



# The Positive Side

Positive Women's Network  
www.pwn.bc.ca

March/April 2004  
Volume 12 Number 2

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## HIV & Me

walking around in my own skin

by Lori Wilson



*Lori Wilson and her husband, Stuart.*

husband's best friend and confidant. I am not ashamed about being HIV+. It's been a blessing in disguise, really. If I hadn't gotten it, I might not be alive today. HIV helped me to sober up and take a good, hard look at myself. It gave me a good shake and made me realize that I wasn't invincible.

**I was first touched by HIV over 17 years ago when I was living down in LA.**

I was submitted to a compulsory HIV test when I was arrested for prostitution. But I was already pretty sure that I had it. I mean, if anyone was at risk, it was me. Also, a few years earlier I was in the hospital and a nurse's

**I see myself as a loving, caring, sensitive woman who cherishes her friends and family.**

I am a funny grandmother full of bundles of gifts, and hugs and kisses. I am my

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## Who's Minding the Health Food Store?

study reveals pwha's may receive inconsistent medical advice in stores

by Sean R. Hosein

“Natural health products” (NHPs) is a term that includes essential fatty acids, homeopathic remedies, herbs, minerals and vitamins. These are used by people with chronic health conditions, including those with HIV/AIDS, to do the following:

- \* manage side effects from medication;
- \* restore health or correct underlying imbalances;
- \* promote health and well-being.

Some users of NHPs can get access to them from practitioners, but they're also available in some pharmacies and health food stores.

Researchers at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine and the University of Toronto conducted a study to find out about the kinds of advice given by health food stores relating to the use of NHPs. This type of research is important as some NHPs, particularly herbs such as garlic and St. John's wort, can interact with some anti-HIV drugs, either raising or lowering levels of these drugs in the blood. These and other herbs have the potential to intensify pre-existing drug side effects or to weaken the effectiveness of medications.

The study team sent four research assistants undercover to visit health



food stores. They pretended to be newly diagnosed with HIV and free of symptoms. The research assistants visited 32 health food stores in a major Canadian city. Each research assistant asked store staff for recommendations and advice about the use, dosage and cost of NHPs for the management of HIV infection.

In analyzing their results, the study team found that 36 different products were recommended by health food stores - an average of two products per employee. In general, most employees had little training about complementary and alternative therapies, and recommendations about some of the NHPs listed had "limited" evidence to support their effectiveness. Some products were also very costly.

The results of this study support the regulations being implemented by Health Canada's Natural Health Products Directorate (NHPD) to do the following:

- \* improve the content of labels on NHPs so that members of the public and distributors know what conditions the products are meant to treat;
- \* require evidence of safety and efficacy for each NHP from the manufacturer or distributor in order for the products to be legally offered for sale in Canada.

These changes will be implemented over several years. Further details about the NHPD's work can be found on its website:

[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/nhpd-dpsn/index\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/nhpd-dpsn/index_e.html)

## Study Details & Results

The research team selected 32 health food stores based on information found in the business telephone directory. Excluded from the study were Asian herbal stores because of language difficulties and lack of product knowledge among the research team. Also excluded were pharmacies, as these are already regulated. All research assistants asked the same questions and did not provide further information about their health. The stores gave their consent to participate in the study. Here are key findings from the study:

- \* a total of 36 different products were recommended by 75% of store employees;
- \* only 25% of store employees inquired as to whether the HIV positive customers were taking any prescribed medications;
- \* 19% of employees suggested that the customer see a medical doctor;
- \* 25% recommended a visit to a homeopath or naturopathic doctor.

From a general health maintenance view, and given some of the complications experienced by people with HIV/AIDS (particularly malabsorption), some of the recommendations from store employees - multivitamins, extra protein, and essential fatty acids - may seem reasonable. However, some of the other products were questionable, particularly the following:

- \* moducare;
- \* astragalus;
- \* garlic;
- \* shitake mushroom extract;



## Over to You

### what's it like to have aids?

by Peg Frank

What's it like  
Living with AIDS?  
Kinda hopin' you're curious  
Hoping you're not already  
Informed - or  
"In the know"  
Cus living is great!  
It just isn't  
Fun  
Living with AIDS.

