

News Highlights

Wow what a year it has been! The Northern AIDS Connection Society is showing no signs of slowing down. There has been great growth within the Society this year. NACS is very committed to the promotion of HIV/AIDS Awareness and Prevention Education in the northern region of Nova Scotia and in addition to the HIV work the Society has the Hepatitis C Aware Project addressing the needs, challenges and barriers faced by the Hep C community.

With all the growth in the organization NACS went through some restructuring and hired an Executive Director. The new Executive Director is Karen Kittilsen. Janet MacPhee has moved into the Hep C Coordinator Position. The Society has been very pleased with the performance of this team and continues to grow as an organization. The team at NACS is continuing its work with the Hepatitis C Aware Project by having focus groups in various locations in northern Nova Scotia for Service Providers and for people living with Hep C. The team also consists of Tom Harrison who has been, through a Job Creation Partnership (JCP) funded by Service Canada, working on website development, database development and planning annual events and campaigns.

The Northern AIDS Connection Society is planning a campaign for AIDS Awareness Week leading up to World AIDS Day on December 1, 2009. The Society will have several displays, four pieces of the AIDS memorial quilt and also Candlelight Vigils held in Amherst, New Glasgow. In Truro and East Hants there will participation in local church services leading up to World AIDS Day.

The Society has been so busy over the last thirteen years, that it has never held an official Open House, so the Society has decided to make 2009 the year. On December 11th, 2009 NACS, between 1 and 4pm will be open to the general public, partners and local Municipal and Political Leaders to come to the Northern AIDS Connection Society. You are invited to spend an afternoon discovering the past, present and future of the organization and have an opportunity to meet staff, board members and volunteers. Find out how NACS started its successes and future endeavors. There will be plenty of snacks and refreshments provided so bring your appetites and holiday cheer for a fun filled afternoon with NACS.

In October NACS co-hosted with CATIE, the Atlantic Educational Conference. This conference was held at the Best Western Glengarry Hotel in Truro, on October 7,8th 2009. This event covered many educational seminars for AIDS Service Organizations and their staff. It promised to be a great event and was a great event. There are a lot of new and exciting tools and resources available on the CATIE website. NACS is very honored, to have had this opportunity to partner with CATIE and be involved in such a large scale event.

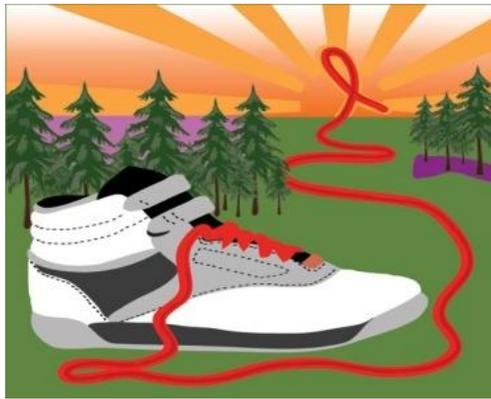
Hepatitis C Aware Project

Project Objectives

There are two primary project objectives of Hep C Aware. Firstly to increase knowledge of Hep C, prevention, care and treatment among Hep C positive individuals and at risk groups in the Northern Nova Scotia (NNS) Region.

Secondly the Hepatitis C Aware Project will be a tool to work with partners, persons living with HCV and high risk groups to gather information during a series of focus groups and one on one interview sessions to result in a map of the network of services available to and the issues for PWHCV in NNS. During this process we are seeking to gain an understanding of existing conditions, services, support, activities, challenges and barriers to persons living with HCV and those at risk for HCV in Northern NS.

So contact me, Janet MacPhee, Project Coordinator to get involved and voice your concerns and opinions – they need to be heard and included in the project results and evaluation. It is the only way to influence change and ensure the continued, knowledge, awareness and support for persons living with HCV. I can be reached at hepccoordinator@eastlink.ca , 902-895-0931.



Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life Update

The Northern AIDS Connection Society (NACS) has enjoyed having, for the past few years, the opportunity to hire a summer student for the position of AIDS Walk Coordinator. This enables NACS to help employ a hard working student who needs employment and to develop new skills to add to their success in any future endeavors. At the same time NACS gets the much needed help it needs to run the main fund raiser of the year. This fund raiser has always been a fun filled gathering of community partners and individuals to raise much needed funds for the society. Without the hard work of staff, volunteers, community partners and our sponsors NACS would not exist.

The Northern AIDS Connection Society (NACS) is very pleased to say that the Scotiabank AIDS Walk for life, held in September, was a huge success and from the four walks in Truro, Elmsdale, Amherst and New Glasgow the society raised approximately 15,000 dollars. The weather was great and we had a great turnout of people. NACS would like to thank all of the sponsors staff teams, Individuals and volunteers for a job well done.

The Northern AIDS Connection Society is looking forward to next year. We will see you there!

True Peoples Stories

Autobiographical Story of a Transgendered Person

I was born on May 10, 1975 in a rural town in Nova Scotia Canada. I also have one sibling. My parents discovered that I wanted to be a female in 1986 when started to wear women's clothes, makeup, jewelry, hair accessories, sexy outfits, intimate wear along with using female body spray and perfume.

