



ABOUT US

AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI) is a community-based AIDS Service Organization (ASO). We provide education, support, and advocacy for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and other communicable diseases. Our service area includes the communities of Greater Victoria and Nanaimo. We operate a mobile needle exchange service in the Cowichan Valley and our catchment area includes all of the Gulf Islands.

At AIDS Vancouver Island we provide education, advocacy and support clients. AVI provides education and harm reduction information to schools, the broader community and target populations. Evidence demonstrates that comprehensive prevention programs can help to effectively contain HIV and other communicable diseases.

AIDS Vancouver Island provides integrated services to individuals with HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, tuberculosis and other communicable diseases, and our Street Outreach Program provides services for people who use drugs by injection. As an example of our commitment to reducing harms and containing HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and other communicable diseases, AIDS Vancouver Island has managed the country's oldest needle exchange program since 1988.



AIDS Vancouver Island's effectiveness is derived from our role in the community and our connections with the populations most infected by, and at risk of, contracting HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and other communicable diseases. Throughout our large volunteer base and the community partnerships we have forged, we effectively target and educate difficult-to-reach populations. AIDS Vancouver Island is a vital component of the total effort against HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and other communicable diseases.

AIDS Vancouver Island is a founding member of the Canadian AIDS Society (CAS), agency of record for the Pacific AIDS Network (PAN), and a member of the United Way of Greater Victoria. The British Columbia Ministry of Health, Health Canada, and the United Way of Greater Victoria provide our funding. Funds are also generated through various fund development applications, promotional activities and charitable donations.

A brief history

On September 17, 1985, five men (Wayne Cook, Don MacIvor, Roy Salonin, John Spenser, and Grant Sullivan) sat around a kitchen table and decided it was time to meet the challenge posed by the AIDS epidemic on Vancouver Island. These five men saw the growing need for accurate and up-to-date information and services relating to HIV/AIDS. That evening saw the birth of AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI), with the founders forming the first Board of Directors.

The society was subsequently incorporated in BC and registered under certificate number S20925 on January 24, 1986 under the legal name of The Vancouver Island Aids Society. Initial funding for the society's expenses came from a benefit and charitable donations. There were no paid staff and a small office space was obtained at no charge. Over the past 16 years, the need for HIV/AIDS related programs and services has continued to grow. AIDS Vancouver Island has continued to receive support from individuals and organizations in the communities we serve including the Vancouver Island Health Authority (formerly Central Vancouver Island and Capital Health Regions).

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DIRECT SERVICES

Positive Wellness Program

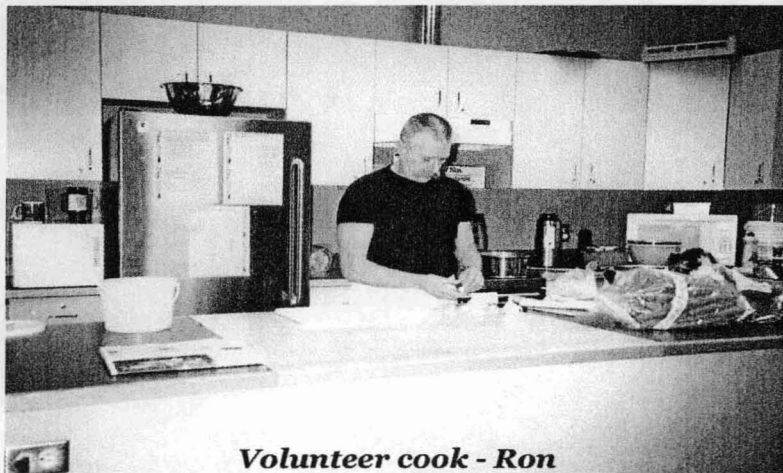
Counselling for clients which is short-term and solution-focused is offered by appointment and on a drop-in basis.

Advocacy and assistance regarding income security, housing, legal, and family issues is provided.

