

Services at the AIDS Committee of Toronto

ACT is the AIDS Committee of Toronto. We've been providing services to people concerned about HIV/AIDS since 1983. We're one of the oldest and largest community-based AIDS organizations in Canada. And we're committed to responding to the changing needs of men and women, whether you are someone living with HIV/AIDS or someone whose life has been touched in some other way by this epidemic.

ACT's services are for you. They're free. And if we are unable to provide the service you need, we'll connect you with someone who does.

Counselling

ACT counsellors are available for people living with HIV/AIDS and for people whose life has been touched by HIV/AIDS — family members,

friends, partners, caregivers. You can make an appointment to talk with a counsellor or you can just drop into our office and speak with the "counsellor on call". Counsellors can meet you outside of our office or they can talk with you on the phone. Our counsellors are men and women from various communities. Some of them are living with HIV/AIDS themselves. To make an appointment with a counsellor, call the ACT Hotline at 416-340-8844, or drop by our office between 10 am and 5 pm and say you'd like to speak with the "counsellor on call".

Practical help

If you are living with HIV/AIDS, ACT can help you in many practical ways.

- We provide drives to and from health-related appointments.
- We can lend you medical equipment if you are unable to afford it — a wheel chair or scooter, for example.
- We can help with moves. We can get you good second-hand furniture: beds, tables and chairs, sofas, etc.
- We can connect you with a volunteer who will help you with tasks around the house like laundry, shopping or meals.
- We have knowledgeable volunteers who can help you figure out your income tax return and your insurance policy.
- We have a phone at our offices that you can use to make local calls.

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ACT's Spring 2000 Support Groups

Here's a list of Support Groups that ACT will provide this Spring. They will start at the end of April/beginning of May. To join a group, call the ACT Hotline 416-340-8844 and book an appointment with a counsellor, or walk in and register with the counsellor on call.

Living with HIV/AIDS

A ten week group for people who are HIV positive, not newly diagnosed. Connect with people who share your experiences — discuss the issues that are most important to you.

Aging with HIV/AIDS

A ten week group for maturing men living with HIV/AIDS who want to explore the many issues related to aging in the gay community.

Reinventing Yourself as a Person Living with HIV/AIDS

A ten week group for people who are interested in exploring positive ways to recreate their lives.

My Body/My Side Effects

A ten week group that is a place to discuss the many issues related to handling the side effects of HIV treatments.

Caring for Someone in the Changing Face of AIDS

An ongoing Monday night group that focuses on ways to cope with caring for someone with HIV/AIDS.

Long-Term Survivors

An ongoing group that focuses on how long-term survivors can cope with the many challenging issues they face.

Bereavement Group

A mixed group (men and women) for people who have experienced a loss due to AIDS.

The GAP (Gay and Positive)

A confidential support group for young HIV positive gay or bisexual men under 25. Contact Dino at Central Toronto Youth Services 416-924-4126 ext. 243.

Women Gathering

A group for newly diagnosed women from all communities. A partnership project of ACT, the Teresa Group, The House, and Women's Health in Women's Hands. Call Bridget at Planned Parenthood at 416-927-7171 ext. 233.

HIV-Negative Gay Men's Group

A ten week group for HIV negative gay men who wish to explore the impact of HIV/AIDS on their lives.

Friends and Family Affected by AIDS

A ten week group open to all — mothers, fathers, siblings, relatives and friends — who care about someone living with HIV/AIDS.

Are you a patient at the Toronto General Hospital Immunodeficiency Clinic?

Would you like to have your say as a member of the Clinic's HIV Advisory Committee?

If you would, please call David Coop, Clinic Manager 416-340-5077.

Support ACT by attending

**FASHION
CARES**

April 29, 2000

 **AIDS WALK
TORONTO**
September 24, 2000

**DANCERS
FOR LIFE**
Fall 2000

Internet Support Group for HIV-Positive Women

It's Wednesday afternoon, and women from Toronto, Chicago, Tennessee, California, and England are discussing the challenges that they are facing in living with HIV. The group is fast-paced, lively and full of information, support, warmth and humour. How is it possible for all of these women to be together as a support group? It's an online "chat" group, hosted by hivwoman.com.

