

# + POSITIVE DISPATCH

NEW SLETTER OF THE AIDS COALITION OF NOVA SCOTIA · WINTER 2016

## Welcome Elena and Lori!

We now have a new Support Services Coordinator! Her name is Lori O'Brien and she has a background in social work and psychology. She has worked at The Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia and has volunteered at Feed Nova Scotia for 6 years.

Lori has a background in researching substance use and abuse and has developed programs surrounding these topics. We are excited to have her as part of the team! If you need help with anything at all or just want to chat, drop in to ACNS, call Lori at (902) 425-4882 / 1-800- 566-2437 ext. 225, or email her at [sc@acns.ns.ca](mailto:sc@acns.ns.ca).

We also have a new Fund Development Coordinator, Elena Fodor! She has a background in Public Relations and she has worked for Parkinson's and volunteered for Hepatitis Outreach of Nova Scotia.

Elena is busy planning fundraisers for the New Year which you can check out at the end of this newsletter. If you have any questions about upcoming fundraisers or are interested in volunteering, Elena's phone number is (902) 425-4882 / 1-800-566-2437 ext. 228 and her email is [fund@acns.ns.ca](mailto:fund@acns.ns.ca).

## Successful Aging from the Perspectives of Older People Living with HIV

In Canada today, living with HIV is as much about wellbeing, social participation and maintaining independence as it is about optimizing access to medications and health care. However, despite the availability of better treatments, people living with HIV (PLWHIV) – particularly the growing number age 50 and older - continue to experience barriers that limit their full participation in society. As they grow older, PLWHIV are expressing concerns about how well their health and social needs will be met by existing services and supports.

Successful aging is a concept that has been studied for over 50 years, but how 'success' is defined depends on who you ask (older adults, medical professionals, aging experts). Factors related to successful aging that have been studied before in the general population includes: longevity, physical functioning, mastery, cognitive functioning, ability to adapt, coping, social engagement, productivity, emotional well-being and life satisfaction.

Our goal is to determine, from the perspective of older PLWHIV:

- How they define successful aging;
- What they feel they need to age successfully with HIV; and,
- What factors influence their ability to age successfully

By organizing this information into a 'conceptual framework' (a map which shows how ideas fit together), we hope that this project will support:

- The creation of programs, services and supports that contribute to successful aging for older PLWHIV; and,
- The development of a tool to help researchers and/or service providers measure perceptions of successful aging among older PLWHIV

This study will include one-hour individual interviews with 32 older (age 50+) PLWHIV in Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. Interviews will be conducted in person, by telephone and/or using Skype. To participate in the study, a person must be: HIV-positive; 50 years old, or older; and willing to participate in an interview conducted in English or French.

You will be paid \$25.00 to participate in this study. If you have children in your custody who are under the age of 16 and you need to arrange childcare in order to participate in the interview (i.e. they are not in school at the time), an additional \$20 childcare subsidy is available upon request.

All payment will be in the form of a grocery gift card which will be mailed out approximately three weeks after your interview. If you have any questions about this study, contact Lori O'Brien, Support Services Coordinator here at ACNS; or, Kate Murzin, Health Programs - Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation at 416-513-0440 ext. 244 or by email: [KMurzin@HIVandRehab.ca](mailto:KMurzin@HIVandRehab.ca)

## Holiday Hours

Our office will be closed over the holidays. We will be **closed at 1:00pm on Friday, December 23<sup>rd</sup>** and we will be **re-opening on Tuesday, January 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00am**. Should you require assistance during this period, contact 211 for

information about government and local community programs and services; call HealthLink at 811 to speak with a nurse about non-emergency health information or referrals to other services; the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team at 1-800-429-8167 call be called for mental health crisis support; for on-site health care services (in Halifax only) call the Mobile Outreach Street Health at 902-429-5290. For a medical emergency, please go to your nearest hospital emergency room.



## Award-Winning Community Service!

For the Rainbow Community Rewards, the Imperial and Sovereign Court of Atlantic Nova Society, Inc. (ISCANS) presented us with the award of Best Gay Organization.

The recognition was very meaningful for us and we are proudly showing the award off in the main area of our office!



## Totally OUTright is Here!



Totally OUTright in Nova Scotia (TOinNS) has acquired sufficient funding to move forward! Grants from the M.A.C AIDS Fund, the Nova Scotia Dept. of Community Services (Sexual Violence Strategy), and the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia Community Grants program will allow us to run this program for participants from across the province in our Nova Scotia pilot of this highly regarded program. TOinNS is a free four-day sexual health leadership training program for young Gay, Bi, Two-spirit, Trans\* and Queer (GB2STQ\*) men (aged 18-29). Participants will engage in interactive, thought provoking presentations from GB2STQ\* community leaders, and experts in GB2STQ\* men's health. Topics include: coming out, sexual health, relationships, harm reduction re substance use, community history, and a whole lot more!