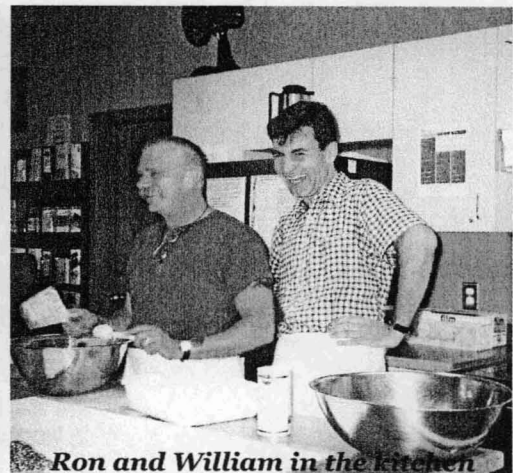
Referrals are made to community resources, professionals, agencies and institutions (e.g. drug and alcohol services, legal aid etc.)

Drop-In offers refreshments (9am-1pm) and a nutritious lunch for people with HIV/AIDS (noon-1pm).

The Positive Wellness Program offers programming for HIV+ clients, their family and friends.



Volunteer cook - Ron



Ron and William in the kitchen

Financial assistance (on a limited basis) is available through the Emergency Assistance and Complementary Health funds as well as the provincial bus pass subsidy.

The Advocate/Counsellor based out of the Nanaimo office offers counselling, support, advocacy and financial assistance to HIV+ clients, their friends and family in the Cowichan Valley, Greater Nanaimo area and surrounding regions.

Street Outreach Services (SOS)

SOS offers needle exchange and health promotion/harm reduction information in addition

to relevant programming (acupuncture, Christian drug and alcohol support group, art therapy, etc.) and a drop-in.

Anonymous HIV, Hep C, Pregnancy and STD testing is provided on-site by the Capital Health Region Street Nurse Program. Vaccinations, referrals and other services are also available.

The Hepatitis C Outreach Project offers peer support, information and referrals to individuals infected with Hep C or at risk of infection. The project also trains individuals in prisons and in the street community to be Hep C peer educators.

Street Outreach Services also runs the Cowichan Valley Mobile Needle Exchange, which is based out of Duncan. For information or to access services, call (250) 701 - 3667.

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EDUCATION SERVICES

Health Promotion and Community Development

Infoline (1-800-665-2437) provides information about HIV/AIDS, safer sex, HIV testing or transmission, STDs, harm reduction, and more. All calls are confidential and are administered by trained volunteers and staff.

Speakers Bureau arranges HIV/AIDS and related presentations (by appointment) for schools, workplaces, and community or religious organizations. Speakers address a variety of topics and present to a wide range of audiences, including children as young as five.

Information on HIV/AIDS and related issues is displayed at health fairs and other public forums.

AVI's Resource Centre provides an extensive collection of material, which is available to the public regarding HIV/AIDS and related issues. Please call for hours of operation.

The Men's Wellness Program offers support, information and outreach to men who have sex with men (in order to reduce their risk of infection) as well as HIV+ gay or bisexual men.

Nanaimo - AIDS Vancouver Island's Nanaimo office provides education services to the Cowichan Valley, Greater Nanaimo area and more remote communities, including some Gulf Islands.

Education Information, resources, presentations and displays can be requested through the Education Workers based in the Victoria and Nanaimo offices.

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VOLUNTEER WITH US

If you would like to volunteer for AIDS Vancouver Island, here are some things we would like you to know before you join us.

Volunteering for AIDS Vancouver Island is about getting involved in the programs, supports and services AIDS Vancouver Island provides for people who are living with HIV/AIDS, people who use drugs by injection and people who are Hepatitis C positive. With the advancements in treatment, HIV positive people are living much longer than they did during the years following initial onset of the disease in the mid 80's. AVI's Positive Wellness Centre provides a safe place for HIV positive clients to drop in, have lunch, and find support through meeting and talking with peers and AVI counselling staff.

