

COMING OUT

a forum for all gay
& bi men regardless
of their proximity
to the closet door

Thursday, October 12
Open Space Gallery

510 Fort Street

(between Government & Fort St.)

7:30pm

\$3 by donation

For more info call 384-2366
or visit us at www.avi.org/men

Coming Out is produced by the Men's Wellness Program
and AIDS Vancouver Island, and is funded in part by Health Canada.



Inside the *Coming Out* Apple iSsUe...
Tonnes of great resources for anyone regardless
of their proximity to the closet door

Coming Out forum Oct. 12

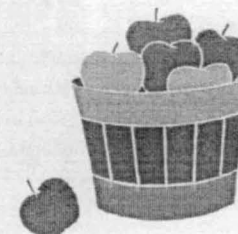
Probe your prostate

Good reading

AIDS Walk 2000

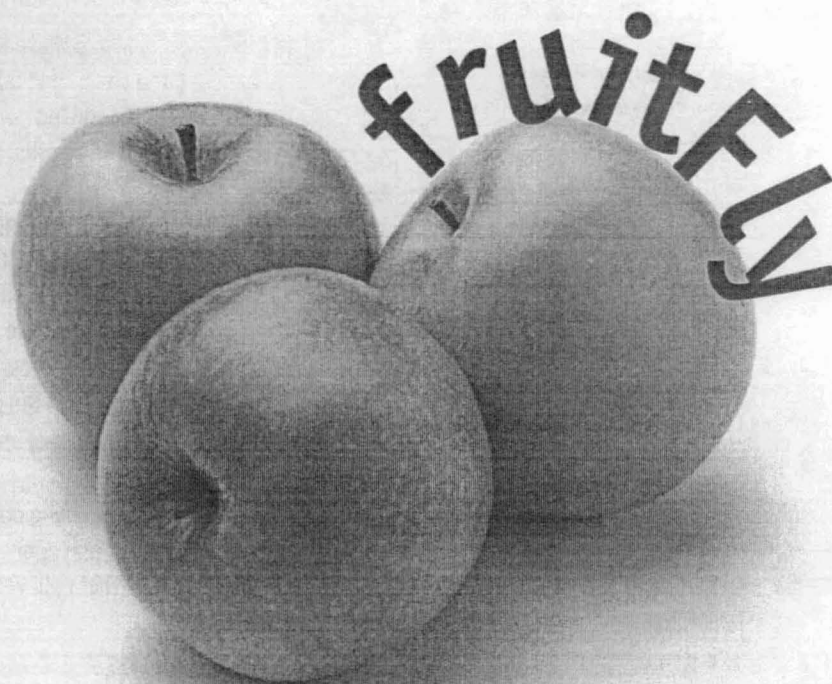
Very cool websites

Program & event listings



Issue 3

Volume 3 -August/September 2000



fruitFly

The Newsletter of the
Men's Wellness Program

fruitFly is published as often as possible by the Men's Wellness Program at AIDS Vancouver Island. We'd love to get your writing, prose, artwork, sketches, and feedback. We'd prefer to get these by email ('cause it's easier to work with and we're lazy), but your stuff can also be mailed, faxed or dropped off at our office. Oh, we gotta have your name and phone or other way to reach you, too. We won't print your name if you don't want us to.

fruitFly won't print sexist, racist or homophobic copy (duh!). We will cover issues and events important to the lives of gay & bisexual dudes in Victoria and on Vancouver Island, including those living with HIV/AIDS. The opinions expressed are those of us, the writers, and not necessarily of AIDS Vancouver Island or Health Canada.

Designed by Matt Larmour & Marc Mertens

Written by Don Boulding, Alan Mallett
& Marc Mertens

The Men's Wellness Program

(formerly the Men's Outreach Project)

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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 gay & bisexual guys. The program involves outreach and prevention education to gay & bisexual men focusing on reducing their risk of contracting HIV.

MWP is funded in part by Health Canada.

EDITORIAL

"Come out, come out, wherever you are..." It's been a sizzler of a summer, and the streets and clubs are filled with great guys. Some queers and queens are so far out of the closet, they burned the door down as they exited. Some are merely peeking out, fear and denial piercing like spikes into the doorframe. It's important to return to that door occasionally, to remind ourselves where we came from, and why we made the journey. Coming out is not a one-time gig. We're constantly coming out. Remember the last time a retail clerk, colleague or acquaintance asked about your wife or girlfriend? How did you respond?

In preparation for our *Coming Out* forum on October 12, we asked a number of our local guys to talk about their experiences. Whether it's with family, partners or schoolmates, we learn that each time we do it, our capacity to live in comfort with our sexual identity increases.

Marc is leaving the Men's Wellness Program after almost three years, and talks in part about how aspects of his coming out process have contributed to his decision to return to school.

