



AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan

2011/2012 Annual Report

Supporting people living with HIV/AIDS

June 2012



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our dedicated and hard working Board of Directors has given superb direction and support throughout this past year. Under the Board's direction, APSS continues to grow and meet the needs of people with HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C.

Wes Peace – Chair
Lana Krogan-Stevely – Vice Chair
Jennifer Martuo - Treasurer
Carla Blakley - Director
Bob Morin – Director
Shauneen Pete - Director
Mirtha Rivera - Director
Leslie Sparling – Director
Brian Wiens - Director

The APSS staff brings energy, commitment and a can-do attitude to the organization and the people we help.

Jaqueline Anaquod, Education & Prevention Coordinator
Morag Hurn, Support Services
Dan Lindsay, Needle Exchange Administrator Saturdays Alternate
Doreen Lloyd, Ribbons of Hope Life Skills Coordinator
Kasey Manic, Needle Exchange Administrator - Saturdays
Cindy O'Connor, Administration Coordinator
Laurie Pellerin, Needle Exchange Administrator
Laurie Sampson, Executive Director
Krista Shore, Circle of Courage Peer Support Coordinator
Alicia Slywka, Outreach Coordinator
Danita Wahpoosewyan, Needle Exchange Coordinator and Peer Support

APSS STAFF

Thank you to our committed volunteers and students who help to ensure the continued operation of our office.

The Red Ribbon is the global symbol for solidarity with HIV-positive people and those living with AIDS. APSS is pleased to provide red ribbons to individuals and community agencies.



Message from the Board Chair – Wes Pearce

For 26 years AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan/AIDS Regina has provided valuable supports and services for clients who have AIDS, are HIV+ and for those who are most at risk. As the media marked World AIDS Day 2012, it was again reported that Saskatchewan had an HIV rate that was twice the national average (this is not a new statistic as rates have been rising since 2002) but inevitably the increase in new clients puts a further strain on the organization's ability to respond.

Last year, I wrote "Our 25th anniversary was not without several challenges and some substantial changes" and I can confidently write that our 26th anniversary year was not without several challenges and some substantial changes as well! Many of the challenges that we face are not dissimilar to those faced by a growing number of not-for-profit organizations: we've already outgrown our space at 2911 5th Avenue, securing enough funding for operations (as opposed to programs) is increasingly complex and difficult, there have been inevitable staffing changes on 5th Avenue (we said goodbye to Jaqueline & Daphne BUT said hello to Alicia Slywka, Laurie Pellerin & Doreen Lloyd) all while more people need our services; the services and supports that they are requesting are rapidly changing as well.

It is easy at times, to get discouraged and forget to count the success stories and the very positive events that have taken place this year. Many of those achievements are highlighted throughout this Annual Report but I would like to highlight a few:

- to help counter the fact that a vast majority of new HIV infections are a result of intravenous drug use, APSS received an increase in funding from the RQHR in order to keep the Needle Exchange open for longer hours (including Saturdays) and the result has been a dramatic increase in the number of needles being distributed by APSS (with a dramatic increase in the number of needles being returned as well);
- we have noticed a dramatic increase in both registrations, and more importantly, successful completion of our Ribbons of Hope Life Skills Program(s);
- the drop in centre has become such a popular place for residents in the neighbourhood that it is sometimes a challenge to keep up with the demand for coffee (which is both good and bad news);
- our ongoing collaboration with the SHEA awards proved to be the most successful event ever! Much thanks to the SHEA committee, to Jeffery Straker (whom people can't stop talking about), to the nominees (and just as importantly the nominators) and especially to Dr. Roberta McKay for her continued support, encouragement and enthusiasm for this very important event;
- our major fundraisers this year: the annual Gerbera Daisy Sale, the annual Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life, the Scotia Bank comedy night & silent auction have been enormously successful.
- we were again very honoured this year when APSS (Wellness Fund) was named one of the charities being supported by the Regal Social Association of Regina. The court has worked tirelessly throughout the year to raise HUGE amounts of money for the charities they support. We are deeply grateful for the Court's continued support of APSS.

