



2012
Annual Report

ACYR Mission

The AIDS Committee of York Region is a community-based, non-profit organization, which embraces the GIPA* principles, provides support, and offers education which promotes the development of a caring and compassionate society, as well as access to dignified care for people affected and infected by HIV/AIDS.

*GIPA=Greater Involvement of People with HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

ACYR Vision

The AIDS Committee of York Region envisions an informed and compassionate society, which is supportive of people living with HIV/AIDS who are striving to overcome social, economic and service challenges, working with them towards a healthy and empowered lifestyle.

ACYR Values and Beliefs

- We value and believe in the greater involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS at all levels of the organization
- We value the practice of anti-oppression and anti-racism in our provision of equitable service to diverse communities affected by HIV/AIDS
- We value and respect people and believe in their ability to succeed
- We believe in a holistic approach to wellness that encompasses physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects characterized by respect for human dignity and diversity
- We believe in the encouragement of self empowerment by enhancing an individual's ability and opportunity to make informed choices
- We believe in an individual's right to information, access to service, and education
- We value the confidentiality of all people living with, or impacted by, HIV/AIDS who use our services
- We value collaboration of individuals, families, communities and agencies in support of those affected by HIV/AIDS
- We believe that Harm Reduction and Risk Reduction approaches are legitimate strategies and choices for support of individuals and families



Above: Turtle Jacks at Walk & Roll to the Water
Right: Outreach at Fairy Lake Multicultural Festival
Left: Candlelight Vigil 2012

2012-2016 Strategic Directions

The ACYR has continued to build a strong foundation to support the array of services we offer. This year, the Board of Directors undertook a strategic planning process to set our organizational priorities to 2016. Through the achievement of our strategic goals, we will continue to lead HIV prevention and support into the future. A Strategic Planning Committee comprised of Board members, staff and management, including people living with HIV/AIDS, directed the process. An environmental scan and an analysis of the ACYR's strengths, weaknesses/challenges, opportunities and threats (SWOT) were conducted. All of the information gathered was used to develop three strategic directions to guide the organization to 2016. We are proud of the inclusive approach used for this process and a work plan will be developed to action the strategic directions.

Strategic Directions:

1) Foster Resiliency: The AIDS Committee of York Region has provided a range of programs and services to meet the diverse needs of our service users. We are recognized for providing outstanding care. We have delivered education, outreach, client support services and a volunteer program alongside our Women and HIV Initiative. Our service users depend on us and at times, the demand exceeds our capacity. We need to better balance expectations with what we can do while maximizing our resources and impact.

2) Sustain Our Organizational Wellness: Over the past few years, the AIDS Committee of York Region has grown. We have added to our staff, expanded the scope of our work and increased our budget. We have nurtured an organizational culture that we are proud of – one that is inclusive, respectful and self-reflective. We have developed systems and structures to guide us and we have supported the development of our staff and Board members. We need to reinforce and build on these gains.

3) Strengthen Our Financial Health: The AIDS Committee of York Region has achieved some financial success. We have been able to grow our operating budget even in times of economic constraints. Our success has been tempered, however, as some of the growth was attributed to time-limited funding and our few fundraised dollars. With an uncertain economic climate and shifting funder priorities, we need to intensify our efforts to increase our funding from various sources.



Report from the Board Chair and the Executive Director

In the early days of this agency, Lyla Peros, the Chairperson of a fledgling AIDS Committee of York Region (ACYR) knew the importance of dignified care for those impacted by HIV and saw the great need for support in York Region. In 1993, she told the press about the devastating loss of her son to AIDS just eighteen months after being diagnosed and the motivation for starting the first support group: "I do not want people to suffer."

These prescient words from a committed volunteer two decades ago continue to be a powerful reminder that behind the statistics, the science, and the stigma of HIV, there are real people touched by this pandemic. It is a privilege to be a part of the ACYR and its long tradition of caring, and to share the relevance of our work with you.

This year, the ACYR has remained attuned to the needs of the community we serve as we advanced our mission in a significant and innovative manner. With offices in both Newmarket and Richmond Hill, we continue to foster new alliances to promote awareness about HIV in our Region, and build our capacity to maintain a high level of social service in York Region.

