



Fall 2015 Newsletter

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▶ SHARP IS CELEBRATING  
25 YEARS OF CARING—  
GET INVOLVED



▶ HOUSING & HIV RESEARCH  
SUMMIT—WASHINGTON DC



▶ SEASON OF THANKS &  
GIVING

Fall 2015

# SHARP *focus*

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY'S MOST VULNERABLE



**1990 - 2015**

On October 4th, 2015, 30 SHARP residents, volunteers, and staff came together to celebrate the SHARP Foundation's 25th Anniversary. Over the past 25 years, SHARP has committed itself to improving the lives of people living with HIV, by providing holistic, personalized care to meet the complex social and health needs

of each and every person we serve.

Back in 1990, Walter Beswick, Don Gallant, Gary Krausher and many friends created the Society Housing AIDS Recovering Persons (SHARP) to provide a safe, compassionate place for people dying of AIDS could live the last days of their lives with dignity. When asked why he started SHARP Walter responded by telling a story of the first person they cared for and saying "*...we lived and loved along with him... in his own room, I repeat, his own room ... he had something of his own until he died. Where can others go?*". With very little money and lots of hard work the Foundation was built; first by caring for people in scattered homes in the inner city and then opening Beswick House in 1993. Care was provided by volunteers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Fortunately, people living with HIV can live long, healthy and happy lives due to advancements in HIV therapy. However, SHARP was still needed to help those who had difficulty coping not only with HIV, but many other health and psychosocial issues including homelessness, mental illness, trauma and the persisting stigma. Over the past 10 years, we have quadrupled the number of people and increased the number of options for care. Unfortunately, the number of people wanting or needing our unique care is growing; having few to no other options. Once again we need to ask the question "*where can others go?*" We are already planning a new home (Beswick 2.0), and we will continue to look for innovative solutions until we can get to zero - zero new HIV transmission, zero AIDS-related deaths, and zero discrimination!

There is lots of work to do, but it is time for us to celebrate! With your support and commitment SHARP has become a truly remarkable 'little' service that is receiving national and international recognition, but more importantly has provided a place that over 400 people have called "home"! Our success comes from the relationships we build with each other and the rest of the community - a real family!

We will be hosting a number of events over the next year and look forward to seeing you there! Thank you for being an important part of the SHARP Foundation!

## Share Your Favourite SHARP Experience for a Chance to Win!

Do you have special memory or experience about SHARP that you would like to share? If so, we want to hear about them! Submit a written or visual piece of work (e.g., painting, drawing, photograph, or both, depicting one of your favourite memories or experiences with The SHARP Foundation for a chance to win!

There will be a first place prize for the best written submission and visual submission.

Deadline for submissions is December 1, 2015

You may submit your work via email to [info@thesharpfoundation.com](mailto:info@thesharpfoundation.com) or in person at our main office:

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We encourage all submissions to be as creative as you wish to make them!  
However, we ask that all written submissions be no more than 500 words.

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## **SHARP at the 8th Annual North American Housing & HIV/AIDS Research Summit**

In September, the SHARP Foundation's Executive Director, Floyd Visser, and Alberta Health Services - Provincial Harm Reduction Supervisor, Barbara Ross, presented on SHARP's eLearning modules, "Caring for Individuals with Complex Health and Social Needs", at the 8th Annual North American Housing & HIV/AIDS Research Summit in Washington, DC. This Summit focused on understanding social drivers of HIV (e.g., social marginalization, incarceration and violence) and how to properly address these issues in order to offset barriers that impede the effectiveness of HIV prevention and treatment programs. Although new HIV treatment and prevention strategies have provided ways to eliminate new infection rates and decrease HIV-related deaths, these efforts continue to be undermined by societies inability to address social and structural factors that continue to drive the HIV epidemic. Research indicates that HIV is largely concentrated in populations that more often than not, are marginalized by poverty, homelessness and substance abuse, while other evidence has shown that effective structural interventions (i.e., housing, proper nutrition, economic education, job training), improve the HIV prevention and treatment program outcomes. Therefore, the main goal of the Summit was to provide a platform for interdisciplinary discussions to be held regarding the importance of acknowledging and addressing the inter-connectedness of various social discourses and ways they contribute HIV epidemics in vulnerable populations.