The program seeks out young GB2STQ\* men with leadership potential. Criteria will include connections with organizations, networks, etc. as members, volunteers or employees. These connections will provide program graduates with opportunities to disseminate their expanded knowledge and skills: influencing their peers, informing policy and procedures of the organizations they are involved in, and moving into leadership and/or mentor roles.

The program will be run Feb. 22-25, 2017 in Halifax. There is no charge to take part in the four days of training. Travel, meals and accommodation assistance is available for those who qualify.

For more information contact the Gay Men's Health Coordinator at [GMHC@acns.ns.ca](mailto:GMHC@acns.ns.ca) or 902-425-4882 ext. 222 or 1-800-566-2437 ext. 222 or visit the program webpage at: <http://www.acns.ns.ca/progs-services/totally-outright.html>

## “Ass Class” going to Sydney.. and back to Halifax!

An adaption of the ground-breaking workshop from England, the *Ass Class* looks at instructing gay / bi (including gay / bi trans\* men) in some basic anatomy as a way to understand the full range of anal sexual stimulation, pleasure and health. The half-day workshop is travelling to Sydney this spring (date TBA), and will also be offered in Halifax too (date TBA). For more info, or to get on the contact list for the next *Ass Class* offering, contact Gay Men's Health Coordinator Chris Aucoin at 902-425-4882 ext. 222 or 1-800-566-2437 ext. 222 or email [GMHC@acns.ns.ca](mailto:GMHC@acns.ns.ca).

## CATIE Atlantic Gay Men's Health Consultation



On Dec 5th and 6th, ACNS hosted CATIE which led two days of capacity-building with local and regional Atlantic stakeholders in gay men's sexual health! Michael Kwag, CATIE's Gay Men's Sexual Health Programming Knowledge Broker, had this to say: “The engagement and enthusiasm for strengthening the health of gay, bi, queer, trans, and Two-Spirit men in the region was so strong!” “In spite of [challenging] conditions, the future definitely looks bright!”

There will be two webinars in March (dates and times TBA) to follow up the December discussions: one on HIV Disclosure, and one on HIV Testing with a focus on Point of Care (rapid) testing (POCT). For details on the webinars please contact the ACNS Gay Men's Health Coordinator at [GMHC@acns.ns.ca](mailto:GMHC@acns.ns.ca) or 902-425-4882 ext. 222 or 1-800-566-2437 ext. 222.

*Atlantic stakeholders in gay men's sexual health attend two days of capacity building at ACNS in December.*

## CATIE News

TreatmentUpdate is CATIE's flagship digest on cutting-edge developments in HIV and hepatitis C research and treatment. In the latest issue: Heart and age-related issues:

- Dealing with heart- and age-related issues
- Exercise + statin yields enhanced benefits
- Dutch study examines aging and cardiovascular disease

... and much more. For more info see: <http://www.catie.ca/sites/default/files/tu217.pdf> or drop into the ACNS offices and we can print you a copy.

CATIE updated its HIV prevention statements in this fall to summarize the best available evidence on the effectiveness of three approaches to help prevent the sexual transmission of HIV. These statements were developed to help service providers in Canada adapt their programs and incorporate this evidence into their messaging. To read the CATIE statements on

- the use of condoms to prevent the sexual transmission of HIV;
- the use of antiretroviral treatment (ART) and undetectable viral load to prevent the sexual transmission of HIV; or
- the use of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent the sexual transmission of HIV

For more information, go to: <http://www.catie.ca/en/prevention/statements> or drop into the ACNS offices and we can print you a copy.

## Life Insurance Policy Changes



Advances in drug treatments in recent years have changed an HIV-positive diagnosis to a chronic disease that can be managed. A report last year by the Canadian Observational Cohort Collaboration stated that the overall life expectancy of Canadians undergoing antiretroviral treatment increased to 65 years.

As of November 1, 2016 life insurance policies are now available for people living with HIV/AIDS. This means that people who were previously unable to get life insurance many now qualify under the new rules. If you need more information or have any questions, contact Lori at (902)425-4882/1-800- 566-2437 ext 225 and she can assist you.

## Nova Scotia Home Heating Assistance Rebate Program

The Heating Assistance Rebate Program (HARP) provides help to low- and modest-income Nova Scotians with the cost of home heating. This program offers a rebate for eligible applicants who pay for their own heat. Single people with an income of \$27,000 or less (including recipients of income assistance) and households with an annual income of \$42,000 or less qualify for a rebate.

