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Executive Directors Report

It has been a wonderful spring and summer here at Positive Living Niagara. We are so excited to be able to offer services in our one location in St. Catharines. Staff have settled in to the offices and have been able to complete our restructuring. We are now looking at how to offer programing that best meets the needs of the individuals we serve. In the weeks ahead with the help of the Client Advisory Committee, we are adding and changing the types of programs we offer. Our goal is to offer more in-depth programs that meet your needs for information and support. Please make sure you are checking our monthly calendar to see what is occurring.

We are preparing once again for our online auction where we use the funds raised to cover the cost of health related equipment and supplies for clients who find themselves in need. We are looking for donations for the auction and would welcome any new items or gift certificates to place into the auction. No item is too small as we bundle them into packages for the auction. If you are looking for great holiday gifts make sure you connect with the Auction online in the last week of November. The auction is taking place during the AIDS awareness week and all proceeds are going to a community fund that helped 125 people last year with over \$15,000 worth of assistance. This fund is a great support to our clientele and a wonderful resource for staff to offer assistance to those in need.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing Board Chair, Tim Conway for his 6 years of leadership and service to the agency. He has done a wonderful job of leading us through our strategic planning exercises and setting our course for the next few years. This last year with the movement into our new space and restructuring of the management team and programs as part of the implementation of the plan, demonstrated how committed he was in ensuring that the plan was acted upon. Many strategic plans just sit on the shelf but here at Positive Living it is a real action plan that guides us in our work. Tim is vacating the Chair position to Cathie Rogers who was our Vice-Chair. We know she will do a fantastic job in this new role!

I also wanted to thank our staff for all the hard work that they do on a daily basis. They make it look so easy and it is often easy for us to take what they do for granted. Behind the scenes, they work tirelessly to ensure that they are there for our clients, staying on top of the latest trends and ensuring that plans are implemented smoothly. They continue to impress me with the innovative and creative ideas that they bring forward. Their efforts allow the agency to continue to be seen as a community innovator and leader here in the Niagara Region and in the HIV and addiction sectors across the province.

Glen Walker
Executive Director

Mission Statement

Providing a continuum of innovative and proactive approaches to harm reduction, prevention and a person-centered focus on support and education for those at risk and affected by

Increased HIV infection In Women



Approximately 40% of newly acquired HIV infections occur in women through vaginal intercourse . This emphasizes the importance of scientific studies exploring women's reproductive health in the context of HIV infection (World Health Organization). World wide there are more than 100 million women who receive hormonal contraceptives to prevent pregnancy. Recently, it was determined that the use of the injectable hormonal contraceptive Depo-Provera significantly increases HIV infection by approximately 40% in women while other forms of hormonal contraception do not¹.

While a link between Depo-Provera and HIV infection has been established, the biological mechanism of the Depo-Provera-mediated increase of HIV infection remains unknown. Dr. Matthew Woods, a director on the board of Positive Living Niagara, recently conducted a scientific study at the McMaster Immunology Research Centre in the laboratory of Dr. Charu Kaushic to determine how Depo-Provera increases HIV infection in women. Using cutting-edge scientific technology, Matthew has identified multiple unique proteins that are expressed after the Depo-Provera treatment within the female genital tract. These proteins can attract target cells that HIV can infect to the site of exposure. Matthew also discovered that Depo-Provera can possibly compromise the natural protective barrier within the female genital tract further increasing HIV infection. These findings will have important implications regarding the safety of Depo-Provera and suggests that this hormonal contraceptive should be avoided in high-risk populations.

¹ Polis CB, Curtis KM, Hannaford PC, Phillips SJ, Chipato T, Kiarie JN, Westreich DJ, Steyn PS. An updated systematic review of epidemiological evidence on hormonal contraceptive methods and HIV acquisition in women. *AIDS* 2016; 30:2665–2683.

LGBTQ+ Social Groups

If you are looking to expand your social circle, many different LGBTQ+ groups are meeting in Niagara.