There are volunteer opportunities you can become involved in that will help AVI carry out its mandate: *to confront AIDS, prevent the spread of HIV through education, support all those affected by the disease, and advocate on their behalf.*

Volunteering may mean helping with a mail out, doing data entry/clerical work, staffing the reception area, writing promotional material or developing website material. Other times it may mean training as a speaker to give presentations on HIV/AIDS prevention to a school or community group. Some AVI volunteers get involved with AIDS Vancouver Island special events including the annual AIDS Walk, World AIDS Day, AIDS Awareness Week, and the biannual Dancers for Life event. As well, volunteers staff the Needle Exchange program and help with anything from stocking supplies to doing "rig digs" - which means cleaning up an area of the community where used syringes may have been discarded or dropped. There are all sorts of volunteer opportunities with AVI.



Busy volunteer David, with Brigitte and Garth.

If you would like to get involved with us, please read on!

The qualities we look for in a volunteer are:

- Commitment, personal integrity, a sense of humor, humility, diligence, reliability.
- Being comfortable with all kinds of people including those that are physically or

mentally ill, street- involved folks, queers (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, two-spirited...), intravenous drug users and those with addiction issues.

- A willingness to learn about and keep up-to-date about HIV/AIDS related issues, challenging any ignorance and judgments they identify in themselves or others.
- A strong sense of personal and professional boundaries and an understanding of confidentiality issues

We provide volunteers with a core training (volunteer orientation) program. Core training offers time for in-depth thinking and time for consideration about your volunteer role with AVI.

How do you become an AVI Volunteer?



Step One: The Volunteer Application Form.

A four-page application form helps us learn a little bit about you, your interests and skills, and when you are available for volunteering. Some of the questions are personal. This form is confidential. We recommend that you take some time reflecting on and completing the application.

Step Two: The Screening Interview.

After you submit your application form, we will arrange an interview with you. The interview helps us decide how you might make the best contribution to AVI while satisfying your needs to be an effective volunteer. The most important thing for you to consider is why you want to volunteer.

Step Three: Core Training.

Core Training gives individuals an opportunity to decide if volunteering at AVI is for them. It consists of 25-hours of training sessions that occur over a period of approximately one month. Core Training is held on weekday evenings and some weekends over a four-week period.

The course is offered two or three times a year and is intended to provide all volunteers with a base of knowledge that will enhance their volunteer work. Volunteers are provided with information on HIV/AIDS and related psychosocial issues, determinants of health, harm reduction, confidentiality, communication, skills building and values clarification. A certificate is awarded upon completion of the core training program. Individuals accepted as volunteers at the end of the course may apply to take further training specific to Infoline, Speakers Bureau and Street Outreach. Core training is also available for

volunteers in the Nanaimo area.

Step Four: Placement Interview

Volunteers meet with the manager of volunteer services for a placement interview once core training is completed. This enables both parties to determine what type of volunteer experience will suit the volunteer and the organization. Suitable volunteer opportunities are identified and an initial plan is developed to utilize the volunteers' interests, skills, and availability.

More you might like to know... the three most common FAQ's

How much volunteer time do I need to give?

AVI expects a minimum six- month time commitment from volunteers who are accepted into AIDS Vancouver Island. Volunteers involved with ongoing programs or projects often have regularly scheduled times to volunteer giving an average of two to four hours per week. However, some volunteers involved with special events or short-term projects fulfill a concentrated amount of their volunteering commitment in a relatively short period of time through these activities.

Can I volunteer before I take Core Training?

Yes, there are some limited opportunities prior to Core Training. Some tasks occur year round and may require a shorter training/orientation session to serve in these areas. Examples are clerical/data entry and reception work. As well, some volunteers with specific skills can start volunteering prior to Core Training but will be expected to complete training when it is offered.

Can I volunteer after regular business hours?

The majority of the volunteer opportunities at AVI occur during regular business hours. Various special events and the Needle Exchange Program activities may provide volunteer opportunities that occur outside of business hours. The Volunteer Application form lists many jobs and activities you can choose as areas of interest.



What are some examples of things I can do as an AVI volunteer?