Ontario continues to have the highest number of positive HIV test reports in Canada. According to statistical reports, Ontario has more than 26,490 people living with HIV/AIDS and has experienced the greatest number of HIV infections and AIDS related deaths since the start of the epidemic. Closer to home in York Region, the ACYR continues to advocate on behalf of people living with HIV and provide relevant programs that bring those affected by HIV/AIDS in from the margins, so that individuals can reclaim their role as valued members of our community. We are fortunate to have unwavering support from our funders, sponsors, donors, and volunteers, to deliver a unique platform of relevant services to diverse populations that promote wellbeing, address stigma and isolation, and provide educational support across sectors to prevent the spread of HIV. As the only AIDS Service Organization in York Region, we are committed to stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS.

We greatly expanded outreach efforts this year to ensure enhanced community engagement. In partnership with the AIDS Committee of Simcoe County, the ACYR was successful in receiving funding for a Gay and men who have sex with men (MSM) Outreach Program funded by Ontario Trillium Foundation. This Gay/MSM project is in response to emerging issues and will be the first of its kind in York Region, thus the program will fill an important gap in HIV prevention.

We developed a documentary called Walk N' Roll To The Water, A Triumph of Solidarity. This documentary was showcased in the York Region Multimedia Film Festival, and traces a group of committed individuals as they take on a one-day endurance challenge from Aurora to Lake Simcoe to show their solidarity for those impacted by HIV/AIDS. The documentary showcases the strength of drawing together individuals, media, organizations, and businesses to take concrete action and build a personal, local response to HIV.

We hosted several successful educational sessions this year and participated in diverse community events, including a World AIDS Day Candlelight Vigil to remember what HIV/AIDS has cost us and also to reflect on a bright future made possible by improved treatment options, several media appearances to promote HIV awareness, mall and targeted

community event outreach, an annual Central Opening Doors Conference, Women and HIV training for forty-five service providers, and active involvement in growing the PRIDE York Region events. These expanded prevention efforts ensure a strong knowledge base of HIV/AIDS in York Region.

The Board of Directors invested in building their capacity by attending workshops offered by the United Way of York Region on governance and financial management. The staff and Board of Directors attended a joint training session on Trans Inclusion offered by The 519 Church Street Community Centre at our team retreat in January 2012. In addition, the staff has received several skills building training including: Building Resiliency with the AIDS Bereavement Project of Ontario, two days of Harm Reduction training and certification with the Ontario HIV & Substance Use Training Program, and training at the provincial Women and HIV/AIDS Initiative Forum.

While we rely on government funding to provide relevant programs, fund development and organizational stability are key priorities for the organization. As such, we could not be successful in meeting the needs of the community we serve without engaging in fund raising activities. This year, we stepped up our fundraising initiatives through A Taste For Life (our signature dining event in April 2012) with a record 700 participants, A Walk N' Roll To The Water (a marathon 42km test of endurance starting from Aurora and ending at Lake Simcoe), and a Pyjama Walk in collaboration with MAC Cosmetics. With the support of corporate sponsors and individual donors, we are proud to report that we have exceeded our fundraising goals. Programs such as our Drive-to-Care Program, Compassion Fund Program, and Wellness Retreat for service users are entirely funded by our fundraising efforts.

The Board of Directors has also championed a scholarship fund called the Avinash Ramkissoon Education Fund to support the academic goals of people living with HIV/AIDS and those immediately impacted by HIV in our region. Established in memory of Avinash Ramkissoon and to honour his contributions in improving the lives of people living with



HIV/AIDS in York Region, this educational fund will mentor local leaders of the future. This support will enable our community to lead and serve, and live to their highest potential.

Caring, innovation, and collaboration have always been part of the ACYR's DNA, and today, the organization continues to stay true to the aims of the early founders. We would like to honour the dedication of the Board, volunteers, and staff for all their immense contributions this year. With deep gratitude, we would like to say thank you and goodbye to our Board Secretary, Denis Heng, who ends his term with the organization. Denis has left an indelible mark on the fabric of this organization and we wish him the best in all his endeavours. Finally, on behalf of the Board and staff, we acknowledge our community partners for their immeasurable support. The coming year holds a lot of promise and we look forward to unprecedented success in our leadership role in response to HIV/AIDS in York Region.

