this challenge has been largely due to the contributions of community partners and dedicated program volunteers.

For several years, the AV Grocery program has received in-kind donations from the Greater Vancouver Food Bank, Terra Breads, and Bosley's Pet Foods. In 2003/04 staff from the program and elsewhere in the agency worked hard to expand this network of partnerships. As a result, new in-kind contributions are being received regularly from donors who include: the Salvation Army Harbor Light; Colgate/Palmolive; and Cobbs

Bread. In addition, the program received a donation from the Workers' Compensation Board Helping Hands Foundation for new refrigeration and freezing equipment.



AIDS Vancouver is also indebted to the contributions made by the team of over 20 program volunteers who stock shelves, unload delivery trucks, bag groceries, pack produce, and greet clients. The Grocery volunteers work as a team to create an atmosphere of acceptance, compassion, and understanding. They work extremely hard each and every week, and this program would not function without them. During the 2003/04 fiscal year, the AIDS Vancouver Grocery Program faced both challenges and successes. Throughout these challenges, program staff and volunteers have held fast to the overall goal of the program: to provide HIV positive people with nutritious food in an atmosphere of caring and respect.

Grocery Statistics

Grocery Bags Distributed	31,000
Clients Served	1,385

Case Management

Over the 2003/04 fiscal year, Case Management delivered services to 1,338 distinct individuals, 243 of whom were new to the program. The focus of the work in the program is to support clients in stabilizing their health and decreasing the levels of uncertainty and stress in their lives. During the year, 50% of Case Management's overall client interventions involved increasing client's access to health services; 62% addressed client's practical assistance needs; 34% involved increasing housing resources; 47% dealt with income-stabilization; 52% involved psycho-social support; 10% addressed legal issues; and 20% involved harm reduction information and support. The Case Manager located at the Downtown Clinic manages an active case load of approximately 310 clients, and registered 48 new clients within this past fiscal year. Forty Four percent of client interventions at the downtown clinic involve harm reduction information and support.

AIDS Vancouver's 2nd Generation Case Management model – implemented in 2001 – continued to enhance the capacity of Case Management to provide comprehensive support to clients across a spectrum of need. This two-tiered model enables Case Management to effectively serve clients in their moment of need – whether they are newly diagnosed, or a long-time client experiencing a sudden crisis.

The increasing marginalization of persons living with HIV necessitates that Case Managers find creative ways to maintain on-going connection with clients. The Case Management team has achieved this through extensive home and hospital visiting, and on-going collaboration with key service providers (including St. Paul's Hospital, Vancouver Native Health, the Dr. Peter Centre, and the Oak Tree Clinic). Women

living with HIV have traditionally been among the most difficult clients to reach. While women represent 25% of the program's overall client base, they currently make up 30-40% of intensive case managers' individual case loads. The Intensive Case Management team's proactive approach to client follow-up, and ability to meet with women in their homes, or an alternative safe space, has significantly increased capacity in this area.

Efforts to increase accessibility and relevance to the diverse needs of the AV client base are on-going. Over the past year, the Case Management Team has undertaken two major initiatives to address emerging trends in Case Management practice:

In 2003/04 AIDS Vancouver continued to see a steady increase in the number of individuals and families from HIV endemic countries accessing agency services (this population currently represents 7-10% of intensive case loads). The Case Management program will compile a resource directory for HIV positive immigrants and refugees, courtesy of a small grant from Glaxo-Smith-Kline. In collaboration with St. Paul's Hospital social work, AIDS Vancouver hosted a skills-building workshop on negotiating the immigration system. Case Managers also presented a workshop for the *Let's Talk Conference*, a national capacity building conference for working with children, youth, and families affected by HIV/AIDS. AV's workshop on Case Management with immigrant and refugee families was well received, and generated considerable interest in our Case Management program from AIDS Service Organization's across Canada.