First  
There's no more lying,  
Shying away, denying.  
There's lots of crying,  
Over spilt milk.  
There's disclosing; closing  
Doors;  
Acknowledging.  
There's understanding  
The unthinkable,  
That, yes,  
You, too,  
Have, an everlasting,  
Disease.

Oh.  
If you're lucky,  
And I was  
"Lucky".  
It doesn't start out as AIDS.  
You're just HIV.  
Only HIV+.  
(Something better than HIV.)  
You can still study.  
You can dance,  
With the wind.  
You can still run.  
- Still play soccer.  
You can hold  
A job.

But over time  
How much time ?  
Not enough time.  
Some time.  
You lose that.  
The energy to learn,

The wind to play your dance,  
The steam to run,  
And the fire to score a goal.  
No longer is it HIV+  
Or HIV-  
You've lost that too.

Eventually,  
You can no longer work.  
No longer fill full  
Your dreams  
Getting from bed to couch  
Requires more energy than you  
have.  
Driving –  
Out of the realm of the possible.  
You are drifting  
Between life and death.  
And death  
Looks more interesting.

That's what it's like  
Living with AIDS.

And then a miracle happens -  
Something almost unimaginable.  
You  
Get  
Better.  
From A...  
To Plus.  
You make the trip  
From bed  
To couch,  
With gas to spare.

Your medical friends,  
The people you know,  
Know far too well.  
They're surprised,  
And really happy  
To see that you are  
Once again  
HIV  
Plus.  
They are truly pleased.  
You are walking,  
They are looking at you.



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Your colour is good.  
And You discover  
Just how bad  
Death's door  
Was painted.

You rise  
Every day,  
To an alarm.  
Not one that says -  
Stretch!  
Shower!  
Get dressed!  
Go to work!  
But a relentless alarm  
An alarm, like a siren,  
A siren that beacons you  
To pills.  
To pills.  
To pills.

Three pills at 7,  
Every day.  
More at 9,  
Sunday to Monday.  
Teatime pills at 3,  
Regular as clockwork.  
Again more pills at 9  
Each night.  
And finally,  
Nightcap meds  
An hour before midnight,  
Full moon to new moon to full  
moon.

All structure -  
Essential.  
Every dose  
A link  
In the new found  
Chain  
Of  
Life.  
Everlasting allopathic  
Life.  
And every link  
With its flaw  
And every flaw  
With a mending  
Holistic cure.

And thus  
With chain  
And chain repairs.  
The daily toll  
Are 40 pills.  
And more when trouble strikes.

And so my bed,  
Which once was home,  
Captures me  
But in the night.  
In that bed  
Where once I lay forlorn,  
I now lie  
Exhausted,  
From the ringing of my day -  
From alarms -  
Structure -  
And the residue of 40 pills  
Beneath my belt.

So,  
Just for fun,  
Instead of sheep,  
I count the pills I take  
As I search for sleep.  
Just 40 tabs a day.  
But, wait,  
That's 20 shy of three hundred pills  
Each week.  
And then,  
I simply add them up.

With every year  
Of AIDS denied -  
Fourteen thousand  
Five hundred  
And sixty pills  
I pop,  
Pop,  
Pop,  
Pop,  
Pop.

And so I pray  
To the gracious God  
Beside myself.  
If I should die  
Tonight,  
Please,  
Take me fast

continued on page 11



aide told me that I had the HIV antibodies. She had no authorization or right to tell me, but she did anyway.

I freaked out, left the hospital and returned to the streets of LA. I think that I lived in denial until I was made to take the test when I was arrested. Then I had to face it, but I was really scared. For that whole first year of knowing about my diagnosis, I was convinced that I might die at any moment.

### **I returned to Vancouver in 1995 and just bottomed out.**

I was living on skid row. Every day was just about making \$20 to get a hit, get high, come down, and then making another \$20 to get high all over again. Day in, day out. I was getting sicker and sicker and thinner and thinner.

*'I realized that I was tired of waking up sick every day. I took a good look at myself in the mirror and said: "Enough is enough".'*

Then, seven years ago, my left lung collapsed and I was in a drug-induced coma for over a month and a half. Everybody thought that this was the end for me, and my family was called in to say their goodbyes.