With deep respect and humility,

Marnie Sigmar, Board Chair

Radha Bhardwaj, Executive Director



Above: Activities at Client Retreat 2012

Programs and Services

Direct Services

Client Support Services

This program is a crucial component within the range of services we offer at the ACYR and improves the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS. We configured our support services program by retiring some of the activities that we found were under-utilized and strengthened the core services in this area.

- **Monthly support groups & children's activities:** These meetings are a cornerstone of our services to people living with HIV/AIDS in our Region, and provide health promotion, peer support, educational workshops, and capacity building activities to meaningfully engage the community we serve. Special activities for children and youth, including a visit to a pumpkin patch, a zine/creative forum called Positive Space designed by youth, and a holiday party increase positive peer influence. In our annual assessment to see whether our support groups were meeting the needs of our service users:

100% of participants have reported that they have created new networks of peers, and found support that they can turn to as a result of participation within support groups and ACYR activities.

- **Drive-to-Care:** This program meets a critical need in our Region, and provides free door-to-door transportation to medical treatment and care appointments. Entirely funded through our fundraising efforts, this program alleviates geographic isolation and eases the financial burden faced by individuals trying to access much-needed supports.

100% of participants feel this program reduces financial burden and increases access to much-needed supports.

- **Compassion Fund:** This fund provides emergency financial assistance to clients and basic needs support to those at-risk of homelessness. This program is funded entirely through our fundraising efforts and eligibility is based on the priority needs of our service users.
- **Practical Support:** This support includes accompaniment to appointments, home visits, bus tickets, nutritional supplements, clothing bank, and food vouchers. In our annual assessment:

100% of participants identify feeling more capable in accessing practical and social supports.

- **Annual Client Retreat:** The retreat provides excellent opportunities for peer mentorship, enhanced support networks, building resilience, educational support, volunteerism, and promotion of wellbeing. This popular program is funded entirely through our fundraising efforts.

100% of participants find this retreat valuable and 80% indicate they have gained new skills in dealing with isolation due to stigma.

- **Wish List Program:** This program matches wish lists from children, families, and individuals with donor(s) from the community. There are wish lists targeting every budget and the donor(s) can choose items that suit their pocket book. This program is entirely funded by contributions from individuals and groups in the region.

Education, Outreach, and Public Awareness

Our organization promotes health and provides targeted HIV prevention education in York Region. Using a variety of forums, including social media, web-based training videos, our award winning documentaries, media interviews, and interactive educational workshops, these interventions prevent the spread of HIV, reduce the risk of HIV re-infection, increase knowledge, self-esteem, and negotiation skills.

To help break the silence surrounding HIV and sexual health in our Region, we offer workshops for varying age groups and diverse audiences. Targeted events include: mall outreach and community events outreach, a World AIDS Day vigil, presentation at the annual Quest Conference for educators, PRIDE York Region activities, media interviews, condom stuffing parties with volunteers that allow us to distribute HIV prevention supplies to various dispensaries, ribbon-making get-togethers with volunteers, and engaging HIV 101 workshops and forums in collaboration with people living with HIV.

Our signature annual events, including A Taste For Life and Walk N' Roll To The Water have greatly enhanced cross-sectoral partnerships. With a record attendance of 700 participants at A Taste For Life in 2012, we have greatly increased our visibility and worked hard to build supportive communities. We would like to thank all our participating restaurants this year: Aqua Grill, Bonsai Hill, Covernotes Café, Edward Street Bistro, Fishbone Bistro, Fraticelli's Italian Grill and Lounge, Jonathan's Mediterranean and More, and Scorpion Mediterranean Bar and Grill. A special note of gratitude to our corporate sponsors TD Canada Trust and DMTI Spatial for making A Taste For Life a great success this year. This year, we also introduced the Pyjama Walk in collaboration with MAC Cosmetics and Upper Canada Mall. These events not only raise funds for our support services but also help to fight stigma within our communities. They are an integral part of HIV prevention and support in our Region.