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The experience of working closely with persons living with HIV/AIDS has informed our Case Managers that individuals are most likely to engage in risky or harmful activities when they are experiencing a high level of stress. To this end, one of the central goals of the Case Management program is to assist at-risk individuals in reducing the level of stress and uncertainty in their lives. Increased access to health care, housing, income, psycho-social support, and practical assistance plays an integral role in supporting an individual's capacity for healthy decision-making. In an effort to build on this, staff in the Case Management program have researched models for secondary prevention as a means to increase program capacity for harm reduction and prevention work. Through this

process, models of prevention case management used in the United States were assessed and examined. Building on the key components of the U.S. approach, our Case Management assessment process has been adjusted to address treatment adherence, positive sexual health practices, developing healthy relationships, enhancing personal coping skills, and utilization of harm reduction resources. Further development of this capacity will take place over the upcoming fiscal year.

Case Management

Number of New Clients	1,338
Number of Drop in Sessions	4,147

HelpLine and Reception Services

The team of highly-trained Helpline volunteers continued to assist callers and e-mail correspondents with their concerns related to HIV/AIDS. Concerns and questions are addressed related to: transmission of HIV (40.4% of inquiries); testing for HIV (29.6%); safer sex practices (13.9%); safer drug use (2.7%); and symptoms associated with HIV infection (13.4%). Overall, the Helpline is responding to more questions from men who have sex with women, and addressing increasing numbers of concerns related to HIV testing technologies and indicators of disease progression. In terms of gender, 64.3% of individuals accessing the program's services were identified as male, while the remaining 35.7% were identified as female. In the fall of 2003 the Helpline engaged in a promotional campaign to encourage use of the service. A poster was developed and distributed

throughout youth and community centres, libraries, and other community-based organizations. In addition, Helpline/Reception Services and the PARC Library hosted a short-term practicum placement for a public-relations student. The student developed a promotional pamphlet for the Helpline and Library programs, as well as a distribution directory for future promotional campaigns.

This year, the Helpline volunteer team also commenced work related to compiling and maintaining lists of HIV-related community resources. Lists include: health practitioners that are accepting new patients with HIV/AIDS; community partner agencies providing HIV/AIDS services; and weekly available housing lists for the benefit of Case Management and agency clients.

Support Programs

In the past 12 months the number of volunteers involved in the AIDS Vancouver Care Teams has increased from 17 to 30 (76%). A third Care Team was established, allowing the program to greatly increase the number of clients receiving support from volunteers. Clients continue to receive 75% social support and 25% practical help from volunteers.

Beginning December 2003, the Care Team program started providing service to clients living in the Downtown East Side. Through this service, AV Care Teams are now able to support people living with HIV/AIDS who may be former (or current) injection drug users and experiencing extreme poverty.

The general training provided to all Care Team volunteers has been re-designed and increased

from 9 hours to 12 hours. Program training materials and manuals have been expanded to include information on opportunistic infections and mental illness, together with extensive procedures and resources for volunteers working in the Downtown East Side.

AIDS Vancouver Counselling Services through Support Programs connects clients to professional counsellors who will see them through their private practices at no cost. Over the past year AV actively recruited new therapists in order to expand counseling options for our clients, and as a result the program has gone from 8 to 13 active counsellors. Through this increase, and with the support of an art therapy practicum student and a counseling intern, the agency no longer has a waiting list of clients seeking professional counselling.

PARC Library

Throughout the 2003/04 fiscal year, the PARC Library staff and volunteers continued to focus on the program's mandate to provide access to relevant and timely information and resources related to HIV/AIDS. During the period, the Library team addressed 6,371 information requests from a variety of sources, including: people infected with or vulnerable to HIV/AIDS (86.1%); health care and social service professionals (3.2%); students (1.5%); staff and volunteers of AV and other local agencies (7.4%); and the media (1.8%). Over the course of the fiscal, the Library added 165 new borrowers to its client base.

In addition to information services, the PARC Library provided computer training sessions to 110 individuals. Open to clients of AIDS Vancouver, these training sessions focus on building competency related to using personal

computers, and accessing health information on the Internet. In the same period, the Library team also produced summaries of HIV-related epidemiological data, collected new information resources that reflect community needs, and participated in a number of local events, including information tables at AIDS Walk and World AIDS Day at Carnegie Community Centre.

The Library program works in partnership with the BC Persons with AIDS Society, and collaboratively with a number of committees, including the Gathering Place Resource Room Committee, the BC Community-Based Research Capacity Building Program (BCBRAC) and CONNECT, a national community health information and capacity building initiative. In addition, the Library also continues to develop

relationships with a variety of local service organizations. This was most notable in 2003/04 through ongoing interactions with and support of YouthCO AIDS Society, after the loss of their entire youth-focused HIV/AIDS resource library in a fire. Planning work with YouthCO will continue in the current fiscal year with the goal of rebuilding this collection jointly.