Barbara and Floyd's presentation focused on the development and implementation of SHARP's eLearning modules as an educational tool for frontline service workers that focuses on addressing the syndemics of HIV in marginalized populations. The overall goal of these learning modules is to provide frontline workers with the information they need to better understand, empathize with, and care for individuals with complex health and social needs. These modules effectively address these discourses by providing the frontline healthcare and human services workforce with new tools and skill set that can properly acknowledge and address the interconnectedness of disease and social conditions, and what needs to be done in order to improve clients ability to access effective HIV treatment and prevention programs. The nature of one's lived experiences often increase their vulnerability, especially for those living with HIV who may be undereducated or live in poverty, as these social discourses often impede individuals ability to adequately access services and programs that increase their well-being. Therefore, it is important to understand the complexity of the social conditions an individual is subject to and how this may inadvertently affect how they engage in HIV prevention and treatment programs. Failure to do so results in reduced success rates and effectiveness of HIV prevention and treatment programs.

***"HIV is only a piece of an individual's identity, there are greater societal discourses that contribute to HIV". - Floyd Visser***

SHARP looks forward to seeing similar jurisdictions apply these eLearning modules into their care practices and how they can reform ways frontline service workers engage with social drivers that limit the effectiveness of HIV prevention and treatment strategies.

## **Outdoors with SHARP**

**SHARP residents enjoyed a two day camping trip to Kananaskis at the end of August. Those who participated in the trip were excited to share about their experiences:**

*"It was a wonderful and healthy place, I enjoyed the mountains and the view. It was good for my mind, very refreshing."*

*"It was neat-o man, I loved everything about it. I liked when we went for a ride to the upper falls. Loved the freedom and how free it made me feel."*

*"When we got there we went exploring it was really gorgeous and so beautiful, and accessible for everyone. The hike to the waterfall was awesome ... really awesome. We expected to see more wildlife than chipmunks, but I didn't really care because we were there. We made smores, sat by the campfire and did crafts and activities. Families from the other cabins came to visit with us too; they were awesome and very pleasant. So was the staff there. I would take my family there if I could! Thank you SHARP, volunteers and staff, you were great! I can't wait to go back next year."*



**We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to our wonderful volunteers who made this trip possible! Thank you!**

## **2015 Calgary Pride Parade**



On September 7<sup>th</sup>, SHARP participated in the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Calgary Pride Parade. Over the years, Calgary's Pride Parade has flourished, and attendance has increased dramatically. It was projected that this year Pride Parade hosted 60,000 people!

SHARP's annual Pride Parade after party, Deep Roots, went off without a hitch, and a total of \$2,900 was raised! Thank you to all those who came down to support SHARP, especially to those who donated their time to make the event a success!

A special thanks goes out to **Broken City** for offering their space and time to host our event and **Mystare, Saint Asia Divine and friends** for providing five-star entertainment for the evening.

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## The Season of Thanks and Giving

### Dear Supporters,

The SHARP Foundation would like to take a moment to give thanks to those who have supported



the lives of those living with HIV.

Thanks to your donations, we have been able to help those living with or affected by HIV by providing them with the services and supports needed to improve their health and well-being.

Your financial support is important to us, equally as important is time donated volunteering with SHARP clients and staff. The SHARP Foundation is forever grateful for the compassion, kindness and support that has been extended to us. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you.

Yours Truly,  
The SHARP Foundation

***"At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." - Albert Schweitzer***

## What We Do

The Calgary-based SHARP Foundation was established in 1990 with a vision to provide quality client-focused care and secure housing for the community's most vulnerable persons living with HIV. Since then, the

## Volunteer

Of course your time is one of your most valuable assets, especially to The SHARP Foundation! SHARP is always looking for helping hands who are interested in donating their time and skills. There are several volunteer opportunities available for those who are interested in joining the SHARP team.

If you are interested in volunteering with us, please contact us at 403.272.2912 or email

Foundation's work has grown to address the needs of almost forty clients in five facilities that provide everything from intensive long-term care, to providing independent living environments. Our facilities and support services represent a full spectrum of care – addressing the physical, medical, psycho-social and spiritual needs of Calgary's most vulnerable. We provide this to our clients for up to 1/18th of the cost of acute hospital care.

n.steinback@thesharpfoundation.com.



## DONATE

Did you know that you can donate to SHARP through the United Way? If your workplace participates in an annual or ongoing campaign where funds are directed to the United Way, you can designate your dollars to SHARP by quoting our Charitable Registration Number (897948436RR0001) in Section 2, Option C on the form your employer provides. The SHARP Foundation is not a recipient of direct United Way funding.

There are many other ways to give to SHARP as well! To make a monetary contribution, visit [Canada Helps](#) or contact us directly.



**The SHARP Foundation**

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[www.theSHARPfoundation.com](http://www.theSHARPfoundation.com) - Charitable Registration #897948436RR0001

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