Group	Contact Information	Group information
LGBTQ+ Dinner Social Group	Matthew Rahn: mjrahn@gmail.com https://www.meetup.com/lgbtqdsg Facebook: facebook.com/lgbtqdsg Twitter: @lgbtqdsg	A once-per-month social meetup group for Niagara LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning) community. The purpose is to provide a casual environment where members can find meaningful connections and hopefully build friendships with one another. Group events are held at various locations in the Niagara Region.
St. Catharines Gay Men's Meetup	Dennis Eveleigh: dweveleigh@yahoo.ca www.meetup.com/St-Catharines-Older-Gay-Meetup Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/groups/1401400753222714/	A group of gay men who meet informally to make new friends, catch up with existing ones and to just support each other. We meet every Wednesday night at the Mahtay Cafe in St. Catharines. Guys can drop in any time between 7:30pm and 10pm. The meeting is just an unstructured social time in a private room where beverages and snacks are available for purchase.
Breakfast Club Social	Geoff Straw: strawpalace@hotmail.com Meets at Angel's Restaurant-Henley Square 395 Ontario Street, St. Catharines	The breakfast club get-together is always held on the third Sunday of each month and provides an opportunity for socialization in a friendly, laid back setting. All are welcome.
LGBTQ Coffee Night	Blake Smith: blakecadens23@gmail.com Ash Verway: Av16zy@brocku.ca	LGBTQ Coffee Group! To be held the 3rd Wednesday of each month. 5:30pm - 7pm In Port Colborne. To maintain the meeting facility as a safe space, Blake and Ash will not publicly announce the meeting location. Please contact Blake Smith or Ash Verway if you are interested in attending.
Safeplace Niagara	safeplaceniagara@gmail.com Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/SafePlaceNiagara	Creating inclusive and safe activities for all members of the LGBTQ, sexually and gender diverse community and their families, friends and allies in the Niagara Region. A variety of events are hosted including soccer tournaments, bowling nights, paint classes and more.

New Board Chair Message

“I am
honored
and
humbled to
serve as
the new
Board
Chair and
follow a
strong
legacy of
leaders”

As a board member over the past four years, I have had the pleasure of watching Positive Living Niagara truly raise the bar as a strong not-for-profit, community-based AIDS service organization (ASO). As we move forward in 2017 and beyond, I am proud of what Positive Living Niagara has accomplished and am excited about the future. I am honored and humbled to serve as the new Board Chair and follow a strong legacy of leaders.

The board of directors of an incorporated, non-profit organization is legally responsible for the governance of the organization. Within that mandate is the expectation that the board will develop, implement and monitor policies that will allow the organization to carry out its work.

As the governing body, the board of directors provides oversight to ensure that the organization meets its mission and is operated effectively and in the best interests of the stakeholders: clients, staff, volunteers, funders, and the community at large.

As such, it is with pride that I plan to help and guide Positive Living Niagara through the next two years. Continuing to implement its *Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020*, and support the *Ontario HIV/AIDS Strategy* that will guide the work of Positive Living Niagara. The agency is well positioned to continue to focus on changing the course of prevention, engagement and care in Niagara Region! My whole-hearted thanks to the staff, volunteers, community and funding partners who make our success possible.

I would like to thank the members of the Board of Directors for their work and dedication. I would particularly like to thank Glen Walker, who demonstrates leadership and commitment in the implementation of these strategic directions.

Our Mission is to provide a continuum of innovative and proactive approaches to harm reduction, prevention and a person-centered focus on support and education for those at risk and affected by HIV, HCV, and STBBI's. Positive Living Niagara's resilience, determination and a shared sense of purpose makes me confident that we continue to raise the bar each and every day.

Cathie Rogers, Chair

Calling All Knitters!

We Need Your Nimble Fingers

Our fabulous, annual Red Scarf Campaign will happen again this year, during the last week of November 2017. It takes us all year to gather enough scarves to make this amazing, thoughtful event happen. If you are a knitter or know a knitter please knit us a scarf. We even have yarn for you. Give Val (ext. 115) or anyone here at Positive Living a shout 905-984-8684. Thank you to so many of you for the support you have already given.