### **And then I woke up.**

No, I mean I really woke up. Not just from the coma, but from my life. I realized that I was tired of waking up sick every day. I took a good look at myself in the mirror and said: "Enough

is enough." To everyone's surprise, I came out of the coma and I cleaned myself up.

Seven years later, I am trying to stay healthy and happy. I only relapsed once during the past seven years. I tried using once, but I realized that it was still the same old stuff. I knew then and I know now that I never want to go back to using.

### **Now I try to focus on the positive side of things. I figure, the negative will take care of itself.**

I've started walking a lot. I ride the stationary bike at the Dr. Peter Centre. I read spiritual books. I play my guitar. I don't drink or smoke. I try to eat and sleep well. And I volunteer at the PWN foodbank on Tuesdays, which makes me feel really alive. The

women at PWN - the members, the staff - have been wonderful additions to my life. I see them all as real assets to my life every day.

### **I still have a lot of growing to do, and a lot of things to accomplish.**

I want to see my grandkids more often. Right now, they probably just see me through the birthday cards I send them. I want to be one of the people that they go to with their problems, someone they trust. I was there for

## Hats off to ... our support program donors!

- ♥ Capers
- ♥ Girl Gig Productions ... especially Trigger
- ♥ Safeway Store at Broadway & Commercial ... especially Margaret Jean, Amanda & Nick



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## And the Diamond Tiara goes to ... capers community market!

by Coreen Douglas



Capers is a wonderful example of a company that genuinely gives back to the community. Capers does this monetarily, but in countless other ways as well. It involves its staff, its customers and its suppliers in providing impetus, support and public awareness to issues and organizations that often fall off the radar screen of charitable giving in Vancouver.

PWN has often been an over-looked AIDS charity in the city, dealing with an invisible epidemic among often-marginalized women. Capers has taken us under their wing and provided funds, meals, in-kind donations and a ton of moral support that inspires the women of PWN to continue with the difficult work we do.

Since 1998 Capers has:

- ♥ Supplied 2 lunches every month to PWN members at our drop-in
- ♥ Held a 5% day for PWN (5% of sales donated to PWN)
- ♥ Made PWN the recipient of the Christmas giving program in 2001
- ♥ Raised \$30,000 for PWN at the Living Naturally Fair in 2002
- ♥ Supported the WAVE launch in 2003 with excellent food and beverages
- ♥ Contributed a member to the PWN Board of Directors – Kurstin Leith

Capers excels in supporting groups that are doing important, sometimes cutting edge charitable work, but who are often forgotten by larger companies. Capers has quietly made a difference in many, many people's lives with their work, including PWN members. Thank you, Capers! ♥



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**PWN Support Program Calendar**  
march 2004

**Support Program Calender**  
april 2004



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## Happy Anniversary! sangam celebrates 5 (& 1/2!) years at pwn

by Marcie Summers

### Belated Congrats upon Sangam's 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary at PWN!

Congratulations to Sangam upon her 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Support Worker, which she celebrated in November!

You all know Sangam through her antics in the drop-in, her laughter, good-natured teasing and the genuine caring she demonstrates toward all of our members.



Sangam brings to her work a respectful understanding of the complex challenges facing positive women. She is particularly interested in issues of addiction, bringing to that work an astute awareness of the many barriers women face each day as they seek support and treatment. Sangam's amazing Thursday night support group, Taking a Break, is in its fourth successful year. A big thanks to Sangam for approaching the Broadway & Commercial Safeway, resulting in their donation of over \$10,000.00 this year and a commitment of their ongoing support for the coming year.

Her many contributions to PWN, including honest communication and helpful insights, make Sangam an essential part of the staff team and a wonderful member of our community. ♡

### Notable Women

#### speaking of international women's day, do you know... marion ironquill meadmore?

In 1977, Meadmore was the first Aboriginal women to be admitted to the bar in Manitoba and all of Canada. She has spent the past 50 years helping First Nations communities in Canada to organize for action. She has helped to found more than 10 major Aboriginal organizations during this time.