Gay men have faced many struggles, and in doing so, have landed in the forefront of many areas regarding men's health—be it mental, physical or spiritual. In this issue, we introduce you to a new challenge ... your prostate, and encourage you to take the plunge (that would be the finger into the lube) and PROBE IT.

Hey, when it comes to coming out and being out, just remember: you don't get the "been there, done tha" t-shirt until your dead.

Prostate from page 05

Prostate Self-Exam

It's easy for a man to feel his own prostate gland. It's a walnut-sized organ at the base of the bladder. It can be felt with the tip of a finger inserted into the rectum. Its texture and firmness should be similar to that of the flesh between your thumb and the rest of the hand when you make a tight fist. If you feel anything that is as firm as the knuckle, then that needs to be brought to a physician's attention.

How you reach the prostate, of course, is up to you. Some men may do the exam in the shower, where soap can be used as a lubricant. This can be a little tricky, because you need to get the palm surface of your finger in contact with the prostate, although the fingernail surface can be used for a cursory examination. You may feel more comfortable if you wear a thin latex glove.

Self-Exam With Partner

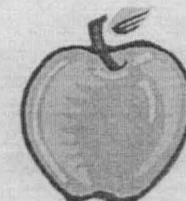
Occasionally, you see hospitals welcoming the partners of women into their breast self-examination classes. The idea is that perhaps the woman is more likely to get her breast examined if her partner is doing it. The same goes here.

It's not difficult to teach your partner how to examine your prostate gland. Aesthetics aside, this is something every individual couple has to decide if they want to do.

Many men can tell when their prostate is being touched because it's very sensitive. If you're having someone else do it, you'll know immediately when they reach paydirt. If you're doing it yourself, it will also be obvious.

Most folks are surprised by how deep they have to reach. You'd have to have long fingers, indeed, to reach completely to the far end of the prostate gland, but it is enough to touch as much of the surface as possible.

As with breast self-examination, you want to cover all surfaces, and you should be consistent in how you approach it. Use a sweeping motion of the finger on one side, and then switch to the other side, to make sure that you cover as much of the surface as possible.





World WILD Web

Next time you're online, check out some of these great sites with resources for those coming out:

www.GMHP.demon.co.uk

The Brits produce some fantastic resources for gay men. Check out *Coming out and Staying Out* in their resource section.

www.PFLAG.ca

Good information for Mom & Dad & Sis and your best friend who's now convinced she's a fag hag.

www.GAYCANADA.com

A great national LGBT resource site with searchable database.

www.GETTINGREAL.ASN.AU

Targetted to gay youth, this is a 'site' for sore eyes.

Further reading...

The following books come highly recommended by Janine Fuller, Manager of Little Sister's Bookstore in Vancouver.

Acts of Disclosure : The Coming-Out Process of Contemporary Gay Men
by Marc E. Vargo, Barney Frank

Boys Like Us : Gay Writers Tell Their Coming Out Stories *
by Patrick Merla

Lambda Grey
by numerous editors

Gay & Grey*
by Raymond Berger

Is It a Choice? : Answers to 300 of the Most Frequently Asked Questions About Gay and Lesbian People *
by Eric Marcus

Uncharted Lives : Understanding the Life Passages of Gay Men
by Stanley Siegel

Gay Midlife and Maturity
by John Alan Lee Ph.D. (Editor)

* indicates book is available from the Greater Victoria Public Library. Visit www.gvpl.victoria.bc.ca

COMING OUT

BY DON BOULDING

*When I first came out
I wanted to shout
But all I could do was stare
For I became white as a ghost
Which shocked the host
But deep down they cared*

*For they got me a drink
And I started to think
That it's OK to be gay
Then I had time to reflect
On what's to come next
Of which guys would come my way*

by Don Boulding

Yes this was way back in '78, my coming out experience was going to the back of the Gay Community Center, not knowing the policy. I knocked feebly at the door, then this gorgeous hunk answered and said, "hi," and I promptly had a seizure. They helped me in the house, gave me a glass of water and I relaxed. The gorgeous hunk's name was Mickey; he worked for the post office in Regina. He's no longer with us but was one hell of a nice guy. His partner drives the city bus. My coming out was short-lived however as the eighties started tragically; my 31 year old sister died suddenly, my mother was diagnosed with inoperable cancer, and my grandfather died all within 15 months. So I played it straight, got married and eventually divorced in '94.

I came out again in '94 only to get involved in a scary relationship with a schizophrenic, which ended up with me

having to move to Victoria (with the help of my Dad, who's still helping). I'd probably be living on the street if not for him.