Liz Morley, a woman living with HIV, started hivwoman.com about 18 months ago to reach out to other infected women. The web site provides online resources, information and support in English, French, Italian, Spanish, German and Portuguese. The goals of the site are to:

- empower women living with HIV to build a network of peer support
- promote and advocate services specific to the needs of women living with HIV
- provide up-to-date health and medical info on HIV/AIDS
- promote HIV prevention methods and risk assessment of activities.

The site has links to treatment information, a bulletin board, "ask the doctor", "take a survey" — designed to compile women-specific HIV medical information, and a chat room.

In the chat room, Liz had been hearing from women who were having difficulties coping with their HIV status. Some women had lost children, partners, or were dealing with their own illnesses and medication side effects. Many women were isolated within their communities or their own families. They were also dealing with many other issues, including grief, guilt, anger, loneliness and fear around their own health.

Liz approached Colleen Franklin, an ACT counsellor, with a request that they co-facilitate an online support group for the chat room. The support group was initially proposed as a three month pilot project.

The group has been a huge success, with typically 8 – 10 women who are a part of "our gathering". So it has continued on an on-going basis. Interested women may contact the website (www.hivwoman.com) to register for the group. We use technical ways to "lock" the chat room, so the group is completely confidential and open only to registered participants. This has become a very cohesive group setting, with a surprising feeling of trust and intimacy amongst the women — even though we are only connected through our screen and keyboard.

Whether you are an HIV positive woman or know someone who's life has been touched by HIV/AIDS please come visit us. We would be more than happy to talk to you!

URGENT

Help Keep the Sunnybrook HIV Clinic Open

The HIV Clinic at Sunnybrook Hospital is under threat of closure. Since this news leaked out in late March the community has been mobilizing to save this important clinic.

The HIV Clinic at Sunnybrook has been going for over 12 years. It has about 750 patients. The Clinic's physician, Dr. Anita Rachlis, is widely respected as one of Toronto's leading specialists in HIV/AIDS. The Clinic has developed close relationships with its patients and the many family physicians who send patients there.

People come from Toronto and many other locations in Southern Ontario to use the Clinic. If it were to close, there is no other facility that could take on these patients — they are all filled to capacity.

We cannot afford to lose this crucially important Clinic! Please join the fight to save the Sunnybrook HIV Clinic. If you would like to help, please call 416-340-8484 ext. 261.



EMPLOYMENT ACTION IT REALLY HELPS

ACT and the Toronto PWA Foundation have developed an innovative, free, client-focused Employment Action program open to all individuals with HIV/AIDS considering (re)employment. Clients can get counselling on benefits, employment planning, job trials, employment skills development, job placement assistance and other services.

Recently Employment Action has been working with Senita (not her real name), a 38-year-old single Mom living with HIV. Senita wanted to explore her options around going back to work. Five years ago, she had to leave her previous job for medical reasons. She is currently receiving government disability benefits. "I've been out of the work force for so long, I was wondering whether I had any chance of getting a job again," she said.

With the support of ACT's Career Counsellor and a PWA Foundation

Benefits Counsellor, Senita has just completed 3 months of skills upgrading in MS Office (at a private school) to enable her to be more job competitive. Now Senita is meeting with Employment Action staff again to rework her resume and get help in making connections with potential employers. She hopes to have a new job soon. "Employment Action has really helped me get ready for work in today's economy. I couldn't have got this far without them," she said.

Since its inception six months ago, ACT's Employment Action program has exceeded expectations. Over 100 people living with HIV/AIDS have attended information sessions, 70 have begun the job exploration program, 18 have found jobs, and 15 more are in the process of obtaining further training. For more information about this service please call Employment Action at 416-340-8484 ext. 225.

Services at ACT *continued from page 1*

- We have a computer workstation with all the latest software on it that you can use to create letters or resumes.
- We have trained volunteers in our Internet Clinic who can help you find HIV/AIDS information on the world-wide-web.

If you are a person living with HIV/AIDS who is considering (re)employment, we can provide employment planning, employment preparation support, job placement and ongoing employment support.

To find out more about ACT's practical services for people living with HIV/AIDS, please call or visit.

Information about HIV/AIDS

ACT has lots of AIDS information for everyone — men, women, youth, transgendered people; lesbian, gay, straight or bisexual; HIV positive or HIV negative. Visit the Access Centre at our office. Pick up lots of free information. And if you don't see what you want, ask us. We'll connect you with what you need.