Meadmore was born almost 70 years ago on the Peepeekisis Reserve in Saskatchewan to an Ojibway father and Cree mother. She is currently studying computers, particularly the internet. Her view is that the internet is going to be the political tool of the future for all the Aboriginal nations of the Americas. ♡

the birth of my first granddaughter. I travelled all the way to Calgary. The trip was really hard on me and my body, but it was a first step.

### I'm still scared.

I don't know what the future holds for me or my husband. The thought of losing him is one of my worst fears. As I mentioned, I am his best friend and confidant, and he's mine too. Sometimes, I am his nurse, but, always, I am a partner to him in every way

I love my home and life – I've never been happier. For the first time in my life, I'm comfortable in my own skin. ❤️

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Over to You - continued from page 5

To a fine and fuller place,  
 With sun,  
 And sea,  
 And fragrant flowers.  
 I'll run with You  
 To that  
 Glowing glory ground.  
 Run with all my soul,  
 Ere my alarm  
 Draws me home,  
 To earthly pills  
 Once more. ❤️

**“hey, how do i turn this thing on again?”**

Yes, that's right! **PWN now has a computer and internet connection** available for your use in the drop-in! Feel free to use the computer anytime during drop-in hours.

Starting in March, **Sheena** will be available from **1 - 2 pm during Thursday drop-in** to answer your computer questions and to help you to find what you are looking for online. In the meantime, if you see that staff are busy with other things, please save your questions until that time. ❤️

- \* olive leaf extract;
- \* noni juice;
- \* milk thistle;
- \* grapeseed extract;
- \* bitter melon.

The results of the study are troubling but not surprising. Similar findings have been noted in a previous study where researchers posed as breast cancer patients shopping at health food stores. In the current study, it is noteworthy that at least one of the products recommended for purchase has the potential to interact with prescription medications (garlic). Also, there's little evidence for clinical benefit (or any benefit) in HIV positive people using many of these products. Moreover, they are not cheap.

The findings support the regulations introduced by the NHPD. In addition, an option raised by the study authors is for health food store employees to receive training about the following aspects of the products that they sell:

- \* potential toxicity;
- \* safety;
- \* interactions with medications.

The study also highlights the need HIV positive people to continue to educate themselves about issues relating to the use of NHPs and the treatment of HIV/AIDS. As with any therapy, NHPs are best used with the advice and supervision of a knowledgeable health care practitioner. ❤️

*From Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE).  
 For more information visit CATIE's Information Network at [www.catie.ca](http://www.catie.ca)*



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**IN 2002 YOUNG WOMEN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 15-29 ACCOUNTED FOR ALMOST HALF OF ALL NEW HIV INFECTIONS AMONG WOMEN IN CANADA.**

**Bases Covered**  
*The positive side to an HIV story*

**WWW.BASESCOVERED.CA**

YouthCO AIDS Society and Positive Women's Network requests your attendance at the launch of **COVERED: The Young Women's HIV & AIDS Prevention & Awareness Campaign**.

For more info contact:  
The Young Women's HIV & AIDS Prevention & Awareness Project  
Phone: 1-877-YOUTHCO  
Email: [Information@youthco.org](mailto:Information@youthco.org)  
[WWW.BASESCOVERED.CA](http://WWW.BASESCOVERED.CA)

**Wednesday, April 14th 2004**  
**1:00-3:00 p.m.**  
UBC Robson Square  
Vancouver, BC  
800 Robson Street  
Room: C400

Program begins at 1:30p.m followed by video and poster presentations.  
Light refreshments will be served.  
Please RSVP by April 1st to [cindyw@youthco.org](mailto:cindyw@youthco.org)  
wheelchair access available (corner of robson & hwy) press level C upth entering

Production of this document was made possible by financial contributions from: AIDS Community Action Plan, Health Canada. The views expressed herein are solely of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the official policy of Health Canada.

# Community Connections

hiv/aids resources, events and opportunities



**The Positive Side**  
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## **cas: hiv+ youth forum**

**Who:** HIV positive youth (29 years old and younger) are invited to participate in the Canadian AIDS Society's 2004 People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHIV/AIDS) Forum – Registration is FREE!