New Resource Guide

Subsidies for Persons with Disabilities in the Niagara Region was created out of a need to navigate resources available in the Niagara Region. With one in six people disabled in Niagara, the need for support is here. Compiled by Ray Robitaille, the guide is broken into six categories, Accessibility, Education, Employment, Funding, Housing and Support. This guide is not a definitive list of resources but more of a jumping off point. Ray encourages people to keep asking questions and searching for help with your needs.

“Being a person with a disability or low income, does not mean that you have to live a life struggling more than you need to, as there are ways to make life a little easier. Contained in this handbook is information that is meant to be easy access to subsidies that are available.”

Ray Robitaille



Invites you to join us for a

**Positively
Hilarious
Comedy Night
Fundraiser**

@ Showtime Comedy & Entertainment

92 St. Paul St, St. Catharines

Friday, September 15th, 2017

Show starts 8 pm, doors open 7 pm

Tickets are \$15

Must be 19+

Spread the word – invite your family & friends

Please contact Linn @ 9050848684 x 126

U=U, or undetectable = untransmittable is the conclusion from a great deal of research that shows if an individual has an undetectable viral load, they are not able to transmit the virus to their sexual partners. This knowledge comes from research that looks at HIV transmissions between sexual partners when one person had HIV and the other did not. In these two studies, there was not a single transmission of HIV from a person with an undetectable viral load.

This is exciting news! But there are a few caveats to consider.

- You have to have a sustained undetectable viral load. It can take 3-6 months to become undetectable and it is recommended that you see sustained undetectable results for at least 6 months.

- You have to be consistently taking your medication as prescribed. Even missing a few doses can result in an increase in viral load and bring you to detectable levels.

- You must also go to your regular appointments and be completing your regular lab work. Missing or delaying appointments could mean you are delaying learning about any unexpected viral load increases.

- U=U is only about sexual transmission. Even if you are undetectable, you can still transmit the virus via breastmilk. There is currently no evidence to support U=U if you are sharing injecting equipment.

There is a lot to unpack when talking about U=U and how it affects people living with HIV. HIV-related stigma is pervasive and insidious. It is not clear yet how the general public will react to the idea that a person with HIV is not infectious. While the hope is that as people learn about U=U, HIV-related stigma will decrease or disappear. This is likely a very long way away.

As of yet, U=U has had no impact on the law when it comes to HIV and disclosure. Do not assume that because you are undetectable you are free of the legal duty to disclose your HIV status to sexual partners.

Further, this does not mean that people who are undetectable are “good” and people who have not achieved undetectable viral loads are “bad”. We should be careful not to create a new hierarchy where certain people are more valued than others because of the amount of virus in their body. Simply put – those with undetectable levels have an additional prevention strategy in their toolbox. There are many reasons why it might be difficult for a person to attain a suppressed viral load.

Despite these caveats, this research is incredible news. For more information about U=U feel welcome to contact anyone on the education team or you can visit



For those who have not visited Positive Living Niagara, we are located at 120 Queenston St. in St. Catharines. It is a neighbourhood with a rich history and a diverse community that includes residents, businesses, service providers, faith communities and of course the wildlife attracted to Centennial Park and the remains of the old canal.

As with every community, this area has faced a few challenges. In an effort to overcome some of these challenges, Positive Living Niagara along with local residents, business owners, faith groups and other service providers, organized an event to inspire community

collaboration. On Saturday, July 22nd, people came together to celebrate Centennial Park and the surrounding community. Not even the rain that fell could dampen the community spirit. With the support of the City of St. Catharines, more than 30 individuals gathered to pick up garbage in the park and the streets along its edges. The day also included a nature scavenger hunt for the kids, gift basket draws and lunch provided by Westview Women for Women.

Staff from Positive Living Niagara provided information and equipment for safe needle disposal. It was also an opportunity to connect with community members to raise awareness of the supports provided through the StreetWorks program and discuss some of the concerns and misconception regarding people who use drugs.

