



## AIDS Calgary On The Move

By Sean McLennan

November 1st, AIDS Calgary opened the doors of their new home on the other side of downtown: 110, 1603 10th Ave. SW. They had been at their previous location on 15th Ave. and Center St. for many years and finally their lease and options to renew ran out. Although, such a huge change can be quite a burden for any organization, let alone a not-for-profit, it can also be a positive opportunity for development—this is the spirit in which the team at AIDS Calgary took the challenge.

Susan Cress, the executive director of AIDS Calgary—or more properly AIDS Calgary Awareness Association—and Capri Rasmussen, the Team Leader of Client Services, shared some of the challenges of their search with us; the organization had some tight requirements for their new location which were all the harder to meet in Calgary's booming real estate climate. The first was space; they were unwilling to compromise the services AIDS Calgary provides the community to accommodate a physical location. Accessibility was vital—they wanted to stay in the inner city where they are closer to clients that rely on public transit. Of course cost is always a big factor; the not-for-profits have a hard time competing with the corporations and up-scale condos for space downtown. It would be surprising if the current developments in and around Victoria Park and the commensurate increase in property values aren't partly responsible for AIDS Calgary having to move in the first place.

They started the search early—last January—and despite the constraints, luckily found a location that not only satisfies the requirements but, according to Cress and Rasmussen, actually allows for an improvement in the services they provide—they are quite excited about the new space.

The building is a non-profit complex just west of 14th St and south of downtown, near MoneyPennies. They'll be sharing the building with the Aboriginal Resource Centre and Awo-Taan Family Centre. It is only slightly larger, but, significantly, it comprises two floors and the ground floor has street access. That allows for a better functional division of the space—downstairs can be devoted to client services and upstairs to the more administrative side of the operation. In fact, downstairs will now be known as the "Calgary Cares Centre"—although there

will be no change to the branding of AIDS Calgary Awareness Association, the hope is that the combination of store-front level access and more generic signage will make the center less intimidating to enter, and enhance client privacy. Overall, Cress and Rasmussen believe the space is more conducive to putting clients at ease.

In terms of accessibility, the new location is a little further from the LRT, but only a couple of blocks from the 14th St. corridor which is covered by a number of bus routes. The area also has two-hour street parking which the old location lacked and it's close to the Greyhound bus station which is more convenient for people traveling in from rural areas. Ultimately, it's as good or better for most people to get to.

The move, admirably, only resulted in less than a two-week interruption of their regular client services between October 20th and October 31st. It didn't interfere at all with any of their larger scheduled events like the AIDS Walk For Life held at the end of September or the upcoming holiday hamper program. Make no mistake though, it was by no means a simple accomplishment; the continuity is due to the hard work of people who are willing to put in the extra effort and who have the organizational skills to get it done efficiently.

A move of this magnitude also comes with a significant price tag—keep that in mind the next time you have a chance to contribute to AIDS Calgary—and if you can, maybe kick in a little more to help offset their added expenses this year.

Putting together and delivering the holiday hampers while settling into their new digs will undoubtedly be more challenging this year than usual, so perhaps try and direct a little more effort in that direction in the coming months. The hampers are for individuals and families living with HIV/AIDS and include all the makings for a Christmas dinner plus other sundries to help sustain people over the winter months. You can make financial donations or donations of non-perishable food items, clothing, toiletries, food vouchers, gift certificates, books, school supplies, bus tickets, phone cards, or games and toys. They will also need volunteers to help deliver the hampers.

For more information about AIDS Calgary Awareness Association, any of its services or to volunteer or make donations they can be reached at:

#110, 1603 10th Ave. SW, Calgary, Alberta T3C 0J7

(403)508-2500

[aidscalgary.org](http://aidscalgary.org)

[info@aidscalgary.org](mailto:info@aidscalgary.org)

To get to the new location on Calgary transit, there are a few options:

- \* The #17 bus stops at 11th Ave. and 15th or 16th St.
- \* From the Center Street or 1st Street LRT station, catch the #6 near The Bay on 1st Street and get off at 11th Ave. and 14th St.
- \* Take the #414, 14th St. Crosstown bus and get off at 14th St. and 12th Ave.

Sean McLennan is a native Calgarian with (nearly) a PhD in Linguistics and Cognitive Science from Indiana University, where he was heavily involved in GLBT education. He currently has a full time gig in software for mobile technology.

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