The maximum rebate is up to \$200, which is based on your income. Your heating bills must be dated January 1, 2016 or later. Please note that you are not eligible for this rebate if heating is included in your rent (you must include a bill or receipt with your application to prove that you pay for heat).

Applications for the 2016-2017 program are available now, and the deadline is March 31, 2017. If you received a rebate last year, an application should be mailed to you automatically.

If you would like more information about HARP, speak with Lori at (902)425-4882/1-800-566-2437 ext. 225, or email her at: [sc@acns.ns.ca](mailto:sc@acns.ns.ca). You can also contact Service Nova Scotia (who administers the program) directly at 902-424-5200 or 1-800-670-4357 or go to: <http://novascotia.ca/programs/heating-assistance-rebate-program>

## The Salvation Army Good Neighbour Energy Fund

The Salvation Army Good Neighbour Energy Fund program runs annually from January 15 through April 15. Applicants can obtain an application for assistance through the Salvation Army website or from a local chapter. This is not a rebate program and therefore you are not guaranteed assistance. Once an application with the supporting documents are received, processing takes about 7 business days. If successful, you will be notified by phone; if not, you will receive a letter with an explanation why your application was rejected. If approved, you will either receive a delivery of fuel or a payment made to your heating utility provider. You may not apply more than once every two years. If you would like more information about The Salvation Army Good Neighbour Energy Fund, visit: <http://www.salvationarmy.ca/maritime/gnef/> or speak with Lori at (902)425-4882/1-800-566-2437 ext. 225, or email her at: [sc@acns.ns.ca](mailto:sc@acns.ns.ca).

## Participate in Research - Positive Plus One



The deadline for PHAs to participate in Positive Plus One has been extended to the new year.

Are you in a relationship where one partner is HIV positive and the other person is HIV negative or have you been in a sero-discordant relationship in the past two years? Interested in participating in a 30 min survey?

If you would like to participate in the study, please go to [www.PositivePlusOne.ca](http://www.PositivePlusOne.ca) or call 1-888-740-1166.

Reminder of the eligibility criteria:

1. You are currently in a relationship where one partner is HIV-positive and the other is HIV-negative and the relationship has lasted

- 3 months or longer, OR you were in one in the past 2 years,
2. You live in Canada, and lived in Canada during the relationship,
3. You are at least 18 years old,
4. You speak and/or read and write in English,
5. If you are HIV-positive, you have disclosed your status to your HIV-negative partner.

For your participation, you will receive a \$20 gift card to your choice of Tim Horton's, Walmart, Subway, or Canadian Tire. The gift card can be mailed directly to you or "in care of" you at ACNS.

## HIV and Older Adults

AIRN is pleased to be taking part in the National Coordinating Committee on HIV and Aging Social Media Campaign. The goal of this campaign is to raise awareness of the experiences, needs and issues facing older adults living with and vulnerable to HIV in Canada. The idea behind a coordinated social media campaign is to maximize the reach of the messages.

Please follow them on Twitter as they share messages related HIV and Older Adults under the themes of (1) Complexity; (2) Access to Care, Treatment & Support; (3) Housing; (4) Vulnerability and (5) Sex. Here is a sample of the messages:

1/3 older people with HIV takes 5+ prescribed drugs. Some HIV housing orgs in Canada are offering medication support in response.

Treating hepatitis C halves the risk of death for older people co-infected with HIV. Barriers to treatment access cost lives. Homelessness is linked to greater HIV risk & less access to HIV meds across the life course. 1 in 4 who use shelters is age 50+.

Think being 50+ means you can't get HIV? In 2014, 22% of people diagnosed in Canada were over 50

Check out these resources on sex over age 50, and aging with HIV from ACRIA! [www.ageisnotacondom.org](http://www.ageisnotacondom.org)

## Osteopathy

ACNS is now offering Osteopathy as part of our Complementary & Alternative Therapy Program!

What is Osteopathy and how can osteopathy assist people who are HIV positive? Osteopathy does not treat or cure HIV; however, it can improve a person's quality of life. Osteopaths do not simply concentrate on treating the problem area, but use manual techniques to balance all the systems of the body. It is a technique similar to massage that is used to correct the underlying issues that may cause pain and stress. It can improve nervous system functions, blood circulation, joint pain, breathing, bowel functions, and stress-related conditions including: depression, anxiety and insomnia. It can also complement drug therapies used to manage HIV (but not replace them).

We are pleased to introduce Martha Faron. Martha has been practicing Osteopathy since 2010 and has a Masters of Osteopathy from the British School of Osteopathy in London, U.K. Her work experience includes experience working with people who are HIV positive. We are delighted to have her on the team! Her appointments will be the second Thursday of every month for 6 months (January 12, February 9, March 9, April 13, May 11, and June 8) She will be here from 2:00pm-4:00pm and will be able to see two PHAs, each for a 50-minute appointment. If you are interested in booking an appointment please call Lori, the Support Services Coordinator at (902)425-4882/1-800-566-2437 ext 225.