At a time when APSS is being asked to do more for less it is important to thank over and over and over our tremendous staff who repeatedly strive to ensure that our clients are supported and cared for, our communities are educated and comforted and that no one is left behind. APSS could not fulfill its mandate without our dedicated volunteers (including students from a variety of post secondary programs in Regina) who are all committed individuals AND who are never thanked enough for their work.

Finally I would like to thank the current APSS Board members who are continuing on for the upcoming year. On behalf of the board I would like to thank Leslie Sparling for her 4 years of work with the APSS Board and I am happy to report that Leslie will remain on as part of the SHEA committee. Finally, I would like to welcome new volunteers, new community partners and our new board member whom I look forward to working with over the next months!

I hope everyone connected with APSS has a most enjoyable summer (if it ever arrives) and I know that there are some great things planned in 2012/2013.

Board Activities

The Board of Directors of APSS established a **Programming Committee** in the fall of 2011. The terms of reference for this committee requires that membership is comprised of HIV-positive people as well as individuals from the community we serve, agency representatives and others who work in the field of HIV/AIDS to provide guidance and direction to the APSS Board on programs offered. The Committee will meet 6 times per year.

APSS was awarded a United Way of Regina grant to **develop outcome measures**. This process will help APSS focus on programming and ensure that effective measurement and evaluation tools are in place. All staff is involved in developing program logic models for their own area of responsibility. Before finalizing, the APSS Programming Committee will provide input on the program areas.

The Board of Directors and staff at APSS continue to work on the **policies and procedures** of APSS. Job descriptions of all staff have been reviewed and performance evaluations will be conducted annually.

The Board continues to develop a **strategic plan** for the organization. This work will be the focus for the Board in 2012/13.

Ribbons of Hope Life Skills

AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan (APSS) works with people living in North Central and surrounding areas in Regina. The Ribbons of Hope Life Skills Program (ROH) was designed to assist individuals and families who are faced with a multitude of problems, living high-risk lifestyles and living with HIV/Hepatitis C. In its duration, the program has struggled with both sustaining a program facilitator and sporadic attendance with program participants. However, in January 2012, a new facilitator was hired part-time to deliver Life Skills programming and provide support to participants, as well as to assess the program. It was so successful that two six week sessions were facilitated between January and March, 2012. The programs ran Monday to Friday from 1:00 - 4:00. A more structured program was developed and delivered to clientele which began to focus on high risk lifestyles, housing/transient living, and chronic addictions. Crisis intervention was needed for a number of individuals who were living in unhealthy environments such as drug and gang affiliated residences and clients that were chronically ill and close to death.

It is important to note that the ROH ran from 2000-2005 and was a six month program. Six weeks is often not enough time to get individuals stabilized in order to cope with day to day living. Program participants are addressing numerous personal problem areas stemming from traumatic experiences and facing numerous barriers in order to better their lives. However, in a short time frame there were lives saved medically, safe housing obtained, and people in recovery for the first time.

Program participants that attended the last ROH sessions have been able to achieve stability and a better quality of life. In a short time frame they have been able to obtain safe, adequate housing and address addiction problems and are in recovery, abstaining from using drugs and alcohol. Many have sought medical help addressing life-long health concerns such as HIV/Hepatitis C., diabetes, cancer, and mental health diagnosis.

In six weeks, program sessions focused on self-awareness/self-worth, problem solving, goal setting, values and beliefs, healthy lifestyles, healthy relationships/sexuality, family problems-abuse, addictions, grieving-loss/separation. Participants were able to obtain five certificates: Train the Trainer – HIV/Hep C; Assertiveness Training; REACH Certificate-cooking/budgeting; Employment Workshop; and Life Skills.

