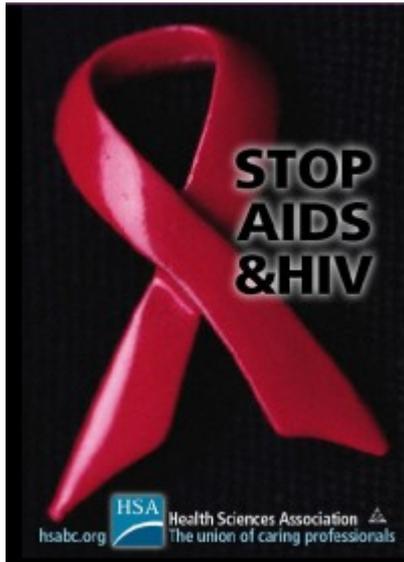


World AIDS Day: We can make a difference

December 1, 2008



This December 1st, World AIDS Day, the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) wants to remind its members and all Canadians that working together we can make a difference in the lives of people living with AIDS.

The National Union in particular wants to thank its members and their Component unions in working so hard to address the AIDS crisis in Africa. From making presentations to their locals and community groups to resolutions at Conventions, they have been pushing the agenda forward.

Activists have distributed thousands of posters and pamphlets on the crisis with the goal of informing their family, friends, co-workers and neighbours about what they can do to make a difference.

More impressive still is the ongoing efforts to raise funds for organizations that seek to prevent the spread of HIV and improve the lives of people living with AIDS. They truly are demonstrating that working together we can make a difference.

One of the global leaders of the movement for international action in support of people living with AIDS in Africa is Canadian Stephen Lewis.

Lewis worked as United Nations Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa from 2001-2006. As Special Envoy he worked tirelessly to raise the profile of the AIDS crisis among world leaders and the general public. He argued that all of us have a responsibility to respond. This was a message that struck home among National Union activists.

In 2005 his Massey Lectures were published in book form and titled "Race Against Time". In the book he powerfully describes the failure of the governments of the developed world, including Canada, to respond to the pandemic in Africa.

The National Union and its Components have had Lewis speak many times at Conventions and gatherings. To date hundreds of thousands of dollars have been donated to the Lewis Foundation. Lewis was also a featured speaker at last week's BC Federation of Labour Convention.

Delegates at the National Union's womens conference were moved to commit to ongoing support of the Masai Clinic in Lesotho, Africa after a powerful presentation by Dr. Anne-Marie Zajdlik , the founder of a HIV/AIDS clinic in Lesotho, Africa.

The committee brought a resolution to the union's national convention for ongoing financial support to the Masai Clinic.

Shortly afterwards delegates to the National Unions triennial Convention felt the same way and quickly embraced the Bracelet of Hope campaign after a presentation by Dr. Zajdlik.

-We have the tools. We are lacking the political will and leadership needed to implement them,- Zajdlik said.

-There is no greater suffering than an orphan with HIV. I already had a heart for Africa ... now it is my soul. Parts of Africa are dying; our response is critical. More than ever, I believe that it is time to re-direct, re-focus and ramp up our efforts."

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017