Volunteer Opportunities

Resource Centre

The Resource Centre provides information on HIV/AIDS through a collection of books, visual materials, journals and subject files. Volunteers reshelv and process new materials and help the public use the collection.

Gay Community Outreach

The Men's Wellness Program promotes sexual health among gay & bisexual men. Volunteers are needed for educational events and outreach. Gay Men's Wellness Program volunteers help with quarterly Community Forums, ensure information notices posted into the community are kept up-to-date, get involved with the Men's Wellness Program newsletter by writing articles or helping with distribution and mail outs.

Volunteers may also become members of the Men's Wellness Program advisory committee.

Office Support

People with typing and computer skills, data entry and accounting experience, a sense of humour, and attention to detail are encouraged to apply.

Reception

Reception volunteers provide the first contact for people coming in to the office. They greet visitors, answering and direct telephone calls, setup appointments, process mail, complete office tasks. Some photocopying and faxing may be involved. Two and three hour shifts are available.

Board of Directors

As a member of the Board of Directors, volunteers represent the agency in the community and guide the policy and governance of AVI. Individuals are elected to these positions at the Annual General Meeting in June.

Fund Development

Volunteers are needed to help AVI with fundraisers, like the AIDS Walk and Victoria Dancers for Life, and to sit on various Fund Development Committees. Volunteers are also needed to help develop a wide variety of promotional materials and assist with promotion and distribution. Lots to do!



The Food Store

This volunteer-driven Food Store provides dietary staples to people living with HIV/AIDS. Volunteers perform all Food Store tasks from ordering and picking up supplies to staffing the food store when it is open. PWAs are especially welcome.

Hot Lunch Program

The Hot Lunch Program serves a free, hot lunch to PWAs four days a week. The program is run entirely by PWA volunteers, who plan menus, order supplies, prepare and serve meals, and do clean up.

Street Outreach

Volunteers provide HIV/AIDS, safer-sex and safer-shooting information to street-oriented youth and adults through our Street Outreach - Needle Exchange program in Victoria. Opportunities include staffing the needle exchange, Those who are comfortable working with street-oriented people and enjoy working late evening hours are needed.

Professionals and complementary therapists are encouraged to volunteer their services.

Services offered now and in the past include acupuncture, reiki, art therapy, shiatsu, stress management, naturopathy, nutrition and financial management.

We are interested in increasing the range of services we provide to clients.

Short -Term Projects

Volunteers provide specific skills and services on a short-term basis: soliciting goods and services from individuals and businesses, gardening, carpentry, catering, computer programming, data entry, and poster design and distribution. Help is especially needed for special events like the AIDS Walk, AIDS Awareness Week, World AIDS Day and Dancers for Life.

Infoline

Infoline volunteers answer questions about HIV transmission and testing, safer sex, risk behaviours and other AIDS-related issues. Active listening skills and a willingness to speak openly about sexual activities are required. The Infoline is open Mon.-Fri. 9-5. Training provided.

Speakers Bureau

Speakers Bureau volunteers give presentations about HIV/AIDS prevention & related issues to schools, workplaces & community groups. They also staff information booths at community events and health fairs. Strong communication and presentation skills, or an interest in improving existing skills, plus a sound knowledge of HIV/AIDS, are necessary.

Persons with AIDS (PWAs) are especially encouraged to apply. Training is provided.

Still Need to Know More?

If you have any further questions about volunteering at AIDS Vancouver Island, please contact the Manager of Volunteer Services, at 384-2366 or by

e-mail at info@avi.org

OR

complete the [Volunteer Application Form](#)

You can fax or mail the form to the address or fax number indicated at the bottom of the application.

We look forward to hearing from you!

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AIDS Vancouver Island

AIDS Vancouver

Men's Wellness Program (AVI)

Pacific AIDS Network (British Columbia)

The Red Road HIV/AIDS Network Society (British Columbia)

YouthCo AIDS Society

B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

Vancouver AIDS Memorial

Canadian AIDS Society

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

Canadian HIV Trials Network

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United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

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