ACT's information is out in the community, too — in doctors' offices, other AIDS organizations, hospital clinics, bars and bath houses. We also have an informative and interactive website where you can search for all sorts of information about HIV/AIDS, safer sex, services and HIV-related events: www.actoronto.org

Our library has books, videos, audio tapes, magazines and lost of

other AIDS resources. You can search the holdings of the library through the ACT website.

Support Groups

Need a place to talk? ACT offers a wide range of support groups. We have groups for men, women and youth, for people living with HIV/AIDS, for people who have been affected by HIV/AIDS and for HIV-negative people. To join an ACT Support Group, call our Hotline at 416-340-8844 and say you'd like to speak with a counsellor about joining a group. (Please see the Spring 2000 list of groups on page 1 of this Newsletter).

Online Services at ACT

The internet is becoming an increasingly powerful tool in the provision of HIV/AIDS services. The AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) is taking a leading role in exploring innovative ways to provide online services. Increased internet access means that community organizations have a new tool in providing services for people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs) — the internet brings the entire world closer together in the struggle against AIDS.

ACT's online services have been designed to fit in to the community values which shape our face-to-face services. Our website promotes informed individual choices about sexuality, health and wellness through access to safer sex information, our library catalogue, and information around our latest advocacy efforts. Our new Online Discussion Forums are a place where people can find support where they might not have been able before. Contact and referral information is available for

any HIV/AIDS organization in Ontario. Community groups can list AIDS related events, download volunteer training materials, or access ACT policies and procedures. Anyone can email us their questions and concerns around HIV/AIDS.

In January 2000, over 2800 people visited our website from around the corner and up the street — and from Togo and Congo.

In January 2000, over 2800 people visited our website from around the corner and up the street — and from Togo and Congo. We have helped an AIDS organization in Hong Kong to create a volunteer training manual for outreach and support workers, and we have shared our poli-

cy and procedures manual with a smaller agency in Toronto. Through recent email inquiries we have provided safer sex information to a gay man in the Philippines who couldn't safely find appropriate information, and a deaf man in Scarborough. Traditional barriers to providing service such as isolation, anonymity, confidentiality, the accessibility of information, and physical mobility are being overcome by our online capabilities.

ACT is committed to enhancing the range of services offered on our website. Soon we hope to enable clients to directly access some of our programs over the internet, expand our Online Discussion Forums, and post more information. As the global village becomes a smaller place, we are only beginning to see the potential of our online services. Why not take a look for yourself at www.actoronto.org

New Programs and Services at ACT

Men

ACT staff have been developing new programs to reach diverse communities of people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. We will be working with gay and bisexual men as well as MSM — other men who have sex with men. We will have a new campaign on HIV testing, produced together with other AIDS organizations. ACT staff will also be working with dance club owners to distribute harm reduction and safer sex materials in their venues. We will continue our outreach in gay community venues, and we will link with agencies serving diverse communities to reach men who might not have access to HIV prevention information.

Youth

ACT's work with youth who are at risk for HIV will continue. Our Peer Outreach Program will work with young people to design, develop and deliver HIV prevention education to young gay and bisexual men. We will work with Scarborough agencies to develop HIV education materials for young women of African and Caribbean descent. As a founding member of the Youth and HIV Network, ACT will continue to work with

other agencies to identify and address the needs of youth. We are also working with other agencies to develop information for youth who have recently tested HIV-positive, and we will be making ACT counsellors more available to youth living with HIV/AIDS.

Women

We are developing information on HIV testing for women. Together with AIDS agencies and agencies serving women, we will provide these materials in English and other languages. We will offer training on HIV/AIDS to women-serving agencies throughout the city. ACT will provide workshops, training sessions and outreach to women whose life circumstances put them at greater risk for infection with HIV. For women living with HIV/AIDS, ACT will continue to provide counselling services — either at ACT, on the phone, at other locations, and we will moderate an on-line 'chat room' for HIV-positive women.

People Living With AIDS/HIV

ACT's Library and Access Centre provides a wealth of information —

from in-depth books and articles, to concise "information-to-go" packets. Staff and volunteers can provide referrals to a variety of HIV-related services. Our website (www.actoronto.org) provides an on-line self help forum for people living with HIV/AIDS, their friends, family, partners and caregivers. In addition to our popular Naturopathic Clinic, we plan to offer a Nutrition Clinic where a volunteer dietitian will provide one-on-one counselling. Our range of practical programs for people with HIV/AIDS (drives, moves, medical equipment, furniture exchange) and social recreational programs such as our "Meet and Eat" weekly hot lunch program and monthly excursions out of the city will continue. We will explore the possibility of developing a community kitchen for women living with HIV/AIDS.

