



MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE

The Toronto People With AIDS Foundation Newsletter

SPRING 2015

FEATURE ARTICLES

Bowling for Dreams & Opportunities

The Power of Peer Support Programs

PWA to benefit from Pride and Remembrance Run



Top Fundraising Team—The Water Bowlers choose the perfect balls for their potential strikes!

Bowling for Dreams & Opportunities

On Saturday March 28th, over 40 friends of PWA gathered at Bowlarama West, some in their best 80's outfits, all to bowl in support of PWA's Dreaming and Engagement programs. This year's LOVE BOWL had an 80's theme and an eager group of participants which made for a successful event, surpassing our \$15,000 goal.

We started the day at The Churchmouse & Firkin on Church Street who graciously hosted brunch for participants and supporters. The Toronto Sisters of J.O.Y. blessed the crew before departing on the fun bus from the village to the westend. After three rounds of strikes, superstitions and inevitable gutter balls, props and prizes were given out.

An 80's Love Bowl not only provided an opportunity to truly put Fun into fundraising, it was a chance to build

awareness for our Dreaming and Opportunities Volunteer program, where clients connect with others, attend training workshops and learn new skills through volunteering.



care has not changed but during our last strategic planning process that consulted over 100 people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, we heard that for many PHAs, their dreams and goals die with their HIV diagnosis.

Why is Dreaming and Opportunities important?

PWA's mandate to provide practical support services, such as food programs and financial aid, as well as health and therapeutic

The process of moving forward from diagnosis requires a rebuilding of often all aspects of one's life – health, mind, body, spirit, personal relationships, employment, housing, etc.

In this process of rebuilding, what can be overlooked, whether out of fear or despair, are dreams. We believe that not only should people living with HIV/AIDS be given the opportunity to reflect on their dreams post-HIV diagnosis, but for those connected to PWA, PWA itself plays a role in inspiring people – both those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS – to dream. Hence, we made dreaming an intentional and formal element of our work.

As Rachel Dickson, PWA's Engagement Coordinator shared with the participants of LOVE BOWL, "dream training has supported volunteers in gaining housing,

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You are important to PWA and we would like to know more about YOU. Share your story on why you've chosen PWA as one of your partners, recipients of charitable dollars and/or in-kind donations. Please write, email or call us info@pwatoronto.org, (416) 506-1400 ext. 240

going back to work or school, learning how to read and write and starting advocacy in their own community. In a world that has turned their back against them and doesn't give them the support they deserve, they still want to help, they still care. They have taken on the responsibility of helping their peers, of supporting an agency that has supported them, of taking on the challenge of changing the world. That's why the Dreaming and Opportunities program is so important.

This year's LOVE BOWL would not have been possible without our incredible sponsors – FOSSIL, Microsoft, HY's Steakhouse, Steam Whistle, Highlander Brew Co., Medieval Times, Davids Tea, The Churchmouse & Firkin Pub, Rainbow Cinemas and our long-time partner, the Toronto Historical Bowling Society – thank you to all of the participants, our sponsors and partners! +

The Power of Peer Support Programs

The United Nations theme for this past World AIDS Day was – “Close the Gap” – with one of the focuses being to ensure that all people everywhere should be able to access the HIV services they need to achieve and maintain their health.

The Circle of Care Initiative is trying to close the gap for women living with HIV in Toronto. After the closure of Voices for Positive Women (VOPW) in 2012, the AIDS Bureau reallocated funds to

designated AIDS Services Organisations (ASOs) to stabilize, strengthen and expand programmes for HIV positive women across a network of services through collaborative programming.

The Circle of Care Initiative is made up of five agencies namely; Toronto People with AIDS Foundation (PWA), Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (BlackCAP), AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT), Teresa Group and PASAN.

PWA is responsible for the Peer Support Program, in collaboration with PASAN and BlackCAP. BlackCAP also leads a support program for African, Caribbean and Black HIV+ women. ACT leads social spaces and learning supports and Teresa Group leads supportive programming for HIV+ mothers and their families.

Building on PWA's long history of utilizing peer based programming as an incredibly powerful way to impact HIV support and care; the goals of the program are to train a strong team of compassionate and knowledgeable women and Trans women living with HIV.

Peer Workers go into the community to provide one-on-one supports with the objective being to build on the value, impact, and benefit that can be experienced by women living with HIV when they are able to receive support from other HIV+ women.

The program has been very successful in connecting clients with services, be it through accompaniment to appointments, advocacy, interpretation, or service

navigation. But don't take our word for it – we asked a few of our peer mentors to share their stories:

“The program has been important to me and I guess it stems back to when I actually worked full time in the field. I worked at an organization that worked with women who lived in the streets and in particular, a lot of girls were positive as well. For some of these girls it might as well have been 1984 all over again because they did not get the support that they needed.



circle of care

This program helps me do that kind of support because the girl I work with needs some real concrete physical support. She needs someone to help her get around, remember times and get to her appointments, help her get to her parents, walk with her and her dog – something a worker in the office could never help her with” – S.H.

“As a peer mentor for the Circle of Care Initiative, I have aided other women cope with HIV, emphasizing hope, personal responsibility, and offer peers ways to manage their health more effectively. By sharing my experiences, challenges and successes, I became a very supportive companion to them. I am greatly fulfilled and exceptionally rewarded by this experience. As a peer mentor, I assisted one lady who lived in

isolation due to fear and stigma around HIV/AIDS. I managed to connect her to women's groups, where she learnt from other women's experiences. The lady was also going through immigration problems and she was at the edge of deportation. As a peer supporter, I assisted her to seek immediate legal advice, and immigration supports.” D.C.