Community HIV Engagement Project: The ACYR was successful in receiving a Public Health Agency of Canada funding for implementing a two-year Community HIV Engagement Project. This initiative is a framework for strengthening and sustaining HIV prevention among priority populations. This project will be delivered in partnership with Blue Door Shelters, LOFT/Crosslinks Street Outreach and Services Network, and Vaughan African Canadian Association. The ACYR is now able to take our services to the streets, and connect regularly with people who are at high-risk for HIV transmission and who regularly use the Street Outreach Van for support. Through this initiative, we have also trained thirty frontline shelter workers

walk & roll TO THE WATER SEPTEMBER 15 2012
10k • 35k • 100k for HIV/AIDS awareness.

Walk & Roll to the Water: Show your commitment to the cause by pledging to run, walk or cycle with us on September 15 2012. All proceeds go directly to support programs and services provided for those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

HOW IT WORKS

- Run/walk 35k or 10k through the Nokidisa Trail or cycle 100k to Sullivan's Point
- Race starts and ends in Newmarket
- Volunteers at pit stops will cheer you on and keep you safe and hydrated
- Scrumptious snacks throughout the race
- Pledge \$100 or more and get a **Single jersey**

SUPPORT A GREAT CAUSE
 Raise a minimum of \$100 in pledges to participate in this fabulous event! Pledges will be collected on the day of the event. Registration is \$60.
 Are you walking or rolling with us?

By raising \$100 in pledges, you get:

- Race kit with goodies
- Post-race foot massage
- Walk & Roll sown
- Finisher's medal

Water is Essential
 Water has historically been a symbol of healing, faith and hope. It is a basic requirement of life. Our athletes traveled to water to recover health and strength. We walk to the water near to generate our funds in community and express our sympathy for those who are affected daily by HIV/AIDS.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS:

running free **NEWMARKET & AURORA** **UPPER CANADA MALL** **Upper Way**

Ontario's largest HIV/AIDS charity. Check out our website to see how you can help us raise funds for our programs. We're looking for volunteers to help us raise funds for our programs. We're looking for volunteers to help us raise funds for our programs. We're looking for volunteers to help us raise funds for our programs.

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Find Us: 194 Eagle St. East Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 1J8. Call Us: 905 953 0248. Toll Free: 1 800 243 7717. Visit Us: www.acyr.org

Run, walk or cycle to raise pledges to support awareness for HIV/AIDS.

- cycle to Lake Simcoe
- run/walk Nokidisa Trail
- Newmarket: start/finish
- snacks & refreshments
- finisher's medal
- fortified race kit

UPPER CANADA MALL **MAC COSMETICS** **running free**

serving men on HIV-related issues and provided HIV outreach at the local Caribana festival called CariVaughan.

Central Opening Doors Conference is a two-day conference for professionals, service providers, and people living with HIV organized in partnership with the Peel HIV/AIDS Network and the AIDS Committee of Simcoe County. This past year, with a total of 78 delegates and topics including HIV & Aging, Women & HIV, and Harm Reduction, we accomplished our collaborative goal of educating service providers to better understand the issues facing people living with HIV and better equip professionals to provide relevant care and service. This conference also allows for opportunities to build consistent quality care across the three regions.



Good Food for a Good Cause!
Wed April 25th 2012

Bookings start at 6:00pm.
Make your reservations early!

A Taste for Life is a delicious fundraiser where participating restaurants donate 25% of your bill to the AIDS Committee of York Region.



Supporting a great cause has never been so easy nor tasted so good!

All diners are eligible to enter a grand prize draw! Send an invitation to a friend, visit www.atatetforlife.org

For more info contact Lisa Di Pietro at 905 953 0248 or visit www.acyr.org

www.atatetforlife.org



Top: TD Bank supports A Taste for Life

Bottom: Walk & Roll to the Water volunteers, participants and staff

Volunteer Support

The ACYR lost the Public Health Agency of Canada funded Volunteer Program this year, and we have therefore re-structured our volunteer support services. After conducting an assessment, we have addressed this funding constraint by widening the scope of the Administrative Support role to encompass some volunteer liaison functions, and streamlined the volunteer program to fit our existing staff capacity. Our volunteers are highly motivated and remain our invaluable assets, and their contributions inform our practice at various levels of the organization. Therefore, providing valuable volunteer options are critical to the wellbeing of this agency. This year, more than one hundred volunteers were involved in community development activities, support services, fund raising, outreach activities, and contributed immensely at the Board level. In spite of funding challenges, more than 1200 volunteer hours of service were contributed this past year by outstanding individuals. We continue to actively explore new funding opportunities to better harness volunteer contributions.