For people with HIV/AIDS who are considering (re)employment, our Employment Action staff will work with individuals to help identify viable career goals, and assist with job placements.

To find out more about ACT's wide range of programs and services for men, women and youth, call or visit. Remember, all of ACT's services are free.

Enrico Mandarino CONTRIBUTING NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

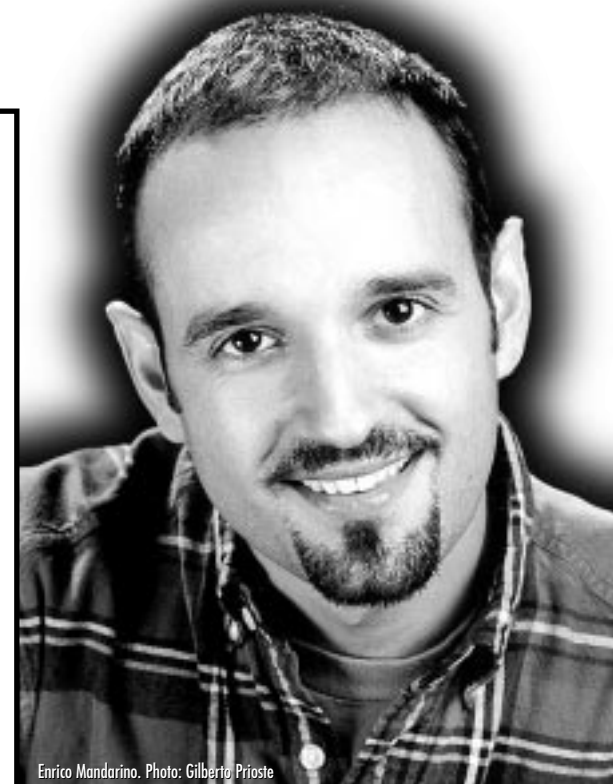
With his bright eyes and boundless energy, ACT board member Enrico Mandarino is a wonderful presence at the AIDS Committee of Toronto. Enrico (or Rico for short) has been a member of ACT's board since 1997 and currently serves as Vice Chair. Rico began his involvement at ACT over five years ago, volunteering in the bathhouse outreach program, providing men with much-needed prevention, education and referral information.

"I want ACT to continue to be a safe place for all people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS to come and receive services and contribute to ACT's work," Rico says. As a board member, Rico has been helping ACT to identify barriers to service for people of colour, women, youth and other groups.

Because Rico wants to ensure that equal service for all extends far into the future, he has established the Enrico Mandarino Non-Discrimination, Access and Equity Fund within ACT's Legacy of Hope Fund.

Rico will contribute to the Fund through a gift in his will and by making ACT the beneficiary of an insurance policy. He also plans to encourage gifts from family and friends. His goal is to have the Fund top \$100,000 so that the interest from the Fund can support ACT programs such as translation of safer sex brochures, recruitment of volunteers from diverse communities, etc. Thank you, Rico, for this very important gift!

In total, 70 people have informed us of their decision to include ACT in their will. Some gifts are big and some are small — all are heartfelt, appreciated and important. If you are interested in learning more about making a gift to ACT in your will or establishing a named fund, please contact Greg Lichti, Development Officer, at 416-340-8484 ext. 265 (glichti@actoronto.org) or Ann Rosenfield, Director of Development, at 416-340-8484 ext. 268 (arosenfield@actoronto.org).



Enrico Mandarino. Photo: Gilberto Prioste

Dancers for Life 1999 A GREAT SUCCESS!

The Elgin Theatre hosted the 12th annual Dancers for Life on Thursday, November 18, 1999. The event raised over \$112,000 for ACT. Dance enthusiasts were treated to another cleverly programmed evening in Dancers for Life's grand tradition. Hosted by **Karen Kain**, the evening's performances reflected the pan-Canadian diversity of dance, as dancers and musicians from different styles and training donated their talents to a good cause.