For four years I've had to live by my Dad's rules. He literally had me by the nuts. I ended up sneaking off to the parks, but always feeling guilty. Much to my dismay, coming out after 40 was more disastrous as I was constantly ignored. Then early last fall I asked a fellow from the park where I can go to meet people like me. He suggested BJ's, which in turn referred me to AIDS Vancouver Island. There I first met Marc, then Tathra, and I went for Core Training in February-March. I totally love my association with the AVI family. I feel like they are my own family.

I have confidence in my ability as a gay male. With the help of Marc who referred me to another fellow for counseling, I am proud to be a gay male.

I have since met another fellow with a disability like me. I have a nice but somewhat rocky relationship.

What I'd like to see is a support group for gays with disabilities. A group is being started in Vancouver, however when you're on a fixed income it is hard to get there frequently.

I love my volunteering at AVI and hope to be involved more. I have developed a nice friendship with Rachel and Marc (Thanks, Marc, for the words of wisdom). And a big THANK YOU for Tathra and Katrina for having confidence in and encouraging me, and a nice thank you to the rest of the AVI family. I love you guys.



gay men read books gay men read
 books gay men read books gay men
 read books gay men read books

The Farewell Symphony

Edmond White
 1998; Random House;
 ISBN: 0679754768

Available from Munro's Books on
 Government St. or the Internet at
www.lsisisters.com

Amazon.com writes:

Edmund White has long been
 praised as one of America's most
 accomplished novelists. *The Fare-
 well Symphony* is the final volume

in the autobiographical trilogy
 that began with *A Boy's Own
 Story* and *The Beautiful Room is
 Empty*. It details the narrator's life
 in New York in the 1970s and his
 flight to Paris as the AIDS epi-
 demic begins. White's prose, at
 once lucid and magical, is the
 essence of great writing. Its
 plainspoken cadences and lan-
 guage resonate with the tragedy of
 youthful passion giving way to
 hard-earned knowledge. Like
 Sherwood Anderson or Theodore
 Dreiser, White has captured the
 soul of the American experience—
 in this case a gay male experi-
 ence—and made it into art.

14
 September
 resumes
 GMRB

Overheard...

If homosexuality is a disease,
 let's all call in queer to work.
 "Hello, can't work today. Still queer."

I don't even consider myself bisexual.
 Frankly, I just think of myself as
 a people person.

Victoria's sixth annual
AIDS Walk



AIDS WALK CANADA
 A PLEDGE IS THE FIRST STEP

Sunday, September 24th, 2000

Register today. Call Stacy or Shelley.
 To volunteer, call Tathra.
 384-2366

Live up-Island?

Call 753-2437 for information about the Nanaimo Walk.
 Sunday, September 24th, Pioneer Square



so long...
Marc says
goodbye

Back in 1989 I came to a difficult realization. I was a gay kid at a school without the necessary resources to support me. A university-bound A-student, I was barely passing during my final year, and all my counselor could assure me was that my gayness would not be noted on my school record. My failing grades were never questioned. I guess they figured that between the taunts, harassment and name-calling, I was dealing with quite enough.

While I had come out to my family, I was still deeply confused, without role models or guidance. I saw no way to attend what I now recognize as heterosexist learning institutions and continue swallowing the abuse and prejudice of my peers and instructors.

An opportunity abroad presented itself. Shy just one credit for my diploma, and like many other queer kids, I dropped out of high school. Weeks later I boarded a plane for Europe. I was there for a year when family issues had me return to Canada. I eventually

ended up at AIDS Vancouver Island.

I'm very proud of the success my predecessors and I have achieved working with the Men's Wellness Program (and its former incarnation as the Men's Outreach Project). We've produced 11 community forums, facilitated the start of our hugely successful *Gay Men Read Books* program, assisted with two Pride celebrations, led ump-teen workshops and support groups, and participated with last year's *Check Your Booty* health conference for queer youth.

Now I'm older and wiser and finally ready to face my biggest challenge. I have resigned from AIDS Vancouver Island and will be returning to school in the fall.

I thank you all for your valuable contributions to the Men's Wellness Program while I've been at AVI and hope you will continue to support its programs and welcome the new Gay Community Outreach Worker.

~ Marc Mertens

health focus:



Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers. Almost all men, by the time they reach the age of 80, will have had prostate cancer, and some of the treatments are controversial.

Detecting prostate cancer, like all cancers,

depends upon a combination of examination by a physician and laboratory testing. The gold standard has always been the digital-rectal examination.

In this test, the physician

inserts a finger into the rectum and feels the prostate for any lumps. It's amazing how accurate this is, considering that you really can't get your fingers all the way around the prostate gland.