PARC Library's three public access computer terminals continue to be in very high demand and the program frequently gets requests for materials in electronic format.

Over the past year a wide range of people used the library as we continue to build an accessible and comprehensive collection and provide timely information dissemination services.

Volunteer Resources

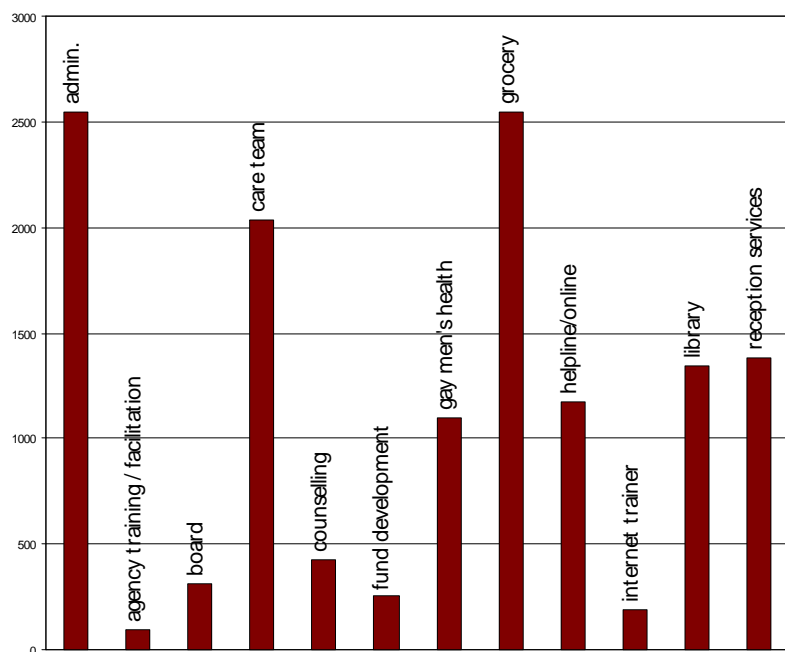
AIDS Vancouver Volunteer Resources strives to build organizational commitment, competency and capacity by providing meaningful and relevant volunteer opportunities that support and enhance the mission of AIDS Vancouver.

successful volunteer recognition initiatives; as well as providing leadership and mentorship in the area of Volunteer Resources Management within local and national bodies.

In 2003/04 AIDS Vancouver had 175 volunteers providing assistance in over 15 different program and service areas: direct services and support; outreach and prevention education; administration and fund development; and research and advocacy. The enthusiasm, skills, resources and motivation these volunteers bring to their work at the agency enables AIDS Vancouver to effectively respond to HIV/AIDS. Successes of this year included: recruitment and retention of a volunteer pool that is highly skilled, committed and diverse in motivation and background; development and implementation of new evaluation tools for assessing agency and program based volunteer involvement; implementation of a comprehensive orientation and HIV/AIDS education curriculum for new volunteers, staff and Board members; several

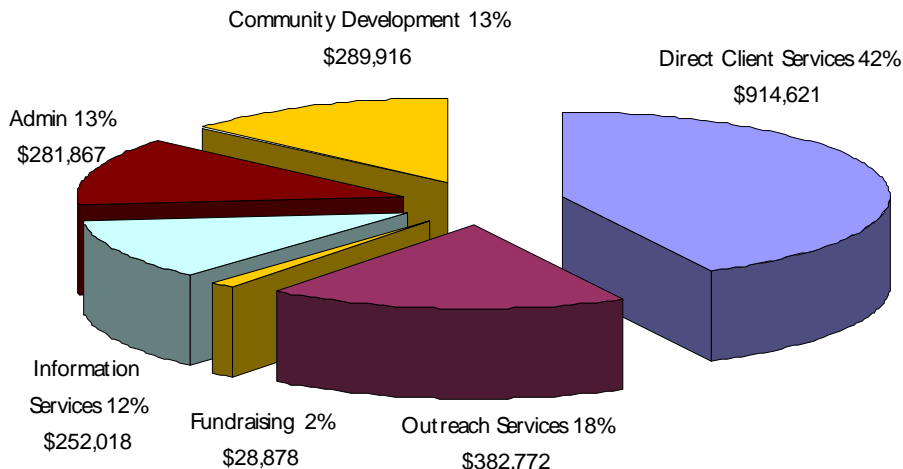
In the coming fiscal year Volunteer Resources will continue to focus on maintaining the highest standards of volunteer management and practice. In addition program staff and volunteers will share and market developed tools, resources and research with other volunteer based programs and initiatives.