On March 30, 2012 a graduation was held to honour the program participants. Families, community supporters and dignitaries were in attendance. Future program sessions have been lengthened and additional programming and supports have been introduced to meet the needs of participants. APSS and program participants extend their gratitude to the Community Initiatives Fund for their financial contribution.

Building on the success of the final two Ribbons of Hope sessions, beginning April 1, 2012, with funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada and the MAC AIDS Foundation, Empowering Individuals and Families Life Skills program will begin.

The first twelve week Life Skills session will include 10 program participants who will graduate June 27, 2012. Three of the students had graduated from the previous Ribbons of Hope Program that was six weeks in duration. With a total of eighteen weeks of programming these three participants feel they will be ready to return to school. One mother of nine plans to enroll in upgrading at S.I.A.S.T., one has been accepted into the faculty of Social Work and the other into Culinary Arts at Regina Trades and Skills.

In a twelve week duration participants are encouraged to explore a multitude of problem areas along with health issues and healthier lifestyles. They address self-esteem/self-worth, problem solving, goal setting, addictions/relapse/recovery, grieving/loss/separation/abandonment, family violence/abuse-physical, mental, emotional and sexual. With knowledge and support many participants have followed through with testing and two individuals are undergoing Hepatitis C treatments. Participants also receive certificates in Assertiveness Training/Anger Management, Traditional Parenting, Cooking and Nutrition, Employment Workshop Certificate, and their Life Skills Certificate.

Participants are offered the opportunity to tour S.I.A.S.T, S.I.I.T. and are introduced to other agency's programs and supports in the community and around Regina. Many are involved in one-on-one counseling at APSS or other agencies. All participants have the opportunity to meet with elders and or work with traditional healers. Participants in need of specialized programming and supports are introduced to appropriate services and agencies in Regina.

Addictions and homelessness are major hurdles.

**Get Tested -
Knowing is
better**

Support Services

Saskatchewan continues to experience the highest rate of infection of HIV in Canada, at twice the national average, according to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health. This has led to APSS experiencing an increase in the number of clients we are working with. We registered 38 new clients; 6 of our clients passed away.

We continue to build relationships with other agencies and health regions allowing us to continue building a client first approach to care. Accepting clients in their current circumstance gives us the ability to create unity, solidarity and trust. The "Circle of Care" that we have developed in partnership with Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region and other community agencies has improved client flow from one service to the next, which has greatly benefited our clients.

To demonstrate the effectiveness of our work, we would like to share a story about one of our clients

In 2009 a 37 year old women came in as a new client. She was an IV drug user and street worker.

In December 2010 she was completely bedridden, unable to care for herself and living in a house that was filled with mold and mice, with a collapsed ceiling. We connected her with the appropriate agencies to help her find safe housing, referred her to the Food Bank and arranged for homecare . We provided transportation to medical appointments, and helped secure a phone for her. As she became healthier she went back to the "street".

In the spring of 2011 she asked for a referral for her addiction. APSS staff got her into Social Detox where she spent 6 days. Unfortunately at that time there was no where for her to go for long term addiction help. She returned to her apartment and once again fell deep into her addiction. During the next few months APSS continued to encourage her to seek treatment. By January 2012 she weighed 63 lbs, was barely able to move and had difficulty even swallowing. She was admitted to hospital with APSS and the RQHR public health nurse staying with her in the emergency room for over 11 hours.

APSS staff worked with the hospital staff, Native Services, Aboriginal Home Care, RQHR HIV health nurse, Social Services and staff from MACSI to find her a safe place to live until she was able to get into long term treatment. We had Addictions staff and our Registered Psychologist meet with her because she knew that coming into our offices (or even the area) would be a trigger for her. She has completed treatment, is a healthy weight, looks wonderful and is looking forward to the future. She has returned to her family and community and is continuing her journey of recovery and improved health.

Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness Fund

The Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness Fund was started to provide financial assistance for health care related expenses to people living with HIV and AIDS. The Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness Fund is supported by many fundraisers hosted by community agencies and businesses.