Frequency

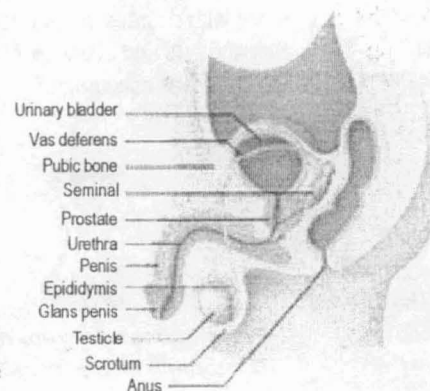
Many men hate this exam, and consequently don't have it often enough.

Physicians often forget to do it as part of the routine physical. If you are a man over 50, ask your physician to examine your prostate gland as part of your routine visit. Many doctors feel this should be done every year.

Similarity to Breast Cancer

With breast cancer, we encourage women to examine their own breasts, not as a substitute for a doctor doing this exam, but as an interim measure. If a woman feels a breast lump between her regular examinations, then she at least has given her doctor a leg up in treating her disease.

Male Reproductive System



The prostate also can be examined by the patient or his partner at six-month intervals in between the regular yearly exam. If indeed you feel a lump, you then have a six-month jump on treatment. This is not talked about a lot because many people have trouble dealing with these parts of the body.

See Prostate on page 11

prostate self exam

What's goin' down?

EVENTS

Coming Out Forum

a forum for all gay & bisexual men at all stages of coming out
Thursday, October 12, 2000
at the Open Space Gallery (510 Fort Street).
Starts at 7:30 sharp.
Come out, come out, wherever you are! For more info call AVI.

GROUPS

GMDG

Gay Men's Discussion Group
Join Alan & the guys for discussion & lots of fun. No need to register, just show up.
Bi-monthly meetings with a topic. Resumes October 5. Contact 384-2366 for info.

GMRB

Gay Men Read Books
Discuss interesting ideas with stimulating guys. Subsidies available for those who need them. Resumes September 14 with *The Farewell Symphony* by Edmond White.
Contact 384-2366 for info.

VOLUNTEERS

Community Forums:

Coming Out

Thurs. October 12
Volunteers needed to make our upcoming forum happen!
Call Tathra at 384-2366 to sign-up.

fruitFly

the Men's Wellness Program Newsletter
Join Matt and the gang as we create our new 'zine. Artists, writers, designers, cartoonists, those with degrees in the Photocopying and Stapling Arts and everyone else welcome. Contributions encouraged.



FOR THE MOST UP-TO-DATE EVENT AND PROGRAM INFORMATION, VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.AVI.ORG/MEN

ON COMING OUT

A personal perspective on my coming out later - Alan Mallett

I am a gay male.

I have always been gay, although for the past fifty years, a combination of ignorance and other life circumstances helped temper that recognition.

My gayness was private, only for me to know, until one year ago, at a critical time in my life, when the lies were piling up, relationships were faltering and my secrets could no longer remain mine. I took a giant, clumsy leap forward, and publicly Came Out. (Note: In my case, the past year was really only the conclusion of a 12-year process. So, coming out did not happen over night).

So, was coming out BAD or GOOD for me? The past 12 months have been good. No, change that to GREAT! I have never felt better about my personal self. I have joined some gay organizations, met hundreds of gay people locally and have been to two Pride Parades surrounded by thousands of my brothers and sisters. I have found compassion and understanding to degrees that I never thought possible. In fact, I am overwhelmed by the huge amount of information and support that has come my way. And, I have a far better understanding of the inexact definition of gay.

The past year has been filled with a huge sense of discovery and personal growth. But, was everything good? NO! There were some very terrible times including some big losses like marriage breakdown, the risk of rejection by children, loss of a home, a financial impact and

a mental and physical health risk. My diary reflects those bad moments, but now they seem so far in the past.

Even though the losses and risks were significant, the rewards and the gains have outweighed the losses by a long shot.

You do not have to go through the coming out process alone. In fact you can't really do it alone, because then there would be no coming out. Get help from your friends or someone you trust. Consider the option of professional counseling to help you along this exciting journey.

Develop a strategy that works for you. For me the visible part was talking to co-workers, my employer, friends and family methodically and thoughtfully. I received my share of professional counseling, joined the Gay Men's Discussion Group, attended some AVI forums and made some significant connections with the "gay community".

I have chosen to come out as publicly as possible. Am I finished? No. There are some things that need further attention, and even though I went through the process very quickly, I am still uncomfortable in certain situations.

Coming out allows you to proclaim that you are gay but it is more than that. "It is a continuing process that deepens your identity, enriches you relationships and nourishes your soul."

Come out honestly. Come out in a way that is right for you. And above all, allow room for you to love and appreciate yourself.

We want to see you use condoms . . . not see your used condoms

Join the Men's Wellness Program for our annual clean-up of the trails in Beacon Hill Park.
Saturday, September 30th at 10am.
Meet at the Totem Pole.

A pizza lunch will be provided following clean-up.