**What:** So, what is the PLWHIV/AIDS Forum? Well, it's a gathering of HIV positive individuals from all across Canada. The point of the Forum is to bring HIV positive individuals together to talk about the issues that are most important to them, and to then pass on these issues (as "Resolutions") to the Canadian AIDS Society's Annual General Meeting (AGM). In this way, PLWHIV/AIDS themselves are given the opportunity to affect the focus of the Canadian AIDS Society's work.

**When:** The Forum is a three-day event, to be held from Wednesday June 16th to Friday June 18th, 2004 in Ottawa, Ontario. Free workshops will be held on Wednesday on such topics as: "GIPA: The Greater Involvement of People with HIV/AIDS" and "Medicinal Marijuana: What a Trip!" Small and larger group discussions will take place all day Thursday. On Friday, everyone will vote on which "Resolutions" will be passed on to the Canadian AIDS Society's AGM.

**Why:** The participation of youth at the Forum will make sure that the issues important to HIV positive youth are heard, and included in the Canadian AIDS Society's work plan It is YOUR opportunity to raise issues, give a voice to your own experience, and to offer suggestions on future youth-related projects at the Canadian AIDS Society! A "by and for youth" mentorship program for new youth participants, and youth-only activities will help to make the Forum a great experience for youth!

**How:** All interested HIV positive youth are encouraged to attend the Forum (did we mention that Registration is FREE?). Limited travel/accommodation scholarships available! Applications due April 2nd!

For more info and to register on-line (Registrations due May 7th!), go to [www.cdnaids.ca](http://www.cdnaids.ca) and click on the "2004 People Living with HIV/AIDS Forum and Annual General Meeting" Link, and then click on "Youth".

If you have any questions or concerns, call or email Maxxine (Youth Project Coordinator) anytime! 1-800-499-1986 ext. 123 [maxxiner@cdnaids.ca](mailto:maxxiner@cdnaids.ca)

## **icad: cdn hiv skills database**

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Skills Database is a new, on-line information resource created to profile and promote the skills, expertise and experience of Canadian organizations engaged in HIV and AIDS programming.

For more information check out [www.skillsforhiv aids.ca/site/index.cfm](http://www.skillsforhiv aids.ca/site/index.cfm)

## **thp: trans services guide**

The Transgender Health Program's guide to trans-friendly services around BC is now available, listing over 150 health, social, and legal service providers.

The guide can be viewed online at [www.vch.ca/transhealth/resources/directory/](http://www.vch.ca/transhealth/resources/directory/).

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## PWN Support Program Events

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### **vagina monologues @ ubc march 10, 2004**

#### **meet @ pwn @ 7:00 pm**

Your vagina got a thing or two to say? Celebrate International Women's Week by scooping a free PWN ticket to Eve Ensler's famous play about women and their vaginas! Show starts at 8 pm @ UBC. Pre-play dinner @ PWN @ 6 pm. Leave PWN @ 7 pm. Call Bronwyn @ 604.692.3008 to reserve your spot.

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### **international women's day march 8, 2004**

Take a moment. Take the whole day. Go play. Relax. Celebrate. Have fun.

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### **mom's day @ pwn march 11, 2004**

#### **12:00 pm - 3:00 pm**

Got kids? Join us in Room 103 as we celebrate our best success during International Women's Week - our children! Megaphones recommended, although not essential. Call Stacie @ 604.692.3005 for more information.

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### **oak tree surveys @ pwn march 23, 2004**

#### **12:00 pm - 2:00**

Got a moment or two? Help out Oak Tree Clinic by filling out their survey during PWN lunch. Thanks a million.

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### **pwn on the road to victoria april 7, 2004**

Can anyone say, "rrrrroad trip"? PWN is travelling to Victoria, BC to host a lunch for all PWN members who live in and around the city. Transportation costs reimbursed. Stay tuned for details - invites will be sent out shortly. Contact AVI or VPWAS for more info. Call Bronwyn at 1.866.692.3001 to register or for more information.