APSS is very pleased that the fund continues to provide financial assistance to pay for medications, massage therapy, medical/occupational therapy, transportation to doctor visits, baby formula and other needs directly related to HIV positive status. We are very pleased that because of the overwhelming support received from the Regal Social Association of Regina, Scotiabank South Albert Branch and the Gay and Lesbian Community of Regina's annual AIDS Benefit, APSS is now also able to offer the services of a psychologist for all HIV-positive people.

Harm Reduction Program

AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan, in partnership with the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region (RQHR), operates one of the busiest Needle Exchange Programs (NEP) in the Province. The NEP distributes clean needles, ties, spoons, water, alcohol swabs, condoms and provides information about harm reduction, HIV and Hepatitis C prevention and resources.

APSS received additional funding from RQHR, through the Provincial HIV Strategy, to extend our hours of operation. We are now open Monday through Friday from 9am – 5pm and on Saturdays from 10am – 5pm.

The additional funding provided the opportunity to offer peer support as needed and requested. Clients and guests may be referred to All Nations Hope AIDS Network for spiritual guidance from Elders and Healers, to Detox for addiction treatment, to the Regina & District Food Bank, or to Carmichael Outreach and the North Central Task Force on Housing for help finding housing. Our Peer Support Coordinator is available to speak with anyone, whether HIV+ or not

Supported through the Provincial HIV Strategy, RQHR provides funding to APSS to initiate a weekly “Anyone-at risk Support Group” which averages 10 participants each week. Each group begins with an Elder smudging and offering a prayer, followed by a talking circle. The Elder is the spiritual guide for building a solid foundation so participants are equipped with the tools to effectively cope with day to day issues. Group discussions include new HIV and Hepatitis C treatments, living a holistic/balanced lifestyle, dealing with the stigma and discrimination around HIV, and issues of poverty and homelessness. Cultural activities include going to sweats, pow-wows, picking sage and going on a medicine walk. All participants share a meal at the end of the group session.

APSS began offering a bi-weekly support group called Circle of Courage. This unique program focuses on HIV-positive women with children who may or may not be HIV-positive, women who are caring for adopted and foster HIV-positive children and HIV-positive women who are considering pregnancy. This peer-based support group focuses on empowering, encouraging, supporting and educating the participants about HIV, HIV medications and side effects and provides a safe and confidential place for people to share. The group explores issues of isolation, discrimination, stigma and depression. Participants determine what direction each session takes. The group meets two times per month. The long-term goal is for the participants to become mentors to other HIV-positive women who may be considering pregnancy or who are already pregnant.

APSS Needle Exchange Program 2011/12:

APSS distributed 1,060,789 new needles, an increase of 64% over 2010/11 (attributed to the extended hours from October, 2011 – March, 2012)

981,637 needles were returned – a rate of 92.5%

NEP contacts between the ages of 15 – 45+ included 7,618 females; 7,976 males and 15 contacts identified as “other”, an increase of 61% over 2010/11 (attributed to the extended hours from October, 2011 – March, 2012)

19,677 condoms were distributed.

Drop-in Center

The APSS drop-in centre is a safe, comfortable, non-judgmental and welcoming place for clients and guests to socialize, relax and provide and receive support in times of need. Guests may enjoy a snack, coffee and juice and nutritional workshops. There is a telephone available to make appointments or to connect with family and friends.

Through APSS's partnerships with RQHR, people can receive an HIV or HCV test, access information about HIV/AIDS, HIV and the Law, healthy living and services available in the community. We also provide emergency services such as bus tokens, hygiene items, referrals and information on available housing.

In partnership with the RQHR, APSS has a health nurse on-site for a half day each week to perform blood tests, talk with clients about their health, and offer counseling to clients and guests about HIV and Hepatitis C.

Also in partnership with RQHR, an Addictions Counselor visits APSS for a half day each week to counsel and refer clients and guests to treatment programs.

With the extended hours of the Drop-In, APSS sees an average of 2,400 guests each month (this number does not include the people who visit only the needle exchange).