“This program in a few sentences has given me power to build my skills in different categories as well as be involved in GIPA and MIPA Principle (Greater and Meaningful involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS). I have been able to help other peers who needed support in different languages mainly French, English, Swahili, Kinyarwanda, Lingala and Kirundi. The Impact of this program for me is it helped me to get out of isolation, loneliness, stigma and discrimination. I feel like it changed my life and made me a leader in the community” S.M.

The program is helping connect otherwise isolated women navigate services and get some respite in their day to day lives. We have seen more women interested in accessing other services at PWA - like our therapeutic services, nursing clinic, and Essentials Market - who otherwise would not have, either because they were not aware of the services or they were self-conscious. Being open and disclosing has encouraged some women to live their most authentic lives because they see their peers living openly. +

PWA to benefit from Pride and Remembrance Run

It's time to dust off those running shoes and get some colourful new laces! Are you ready to run?

Pride weekend in Toronto wouldn't be the same without the annual tradition of the Pride and Remembrance Run. For the last 19 years the Pride and Remembrance Run has been devoted to the celebration and support of the LGBTQ+ community. It is the largest event of its kind in Canada and is one of the most popular running events in Toronto.

The long standing run promoting and fostering community spirit, goodwill, volunteerism and sportsmanship in the LGBTQ+ community celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2015. Over the past 19 years, the Pride and Remembrance Association has raised over \$1 million for local charities that support the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ+) community.

We are pleased to announce that PWA was chosen as one of three beneficiaries for funds raised at this year's event. The other well deserving beneficiaries are Inside Out, and the Pride and Remembrance Foundation.

Funds raised from this year's run will support PWA's PHA Engagement Programs – Speakers Bureau and Poz Prevention Outreach, which uniquely support people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs) through leadership roles in HIV/AIDS outreach and prevention programs. The Speakers Bureau and Poz Prevention Outreach help to foster social change and uphold the rights of PHAs to live healthy, dignified, sex-positive lives through access to information, resources and supports.

Our trained speakers are people living with HIV/AIDS from all backgrounds. Gay and straight, young and old, men and women of different ethnicities talk to public schools, colleges, universities, businesses,

correctional facilities and more about their own personal experiences and how HIV/AIDS has affected their lives.

By sharing their lived experiences with HIV to the community, our public speakers challenge the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS by putting a human face on the virus. Through education, we hope to improve the acceptance of people living with HIV/AIDS in society and deliver a prevention message to help reduce transmission.

We want to thank the Board and committee members of the Pride and Remembrance Association for recognizing the importance of the PHA Engagement programs.

If you are unable to register and run with us, we invite you to come out and cheer us on! The annual five-kilometer run / three-kilometer walk will be on Saturday, June 27, 2015 starting at 10:00 AM. +

A Busy Summer for PWA... Volunteer Opportunities

It's going to be a busy summer for PWA, starting with Pride Weekend - June 27th & 28th. Between the Pride float, our Pride booth and the Pride and Remembrance Run we definitely have a presence at this year's festivities.

We hope that you will come out and support PWA at Pride. We are looking for some dedicated enthusiastic individuals who would like to volunteer in support of PWA at this year's Pride. It's a wonderful way to meet new people and learn more about PWA first hand.

Interested in volunteering? Contact: Douglas Taylor at dtaylor@pwatoronto.org or call 416-506-1400 x240

In July our annual sustaining fundraiser, the Friends for Life Bike Rally, will set off for a week long adventure to Montreal.

We wish everyone a happy and healthy summer and if you can't volunteer we hope you'll drop by our booth at Pride or come out to cheer on the Bike Rally participants as they depart from Allan Gardens on Sunday July 26th at 9am. +

**OUR PRIDE
OUR RUN**
JOIN US IN
CELEBRATING OUR
20TH PRIDE AND
REMEMBRANCE RUN
IT ALL HAPPENS ON
JUNE 27, 2015
AT 10:00 A.M.
TORONTO, ON
REGISTER OR DONATE
AT PRIDERUN.ORG
THIS YEAR'S PRIDE AND
REMEMBRANCE RUN
BENEFITS INSIDE OUT
AND TORONTO PEOPLE
WITH AIDS FOUNDATION
(PWA).
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Charitable Registration #: 13111 3151 RR0001



HOW YOU CAN MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE

\$60 will pay for a member of the Speakers Bureau to educate listeners about living with the virus and dealing with associated stigma

\$100 provides coverage of an average claim for uninsured medication expenses

\$250 supports necessary living expenses while making the transition to disability benefits

\$500 supports HIV positive volunteer leaders to develop needed programming

Your donations directly support our ability to meaningfully engage people living with HIV/AIDS in supporting their health and well-being.

You can make a one time donation or set up monthly donations online at pwatoronto.org or to donate by cheque or discuss other giving options with someone from our Philanthropy department please email donate@pwatoronto.org or call **416.506.1400 ext. 240**

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And your support is making a positive difference...

"I experienced so many fearful moments when I was diagnosed with HIV. My personal sense of shame prevented me from reaching out for help.

I was introduced to PWA and found a fellowship that understood my situation without judgement.

I started my personal journey of healing. PWA supported my focus on wellness in so many different aspects of my life with HIV. Shame and fear of stigma has evolved into living resiliently in my community. I matter and can contribute." R.H.S. +

Mission Statement

We engage people living with HIV/AIDS in enhancing their health and well-being through practical and therapeutic support services and broader social change, and we inspire them to live into their dreams and discoveries.

Our Vision

We live in affirming, sustaining communities where we find inspiration and support for our dreams, health, well-being and meaningful contributions.

Our Board

President/Chair - Brian Fior

Vice President/

Vice Chair - Cory Garlough

Treasurer - Michael Shreve

Board Secretary - Jeremy Smith

Members at Large

Shae Byer

Bruce Mayhew

Ian Mole

Nancy Pryce

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