One of the highlights of the program was this year's **National Commission Project**, *The First Spike*, which involved the collaborative works of four Canadian choreographers, **Joe Laughlin** (Vancouver), **Ruth Cansfield** (Winnipeg), **Peter Chin** (Toronto), and **Jean Grand-Maitre** (Montreal). Also featured were guest artists from the **American Ballet Theater**, **Susan Jaffe** and **Robert Hill**, **Montreal Danse**, **Decidedly Jazz Danceworks** from Calgary, **The National Ballet of Canada**, **Margie Gillis**, **Peggy Baker**, **Rex Harrington** and **Evelyn Hart**. Live music abounded at this year's celebration with the presence of **The National Ballet Orchestra**, cellist **Shauna Rolston**, and the **Toronto Tabla Ensemble**.

Many thanks are due to the volunteers who worked tirelessly to plan, produce and execute Dancers for Life 1999, contributing well over a thousand hours of their time. We would also like to thank our incredible corporate sponsors and Circle of Life Members, without whom this spectacular evening of dance would not be possible. Through their generosity, they ensure that each dollar raised goes directly to support ACT's education, support, advocacy, and health promotion programs. We would especially like to thank **CIBC**, who arranged for students to watch rehearsals on the day of the event.

We would also like to thank the many restaurants, caterers, and companies who contributed to the Gala Receptions and the Pinwheel Event. Their generous support certainly added to the festive tone of the evening.

Finally, our thanks to Dancers for Life's loyal audience, who waited patiently for 21 months for this year's event. Thank you for joining us in this celebration! We look forward to seeing you next year.

DANCERS FOR LIFE



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1999 DANCERS FOR LIFE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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FASHION CARES
MAC viva glam

Join us on
Saturday, April 29
for **Fashion Cares**
M·A·C Viva Glam
Floating World



AIDS WALK TORONTO

Walk the Talk
AIDS Walk Toronto 2000
September 24, 2000
2 pm, Nathan Phillips Square
Register now 416-340-8484 ext. 269

Gala	\$300 (reception, dinner, show, and party) Call 416-340-9255
General Admission	\$85 (reception, show, and party) Call Ticketmaster 416-872-1111 www.ticketmaster.ca or in person at Priape
After Party	\$35 Call Ticketmaster 416-872-1111 www.ticketmaster.ca or in person at Priape
Info	www.fashioncares.com

Grin and Bare It
ACT's newest, nearly naked event
Summer 2000
Watch for details

The Treatment Crisis in AIDS Drugs

FOCUS OF MAY 25 DONOR RECEPTION

Sadly, we're seeing evidence that an increasing number of people are failing on the AIDS drugs, with a resulting increase in AIDS related deaths. This treatment crisis will be the featured topic at a donor reception to be held at ACT on Thursday, May 25, 2000.

This reception will honour two groups. ACT's new Leaders in Caring program recognizes individual donors who provide ACT with gifts of \$1,200 or more per year. We're thrilled that we currently have 37 Leaders in Caring donors. The reception will also honour our over 70 Legacy of Hope Society members — those who have told us that they have included ACT in their will or made provisions for another kind of planned gift to ACT.

We would be very pleased to have you join us on May 25. If you are interested in becoming a Leader in Caring through a \$1,200 donation or a \$100/month monthly donation, please contact Greg Lichti, Development Officer, (416-340-8484 ext. 265 or by e-mail at glichti@actoronto.org) or Ann Rosenfield, Director of Development (416-340-8484 ext. 268 or by e-mail at arosenfield@actoronto.org). Or, if you are planning to include ACT in your will and have not told us yet, please contact Greg or Ann so that we can make sure that you are invited to our reception.

Yes, I want to support ACT

HERE'S MY DONATION

\$500 \$250 \$100 \$60 \$35 Other \$

Please return to: AIDS Committee of Toronto, Attn: Greg Lichti,
399 Church Street, 4th Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5B 2J6.

Or call ACT at 416-340-8484 ext. 235 to make a credit card donation.

Charitable Registration Number 11877 9024 RR0001.

A tax receipt for the total amount of your donation will be gratefully issued by ACT.

Thank you for your donation!

0400

I WILL GIVE BY CHEQUE VISA MASTERCARD AMEX

CARD NUMBER _____

EXPIRY DATE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ POSTAL CODE _____

TEL: HOME _____ BUS _____

E-MAIL _____