

Campbell River's New Positive Fitness Program

AVI Campbell River has launched a Positive Fitness Program in partnership with Strathcona Gardens Recreation Centre (SGRC), with funding from the Vancouver Island Health Authority and with the support of the Integrated Health Network (IHN) of Campbell River.

The goal of the Positive Fitness Program is to provide clients with information about the benefits of exercise when living with HIV or hepatitis C (HCV), and to remove barriers that prevent them from accessing fitness facilities.

Moderate exercise done regularly can help people who are HIV or HCV positive stay physically and emotionally healthy. Not only does exercise strengthen muscles, bone density, and circulations, it can also improve immune function. A scheduled exercise program helps alleviate boredom, decrease stress and improves self esteem. The program will also provide clients with the chance to socialize and have fun.

Registered clients of AVI's Positive Wellness Program will be able to participate in a once weekly fitness program at Strathcona Gardens Recreation Centre, with transportation provided. They will have access to the facility's weight room, pools, hot tub, sauna and steam bath. The program will be divided into two groups – Tuesday is a mixed group and Thursday is women only. The program will run until the end of March.

SGRC fitness staff will be on hand for the first two days of each session to provide participants with an introduction to their facilities and offer some expertise on aquatic fitness, use of aquatic equipment, and orientation of the weight room. Within each six week session, a nurse from North Island Liver Services will do a presentation on hepatitis C and the benefits of exercise and diet. Integrated Health Network staff will also conduct an information session with clients to explain how to access and benefit from their new programs.

Cleaning Up Victoria's Downtown

On Saturday, September 27, 2008, a downtown Victoria clean-up day was organized by AVI's SAG (Street Advocacy Group) in partnership with SOLID (Society of Living Intravenous Drug Users). SAG is a harm reduction group organized through AVI. Approximately 15 volunteers were involved, including AVI volunteers and representatives from SAG and SOLID.

This was an opportunity for a diverse group of people to learn from one another and contribute to our community in a shared effort. Volunteers went out in groups of four, which included a team leader from SAG or SOLID. At the end of about 3 hours work, 86 used needles and 1.5 pick-up trucks worth of



Rick and Wolf, members of AVI's Rig Dig Team

garbage were collected and disposed of. Donations of supplies came from the Cook Street Do-It Centre and Capital Iron, and shovels were lent by Fernwood Commons gardeners Rainey and Margo.

It was a nice sunny day to do a rig dig and garbage clean up in downtown Victoria. The group had coffee and treats then put on their gloves and picked up rakes and garbage bags, spreading out around Victoria. Four people cruised through city hall, China town and down to Streetlink. The streets were quiet and fairly clean; there was very little in terms of drug paraphernalia – no wrappers or waters lying about.

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Men's Wellness Program

It's hard to believe that a new year is upon us once again. The Men's Wellness Program (MWP) has been active with planning for some spring events up and down the Island, as well as sending out an e-news update and working on a new issue of Men's Briefs.

Just before Christmas, interim MWP coordinator Stacy Leblanc travelled to Campbell River to meet with Campbell River Pride. CR Pride is a Campbell River based GLBTQ Social/Support Group open to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual, two-spirited, queer, and questioning people, as well as their family, friends and supporters. The group meets every Tuesday from 5:30pm-7:30pm. If you'd like more information about the group please call Leanne at 250-204-2821, or visit their website at www.crpride.com. The MWP will be working with this group in the coming months to plan some events in Campbell River. Stay tuned for more details.

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Back in December, the Men's Wellness Program was pleased to offer 9 passes for two to the opening screening of Gus Van Sant's new film, Milk, about the life of gay rights activist Harvey Milk. Ticket winners came back from the film with overwhelmingly positive accounts about this important film.

Stacy is also busily preparing an issue of Men's Briefs. If you have any events or ideas for contributions please feel free to email him at mwp@avi.org.

At the end of March Captain Snowdon will be returning to the program after his year of study, with a head full of new and exciting ideas.



AVI Nanaimo Update

Along with the usual flurry of activity that comes with the Fall, September 21, 2008, marked our 13th Annual AIDS Walk for Life at Maffeo-Sutton Park. We had a small but dedicated group attend, with approximately 75-80 walkers and a great showing of support from Tillicum-Lelum with 30 participants.

Also tireless in their support of AVI Nanaimo is M.A.C. Cosmetics. Once again, they were our top fundraisers with their staff bringing in \$2,600 and another \$2,600 in corporate matches. We appreciate the support and dedication they show us year 'round.



MAC Cosmetic's AIDS Walk Team

Photo Credit: Valerie Mumford

This past year we were also provided with two opportunities to link our work to the African experience of HIV/AIDS. In October, we had an invitation from the nursing program at Vancouver Island University to meet and share information with a delegation from the Sunyani Polytechnic in Ghana. It quickly became apparent we share similar challenges including stigma, discrimination, myths and misinformation. The discussion centered on policy and practice for HIV/AIDS treatment, education, prevention and harm reduction and meeting the needs of clients from a front-line perspective.

Also in October, we were invited to meet with a couple from South Africa, Jaco and Antoinette Fouche, who are an HIV+ couple committed to the education and dissemination of AIDS information to the public at large.

The Fouches are founders of Edu-AIDS Consultancy Service and, according to their literature, both are qualified HIV/AIDS educators and life-skills trainers. They concentrate on the development of healthy values, free choice and safer sex, functioning across all religious, cultural and socio-economic barriers. AVI staff attended a banquet and information evening in their honour at the Parksville Fellowship Baptist Church.