My parents placed me in the IWK hospital on the 4 South in the mental health department for two weeks. I started to cut both of my wrists and started to take drug overdoses. I was admitted to the hospital in Truro on 3 South and put on medication. Thanks to 3 South in the Mental Health department of the Colchester hospital in Truro, I was treated respectfully by the staff, they made me feel good about myself and I was always treated as a female.

I was asked to move to Truro where I could live my life as a woman fulltime, so on April 1, 2007 I moved to Truro where I could live my life full time as a woman. I started to volunteer at the Northern AIDS Connection Society (NACS) where I have been for over 2 years. I have recently found out that my doctor plans to send me to a counselor to assist me in preparation for hormone treatment. I feel like I have mixed emotions & feelings around PMS, my breasts growing, morning sickness, cramping, hot flashes, cravings for things and my hair growing long. My ultimate goal is to live in society free of stigma and discrimination and upon completion of my journey I hope to be living full time as a woman.

How I Learned I was Infected

By: Betty MacAloney

Back in mid July of 1974, just hours after the birth of our second child I required an emergency blood transfusion due to server haemorrhaging. Three days later, after more complications I was transported by ambulance to another hospital. I was still receiving blood, and had developed an allergic reaction of hives. The blood was then exchanged for plasma. Two days later, I was able to go home.

By October, I complained of severe itchiness, not the kind you get from a rash, more like an irritation from the inside and scratching only made it worse. I was very tired, not able to care for our baby, my urine was the color of black tea and I was jaundiced. The doctor admitted me to immediately and in isolation. The diagnosis was hepatitis. After a three week stay, I was able to come home. My instructions included a low fat, high carbohydrate diet and lots of rest. It would take about a year for recovery the doctor said. After a few months, my strength slowly returned. By spring I was feeling much better as expected and finally I was back to normal.

Years later, my friends my friends sometimes brought up the subject of hepatitis after hearing about it on the news or someone they knew was infected. I would tell them that I had hepatitis a long time ago and I wouldn't wish it on anyone. In 1998 I acquired a new dentist. As usual, there's a questionnaire to fill out including the question did you ever have hepatitis. Of course I checked yes. This time was different though. The hygienist asked me which virus A, B or C and I didn't know. She went on to say that I should find out so that we can all protect ourselves. I asked her how do I find out and she said to ask my doctor. The next appointment I did ask my doctor which virus of hepatitis I had and much to my surprise, he didn't know. Although regular blood checks were done twice yearly because I had hepatitis years ago, no one knew which virus I had. Another blood check was done to determine the unknown virus. The result was hepatitis C. I didn't know for sure what that meant but I learned it was for life. Sure I heard news flashes about hepatitis, but because I felt well and had no symptoms, I didn't learn necessary facts. The public health nurse came to

me and explained in detail everything I should know about hepatitis. It wasn't necessary to tell everyone, only those who might come in contact with my blood. As I learned the seriousness of this illness and knew that I wasn't putting anyone in danger, I decided to keep this secret to myself other than my husband.

In 2004, after my doctor's retirement, another doctor recognized that I had low blood platelets. A hemotologist found I had an enlarged spleen, an internal medicine doctor performed a liver biopsy indicating that my liver was damaged and I had cirrhosis. When I chose to have treatment, it was time to let my family know my secret. I share my experience because it is known that liver disease can be a silent killer and knowledge is power. Our medical system has come a long way since that time when I was first diagnosed with hepatitis. Because of their knowledge, today hepatitis is treatable.

Health News "Condom talk"

Condoms. A funny name for a contraceptive don't you think! My mother used to make me laugh when she would talk about condoms. She often called them condominiums. I used to laugh hysterically! Really it is no laughing matter. Too many people shrug off the subject of condoms because they feel embarrassed talking with their partner. People also worry about the pleasure being reduced or the moment of passion being ruined by fumbling around trying to open the condom.

The facts about condoms are important. Knowing some basic principles about the proper use of condoms, the difference between male and female condoms, advantages and disadvantages about both can make the subject seem a little less overwhelming.

Here are a few basic rules on the proper use of condoms:

- ✚ Don't wait until you are in the middle of passion to talk about condom use
- ✚ Use a new condom for each time you have intercourse. Vaginal, Oral or Anal
- ✚ Use latex or polyurethane condoms. Animal skin does not protect against STI's
- ✚ Condom failure is often due to improper use of the product, not due to product failure, so invest some time in learning how to properly use a condom.
- ✚ Male condoms- withdraw penis immediately after ejaculation and hold condom at the base of penis to avoid the condom slipping off.
- ✚ Only use water based lubricants with latex condoms such as glycerin and lubricating jellies. Using oil based lubricants can cause condoms to break down and cause holes to develop.
- ✚ Female condoms should never be used in conjunction with male condoms because friction that is developed will cause devices not to stay in place. Lubricant should be added to the inside of female condom or on the penis.

If you have any questions talk with your family physician or contact our office a (902)895-0931 or email us at nacs@eastlink.ca