Education and Prevention

Education and prevention continue to be a key focus of APSS. We continue to receive requests for HIV and Hepatitis C training sessions from women's shelters, schools, correctional facilities, First Nation communities, community organizations, training programs, educational and health conferences and many other disciplines. Topics include HIV 101, HIV & Harm Reduction, HIV and Hepatitis C, HIV and Youth, Healthy Living in GLBT Community, Healthy Living, Building Healthy Relationships, and HIV 101 and Current Trends in Regina. APSS also provides presentations to people who are HIV-positive or at risk of contracting HIV to help stop HIV transmission and to provide information to people so they can live longer, healthier lives. Workshops and presentations are provided at no charge. All presentations are tailored to meet the needs of the target audiences.

HIV-positive participants report an increase in knowledge about living with HIV and HIV transmission. They report a change in behaviours following education and prevention presentations; community based organizations indicate that their staff and clients (who may be HIV-positive or are at risk of HIV transmission) have an increased knowledge about HIV; and staff at community based organizations indicate a greater comfort in working with vulnerable people and using universal precautions when working with people who may be HIV-positive.

HIV/AIDS are social issues as well as medical challenges. Some of the earliest HIV programs were mobilized by the communities affected. The leadership of and involvement by community-based organizations remains critical to successful HIV prevention, care and treatment. They engage affected and vulnerable people, provide essential services, and tackle stigma and discrimination that inevitably accompany so many aspects of this epidemic.

Outreach

At APSS, we are committed to providing service in the communities where clients live, and to offer greater access to HIV/AIDS & Hepatitis C information and services in areas that are under-served. With financial assistance through a grant from The Co-operators, APSS was able to expand its Outreach Program in the community by hiring an Outreach Coordinator.

The focus of the position was to provide HIV prevention and health promotion targeted at diverse groups. These groups included community service providers who work with people who may be HIV positive as well as individuals who are at risk of contracting HIV. Education is the key to stopping the spread of HIV. The Coordinator met with clients daily to discuss addictions, treatment options and the risks of HIV.

One of the main goals of the Outreach Project was to provide the community with access to information and services about HIV/AIDS and APSS at a location other than the APSS office. There is a great need for outreach programs like this because some people will not visit APSS on 5th Avenue because they are afraid that their status may be self-identifying; they do not know that APSS exists and therefore they do not access the services; and some people may be scared or intimidated to come to our office because of the location. The Outreach Coordinator spent time weekly at other community organizations to provide people with access to information in the places where they are comfortable; we took our services to them, instead of them having to come to us. Time was spent at the Newo Yotina Friendship Centre as well as the Regina and District Food Bank. The Outreach Coordinator was able to start building relationships with people, talk with them about HIV/AIDS and answer any questions that they may have. She used questionnaires to get feedback about the level of knowledge in the vulnerable population about HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs); if there is interest in gaining more knowledge; if they considered themselves at risk for contracting HIV or STIs; if they have ever been tested for HIV; and if they know what services APSS offers. These questionnaires helped APSS and the Outreach Coordinator assess the level of knowledge about HIV in the community and to determine the needs of the community. These questionnaires will be helpful for the future to allow the outreach project, Outreach Coordinator and APSS provide the information and services that the community wants and needs.

Doing something new within a community is always a challenge because people do not always respond openly to change. Sometimes getting people to talk to the Outreach Coordinator was difficult because she was new and HIV can be difficult to discuss, but once people knew that it was safe, they were very willing to talk to her. Using the questionnaire was a great method to engage people and to get a conversation started. From the questionnaires we learned that while some people had a basic knowledge of HIV/AIDS and STIs, there were also a number of people who had little or no knowledge. We also found that the majority of people were open to learning more about these issues and wanted more information and resources.

The Outreach Project targeted people who are at risk of contracting HIV, women, new immigrants, particularly those who come from countries where HIV is endemic, and youth.