# Coping with the Holidays!

For many people, the holidays and Christmas can be not only a very happy and joyous time reuniting with family and friends, but also a very stressful time. Old patterns of behavior emerge, our stress levels go up, and our ability to cope flies out the window. Holidays start a few weeks of stress and constant motion for many, as well as feelings of being overwhelmed, depression and even loneliness for others. Here are some coping tips to make it through a very stressful time for many people:

## Have realistic expectations!

We put a lot of pressure on ourselves to pull off the perfect holiday, with just the right gifts, food, decorations and so on. But setting sky-high and unrealistic expectations only leads to disappointment and distress and leaves you missing out. It is also good to have realistic expectations of family and friends. The holiday magic might not transform challenging relationships to good ones.

## Have a plan for potentially tense situations!

With some relatives we know exactly how a get-together will play out, because it's happened year after year...after year. What can help in minimizing conflict is to create a plan about how you'll react. Remaining calm might be possible if you are able to leave the room and cool down.

## Maintain some of your routines!

Many people tend to get stressed when their routines are broken, which happens often during the holidays. Keep some of your grounding rituals in the mix such as eating, exercise and sleeping routines. These activities give you more energy and are key stress relievers.

## Take care of your mind, body and behaviour!

Easy ways to lighten up include deep-breathing, relaxing the tongue, warming the hands (or imagining that they are warm, like holding a cup of cocoa), and relaxing the body as a whole. Encourage positive emotions by focusing

on and savoring all the positive experiences associated with the holidays. Spending a minute or so relishing these experiences helps them to enter our long-term emotional memory.

## Slow down and do less!

Consider giving the gift of your full attention to others, rather than being distracted by your to do list; or the gifts of forgiveness, gratitude, and whole-heartedness.

## Acknowledge the loneliness!

For some reason, it seems like most stressful times happen around the holidays including losing loved ones and break-ups. The sense of loss and loneliness can be overwhelming at this time. Take time to remember during this time. Writing in a journal may be helpful and sharing stories with loved ones. Reach out to family, friends or of course, ACNS during this difficult time. Attending community events may strengthen the connection with others.

## Comfort yourself!

Do something nurturing, gentle and kind for yourself. Look outside at nature or at some beautiful decorations, listen to music that you find particularly soothing or sing your favorite songs. Surround yourself with soothing comforting smells, like the smell of pine, cookies baking or cinnamon. Massage your feet, put on a cozy sweater or scarf or hug someone.



## Upcoming Events

### Mid-Winter Open House

Since it has been such a busy year with new staff, we decided to move our annual open house from December to January. We will ring in the New Year by holding our annual open house at our office on January 19, 2017 from 3:00pm to 6:00pm. Bring yourself, your friends and family! This gathering is open to all ACNS members, volunteers, supporters, donors, partnering organizations, and community members. There will be light refreshments served.

### Bid for Life

Mark the date on your calendars! The BMO Financial Group Bid for Life Dinner and Auction is being held March 30, 2017 at Atlantica Hotel Halifax. Please join us in celebrating this fantastic evening of dining, socializing, and an auction of art, trips and lots of surprises! If you would like to attend or have something that you would like to donate for our auction please contact Elena at (902)425-4882/1-800-566-2437 ext 228.

## What's Going On...?

### December

ACNS CLOSED Friday December 23 at 1:00pm

### January

ACNS OPEN January 3, 2017 at 10:00am  
January 12 – Osteopathy appointments (2:00-4:00pm)  
January 12 - Poz Gay Guys Group (5:00pm-7:00pm)  
January 19 - Open House 3:00pm-6:00pm

### February

February 9 – Osteopathy appointments (2:00-4:00pm)  
February 9 – Poz Gay Guys Group (5:00pm-7:00pm)  
February 20 (Heritage Day) - ACNS CLOSED  
February 22-25 - Totally OUTright in Nova Scotia (Halifax)

### March

March 9 – Osteopathy appointments (2:00-4:00pm)  
March 9 - Poz Gay Guys Group (5:00pm-7:00pm)  
March 30 - Bid for Life Dinner & Auction  
\*March (date TBA), Sydney - The Ass Class  
\*March (date TBA), Halifax - The Ass Class  
\*March (date TBA), Online - Webinar: HIV Disclosure  
\*March (date TBA), Online - Webinar: HIV testing, with a focus on Point of Care Testing (POCT)

\*Contact Chris at [GMHC@acns.ns.ca](mailto:GMHC@acns.ns.ca) or 1-800-566-2437/(902)425-4882 ext. 222 for details.