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### **bases covered: young women's prevention campaign launch**

#### **@ ubc robson square april 14, 2004**

#### **1:00 pm - 3:00 pm**

Join PWN and YouthCO for the official launch of their cutting-edge and hard-hitting young women's prevention and awareness campaign, *Bases Covered*.

Hey grrl, got your bases covered? Contact Cindy @ YouthCO before April 1, 2004 @ 604.688.1441 to RSVP or for more info.

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### **pwn retreat @ bowen island may 15 - may 17, 2004**

The event you've been waiting for all year is back again! Call Bronwyn @ 1.866.692.3001 or 604.692.3008 for more information. (Please note the new PWN Retreat Screening Policy: All members applying for retreats will be screened prior to acceptance of registration.)

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## PWN Support Program Events

### calling all moms!

PWN will be holding a "Special Day Just for Moms" on **March 11**, at **12 noon** in **Room #103**.


In recognition of ourselves during International Women's Week we will celebrate our best success - our children!

If you have babies and/or school aged children (up to 13 yrs of age.) come on out! The day will bring laughter, support, good food, and a whole bunch of cuties together.


If you are unable to attend this date but are interested in the next special event for moms, **call Stacie @ 604.692.3005**. 

PWN gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Provincial Health Services Authority in the production of *The Positive Side*.

Production would not be possible without the involvement of all our contributors, the teamwork of the PWN staff, and, especially, the ongoing support and help of Lori Wilson and Vinita Chand.

Many thanks all-round. 

*The Positive Side* is published six times a year. Editor: Sheena Sargeant  
Please address queries and/or submissions to:  
Editor, The Positive Side, Positive Women's Network, #614-1033 Davie St,  
Vancouver, BC, V6E 1M7, [pwn@pwn.bc.ca](mailto:pwn@pwn.bc.ca)

The deadline for the next issue is **April 19, 2004**. 

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### taking a break support grp thursdays @ 6 pm

Call Sangam at 604.692.3006 for details.

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### drop-in tuesdays - fridays, 11:30 am - 3:30 pm

Closed January 28 and February 25 (cheque issue days).

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### pwn grocery tuesdays, 12:00 - 2:30 pm

There is no pick up on any other day.

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### lunch tuesdays and thursdays, 12:00 - 2:00 pm

Hot lunches Tuesdays,  
cold lunches Thursdays ... mmmm.  
Enough said.

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### phone reception mondays - fridays, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

If you reach our voicemail between these hours, we may be in a meeting. You may leave a confidential message and we will return your call.

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## Connecting to Positive Women's Network

### in person

#614-1033 Davie Street, Vancouver  
(between Burrard and Thurlow)

### by mail

1033 Davie Street, Suite 614  
Vancouver, BC V6E 1M7

### by phone

604.692.3000 (local)  
1.866.692.3001 (toll-free in BC)

### by fax

604.684.3126

### by email

pwn@pwn.bc.ca

### online

www.pwn.bc.ca  
www.pwn-wave.ca



*Positive Women's Network supports women living with HIV/AIDS to make informed choices about their health. We provide safe access to HIV/AIDS-related support, advocacy and education/prevention to women and their communities throughout British Columbia, Canada. ♥*

### support program

Bronwyn Barrett - Program Coordinator - 604.692.3008 - bronwynb@pwn.bc.ca  
Cara Moody - Oak Tree Outreach Worker - 604.692.3007 - caram@pwn.bc.ca  
Sangam - Support Worker - 604.692.3006 - sangamg@pwn.bc.ca  
Stacie Migwans - Support Worker - 604.692.3005 - staciem@pwn.bc.ca

### communications and education

Sheena Sargeant - Communications Coord. - 604.692.3009 - sheenas@pwn.bc.ca  
Jeannie Lowe - Resource Coordinator - 604.692.3011 - jeannel@pwn.bc.ca  
Bronwen Tigar - Young Women's Prevention Coordinator - bronwent@youthco.org

### administration

Marcie Summers - Executive Director - 604.692.3010 - marcies@pwn.bc.ca  
L' Hirondelle Financial Services - Bookkeeping - 604.692.3000

### fund development

Coreen Douglas - Fund Development Coordinator - 604.692.3000

*The information provided herein cannot replace the information provided by a medical professional.*

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