Cleaning Up (continued from Page 1)

The group then went to the infamous “cage” behind the Janion building near the Johnson Street Bridge. They picked up a lot of garbage and with some rig digging, and safely recovered 18 used needles.

At one point a Police cruiser came by and the groups was asked – via the loudspeaker – to leave the property. One of the volunteers waved hello and after some chit-chat, the officer realized what everyone was doing, apologized, and thanked them for cleaning up the space.

They then went over the Johnson Street Bridge and cleaned up the whale wall park and the parking lot behind two buildings. “This was what we felt good about,” said participant Craig Ballantyne. “We picked up lots of old clothes and garbage here – some of the clothes had been there for months. We then went over the bridge to Esquimalt; an area that used to be “party central” before the city cut down all the bushes. Luckily the apple tree was still standing and we all had a break for an apple.”

The group then made their way back to AVI where two AVI volunteers had a delicious lunch prepared. The group of four collected three full garbage bags of garbage and 30 used needles.

AVI and SOLID members agreed that the day was very worthwhile and hope to organize more community clean up days in months to come.

Meanwhile, thanks to funding from the City of Victoria, AVI’s rig dig teams continue to go out for two hours every weekday morning, hunting for used needles to bring back to AVI for safe disposal. AVI volunteers accompany rig diggers most days. If you would like to help with this project, please contact Leslie Robinson, Volunteers Officer at (250-384-2366 ext 109).

~ Thanks to Craig Ballantyne for his first hand report on the day and his contribution to this article.

PWP Victoria Update

The Positive Wellness Program in Victoria has been busy over the past several months. In 2008 we served 6,092 hot lunches in our daily drop-in, which is open five days a week. We had contact with roughly 25 men and 7 women in the drop-in each day.

In December, we had a successful holiday party. Thanks to First Metropolitan Church for hosting us and to a wonderful team of volunteers who gathered donations for a fun raffle and helped plan music and decorations for us. Gill, our nutrition program coordinator, made a fabulous meal enjoyed by 70 people at the party.

A special thanks to the following for their donations to the PWP Holiday Party: Andrew Beckerman and Tim Kyle, Anonymous, Cascadia Bakery, Wild Fire Bakery, Bean Around the World Coffee Shop, and Stanley Stitchcraft.

Volunteers: What they’re saying about AVI...

Volunteering at AVI has opened my eyes to ... the need for more supports for people with HIV/AIDS. ~ C. A., Volunteer

As a volunteer, active daily for 13 years now ... I’ve become very grounded as a client and volunteer ... the positive impact on my life and being is immeasurable. ~ D. D., Volunteer

As a volunteer I have had the opportunity to attend amazing training sessions from which I learned a great deal about HIV transmission and more importantly the personal impact HIV has on individuals and society. ~ M. B., Practicum Student

I find it important to volunteer as it gives some purpose to my week.. ~ S. A., Volunteer

I make connections with some of my peers, AVI staff and volunteers and have people to get along with, and talk with about important issues. ~ R. P., Volunteer

Health Promotion Workshops February 14 and 15

Begbie Hall, 2101 Richmond Ave, Victoria

Topics: Hep C, Treatment, HIV/HCV Co-infection, Living Well with Chronic Illness, and a Sexual Health workshop for Valentine’s Day!
For more info contact Hermione at (250) 384-2366 or hermione.jefferis@avi.org.



DINING OUT FOR LIFE
VANCOUVER ISLAND

SAVE THE DATE!

Dining Out for Life
March 12, 2009
www.diningoutforlife.com

To volunteer, email
Leslie.Robinson@avi.org or
call 250-384-2366.



Update

Welcome back Hermione!

Cool Aid and AVI are pleased to announce that the ACCESS Health Centre received gifts totalling nearly \$335,000 at the end of 2008 – bringing the total to over \$3 million raised for this \$5.3 million initiative.

The Mr. and Mrs. P.A. Woodward’s Foundation has contributed \$70,000 towards the purchase of medical and dental equipment. Sun Star Fund, through the Victoria Foundation, has invested a gift of \$20,000 to be used to encourage more individual and corporate donations, so that the ACCESS Health Centre will be mortgage-free. Other donations adding up to nearly \$225,000 have been received – including over \$60,000 from staff and board members of the two agencies, \$15,000 from TD Canada Trust, and \$50,000 from Civic Heritage Trust.

These donations bring the ACCESS Health Centre that much closer to reality. Construction has begun and we hope that it will be finished by the Fall of 2009. To make a donation or to find out more about ACCESS, please visit our website at www.ACCESSHealthCentre.ca.

This fall, the Health Promotion and Community Development team at AVI Victoria welcomed back Hermione Jefferis. Hermione has a long history with AVI. In 1999, she worked in Street Outreach Services, and as the coordinator of the Taking It To The Streets Hep C/Peer Education Project which included the early development of the Peer Education Program at Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Services, which continues to this day.



Her first project was to conduct a needs assessment of the groups and workshops we already have and what kinds of other workshops/groups AVI could offer. She also organized events for the 25th World AIDS Day in December, including a “Rock Your Awareness” benefit concert at Logan’s Pub.

Come by and say hello to Hermione, send her an email at hermione.jefferis@avi.org, or give her a call at 250-384-2366.



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1601 Blanshard Street, Victoria BC V8W 2J5
Charitable tax receipts are issued for donations of 20\$ or more.

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