Fundraising Activities

APSS's annual **Gerbera Daisy** sale was a great success!! With the support of Wascana Flower Shoppe, SaskEnergy, Track and Trail and the General and Pasqua Hospitals and their volunteers, over \$2,500 was raised to support the programs and services of APSS.

APSS hosted its annual **garage sale** in June. This event is generously supported by people from across Regina and surrounding area and provides an opportunity to support people in need. The garage sale provides an opportunity for APSS staff to meet people from the neighbourhood and beyond and to talk about the programs and services that we provide.

Scotiabank South Albert Branch hosted a comedy night for APSS in September. Ashley Tocher and Jessica LaLonde, Branch employees, organized the event with all proceeds directed to the Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness Fund. This event raised an amazing \$6,156. Thank you to Ashley and Jessica and all of the Scotiabank branches for the ongoing support of APSS.

APSS and All Nations Hope AIDS Network once again partnered in the annual **Scotiabank AIDS Walk**. 250 participants raised \$9,454. All funds raised by APSS are directed to the Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness Fund.

The **Gay & Lesbian Community of Regina (GLCR)** hosted the annual AIDS Benefit on November 25. The drag show entertained 200 people and raised \$2,000 for the Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness Fund. A special thank you to the many volunteers at the GLCR for their continued support of APSS.

APSS celebrated the 11th annual **Saskatchewan Healthcare Excellence Awards on March 10, 2012**. Founding and presenting sponsor, Dr. Roberta McKay and her husband Elmer Brenner were once again gracious hosts. Thanks as well to Dilawri Automotive Group for their leadership sponsorship of this year's event. The SHEA has raised over \$260,000 for the programs and services of AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan over the past 11 years.

The recipients of a 2012 SHEA were: Dr. A. Moustapha, Cardiovascular Surgeon, RQHR; Sharon Monseler, Luther Special Care Home, Saskatoon; Sherri Doell, Outreach Coordinator, AIDS Saskatoon; Dr. Peter Chang, Plastic Surgeon, RQHR; Debbie McCulloch, Pharmacist, Rosetown; Rural-West Primary Care Team, Sun Country Health Region; Elder Better McKenna, University of Regina; Saskatchewan Epilepsy Program, Royal University Hospital, Saskatoon Health Region

Emperor Bruce Sanoir and Empress Avaughna Sanoir and The Regal Social Association of Regina selected APSS as one of their charities of choice for 2011/12. The Emperor and Empress and all of the Court hosted monthly drag shows, bingos and other events to raise money for their charities. All funds raised are directed to the Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness Fund. APSS is grateful for their support and the support of all of their sponsors. Their commitment to people who are HIV-positive and to all of the community is truly inspirational. Thank you Bruce and Avaughna!!

Thank you for your support!!

To our funders



Canada



Mrs. Claire Kramer

Dr. Roberta McKay

Our Partners



Community Partners

- A1 Rentals
- All Nations Hope AIDS Network
- Blue Mantel
- Carmichael Outreach
- City of Regina
- Gay & Lesbian Community of Regina (GLCR)
- Miss B Haven
- Andrew Huculak
- Newo Yotina Friendship Centre
- North Central Community Association
- Parliament Community Church
- Pine Grove Correctional Centre
- Regal Social Association of Regina (RSAR)
- Regina & District Food Bank
- Regina Rent-it Centre
- Santa's Little Helpers
- Sask Energy
- Dion Schlosser
- Scotiabank
- Starbucks
- Street Workers' Advocacy Project
- Track and Trail
- UR Pride
- Wascana Flower Shoppe

AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan

Mandate

APSS will engage the whole community to stop the spread of HIV

Mission Statement

APSS will support community health and well-being through sharing HIV/AIDS information and resources

Vision Statement

HIV infection will be prevented through an effective educated response to HIV and AIDS in our community through promoting behaviour change, risk reduction and creating changes that impact on society.

Education is the key to preventing the spread of HIV

GET TESTED

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