Positive Living Niagara is committed to building stronger, healthier, compassionate communities that support all of its members.

Thank you to everyone who helped make the day a great success!

Peer Program



It's been a year since StreetWorks rolled out its Peer Program. The Peer Program started with people from the community coming together twice a month to help assemble harm reduction supplies. Since then, we have recruited two Peer Outreach Workers and hoping to add a third to the team very soon. The Peer Outreach Workers have gone through training to build on their existing skills and knowledge about harm reduction and safe drug use. This will

allow them to play a valuable and enriching role in our daily work. With their unique strengths and wisdom, we look forward to the Peer Outreach Workers' contributions as "bridges" between community and StreetWorks.

"The Wisdom of the Community will always exceed the knowledge of the expert" John McKnight

Discuss your healthcare experiences!

Many people living with HIV find staying connected to healthcare challenging and face obstacles to getting the best healthcare possible.

Our goal is to talk to African, Caribbean and Black people living with HIV to better understand the challenges faced when accessing healthcare and discuss ways to make healthcare more accessible.

Join us and help shape a better healthcare system for people living with HIV in Ontario.

\$20 Gift card for each participant. Transit fare provided.
Snacks and Refreshments will be served.



**If interested, please call as soon as possible before
September 15, 2017.**

Contact: 905-984-8684 ext : 118 – Winnie or 127 – Sarah

What's Going On

***Reminder that the office will be closed
September 4th for
Labour Day
and October 9th for Thanksgiving***



Pleasure Workshop

Saturday, September 9th

Dinner@5pm, Workshop@6pm

Guest speaker from Come A you are Sex shop

Open to all individuals affected by HIV

To register contact Sarah 905-984-8684 ext 127

Or sburch@postivelivingniagara.com

Positively Hilarious

Friday, September 15th, 2017

Show starts 8 pm, doors open 7 pm—Tickets are \$15

Must be 19+

Please contact Linn @ 9059848684 x 126

Consolidated Programming for More Effective Care!



As the new Supervisor of Support Services and Education, my vision is to see our Support and Education Services continue to grow and develop in response to the evolving needs of our clients and the community. As HIV continues to evolve, we must also adapt to the changing needs of those we serve. The best way we can do this is by working together. No longer will individual silos of services be the norm; instead, a constantly developing and collaborative team approach to better serve the needs of our clients and community will be the standard.

It has now been a few months since we moved our Home Support office over to the Queenston St. location and the results so far have been encouraging. Having all the staff in one location has made communication more effective and enabled Case Managers to work as a cohesive team with their Home Support colleagues. This has led to more effective and coordinated services to those we serve. However, we are not done yet! Constantly improving, continually evaluating and listening to the voice of our clients and community is how we will make Positive Living Niagara the very best it can be!

If you, as a client or a community member, have an idea, a suggestion, or want to share an experience that would help us to refine and develop our services, my door is always open and I want to hear from you. Call and make an appointment at x119.



what we do





Positive Living Niagara

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St. Catharines ON L2R 2Z3

Phone: 905-984-8684

Fax: 905988-1921

E-mail: info@positivelivingniagara.com

Creating an accepting and supportive community

to the Niagara Regional Public Health Service's AIDS Program. We evolved from a committee to a not-for-profit, community-based AIDS service organization (ASO).

In 1990, we incorporated as AIDS Niagara and became a registered not-for-profit. We are proud of our evolution and our long history of serving the Niagara Region. Over the years, we have been guided by our vision, mission and beliefs.

In Oct. 2014 we officially changed our name to Positive Living Niagara. We are proud to announce the launch of our new agency name and logo as part of the ongoing evolution of our service to the Niagara Region in Ontario.

Our HIV/AIDS service agency has grown and evolved over the last 24 years, and we felt it was time for a change. We have refreshed our logo to reflect who we are today and to symbolize our dynamic future. This new name and symbol are more uplifting and reflective of all the people we serve who are at risk and affected by HIV .