Volunteer Hours 2003

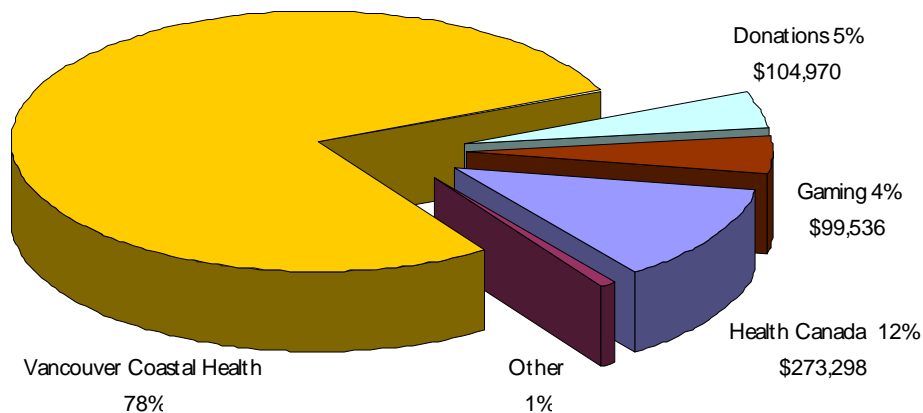


Finance Report

Expenses 2003 - 2004



Revenue 2003 - 2004



Board of Directors

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In Memory of Sharon McKinnon

I first met Sharon just over five years ago. I had just been hired as the Librarian at AIDS Vancouver, she was a Care Team Leader, and we were both members of a selection committee tasked with hiring a new Support Programs Coordinator. As we worked together I was struck by two of Sharon's qualities. The first was that her work as Care Team volunteer and leader was evidently motivated by a genuine and profound concern for the welfare of the agency's clients and indeed all people living with HIV/AIDS. This quality informed every aspect of her role on that committee, and served us all well throughout the decision-making process. The second thing that impressed me about Sharon was her quiet determination. She never raised her voice, or exhibited any anger, but she could do more than just hold her own in a discussion regarding something she disagreed with. She had strong beliefs and clearly strong values underlying those beliefs, and she stuck to them with a dignity and conviction that was truly inspirational.

Subsequent to this committee work, I had the privilege of working with Sharon in variety of capacities, most recently when she was Chair of the AIDS Vancouver Board of Directors during a difficult period of transition. Sharon was ill at the time, and finding it difficult to balance the huge amount of work that she had to do as Chair and a Care Team Volunteer, with her career and a declining state of health. The strain was evident on her face, and she moved slower than usual, but those same inspirational qualities were there, and undiminished. Her heart remained always with the clients of the agency, and there was a strength she seemed to draw from this. She eventually had to give up her Board work, but she remained a fiercely dedicated and committed Care Team volunteer right to the end.

Sharon's contribution to AIDS Vancouver was, and indeed still is enormous. She leaves us a legacy of generous spirit that will not soon be forgotten or replaced. She will be sadly and profoundly missed by all who were lucky enough to know and/or work with her.

Stephen Smith Acting Co-Executive Director

It rained on my first day of work at AIDS Vancouver. As I approached the main door fully drenched, a woman held it open for me. That was the first time I met Sharon. She extended a warm welcome and wished me the best of luck as I joined the AIDS Vancouver team. As I got to know Sharon, her dedication and compassion for people living with HIV was inspiring. I believe she lived her life with incredible grace, kindness, warmth and respect. Sharon will be deeply missed but not forgotten.

Parm Poonia, Coordinator, Volunteer Resources



Major Donors

A very special thanks to all our donors, whose generosity ensures we can continue to offer essential services to our clients.

Government Funders

Vancouver Coastal Health
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Foundations,

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