Women and HIV Initiative

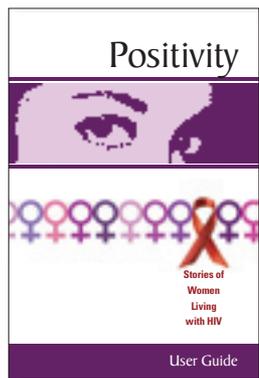
The ACYR is one of sixteen provincial sites selected to implement the Women and HIV Initiative funded by the AIDS Bureau, Ministry of Health and Long-term Care. This program is responsible for implementing community-based responses to women and HIV/AIDS-related issues. In the past year, here are some of the ways we have enhanced local community capacity relating to women and HIV:

- Trained forty-five health care service providers on myths and facts when caring for women living with HIV.
- Facilitated a session at the 2011 Central Opening Doors to women living with HIV as well as service providers. The session called: Increasing Access to Support for Women Living with and Affected by HIV was attended by twelve service providers and fifteen women living with HIV.



Above: York Region Pride Parade flag raising
Right: A Taste for Life volunteers and awards

- Represent the ACYR on the York Region Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee and Anti-Human Trafficking Committee.
- Participated in “Supporting Women in Ways that Work” session on providing opportunities for peer support by positive women at various health care sites.
- Participated in a health fair on Georgina Island and met with an Elder to determine best approach to reaching Aboriginal women who might be at risk for HIV.
- Developed a five-part workshop series to be rolled out in fall 2012 to meet the needs of service providers serving women.
- Participate on the provincial Women and HIV/AIDS Initiative Forum to collaboratively address systemic issues and use a consistent approach to provincial concerns around women and HIV.
- The Women and HIV Initiative also provides our sister agency, the AIDS Committee of Simcoe County, with resources and capacity building support.



Gay/MSM Outreach

In collaboration with the AIDS Committee of Simcoe County, our organization was successful in receiving funding for the Gay Outreach Services Simcoe York Project (GOSSYP) from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. GOSSYP is the first program to provide targeted HIV prevention support to Gay men and men who have sex with men in York Region. This initiative is in response to emerging issues and we aim to: promote access to safe sex materials, provide online outreach to men who are at risk, use social media tools to provide safer sex information, offer training and context to service providers on at-risk behaviours that can impact the health of both male and female partners, develop resources that can be shared in both Simcoe and York regions, and host joint community events. This is an exciting and relevant project and we look forward to sharing many successes this year.



Administration

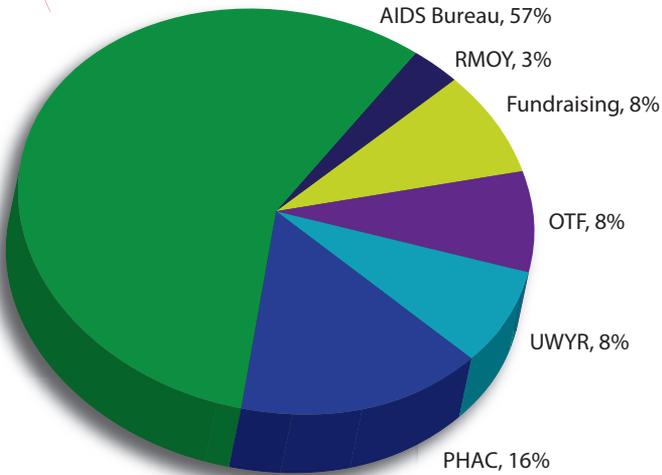
The goal of the administrative structure at the ACYR is to facilitate the smooth delivery of programs and services, and ensure that the organization remains accountable to the broader community. Some highlights include:

- The emphasis on strengthening the valuable human resources at the agency through staff development opportunities and team building activities.
- The ACYR successfully utilizes a secure online OCASE client service management system to more effectively monitor trends in the Region.
- Consistent and relevant policies are in place to manage the changing trends in the HIV sector.
- A modern IT system has been set up with a secure server and remote back-up to ensure the effective coordination of the two locations.
- Event planning and high level fund development decisions are effectively strategized by the Fundraising Committee.
- Newsletters and flyers are developed periodically to promote the services we offer to the broader community and ensure agency visibility.

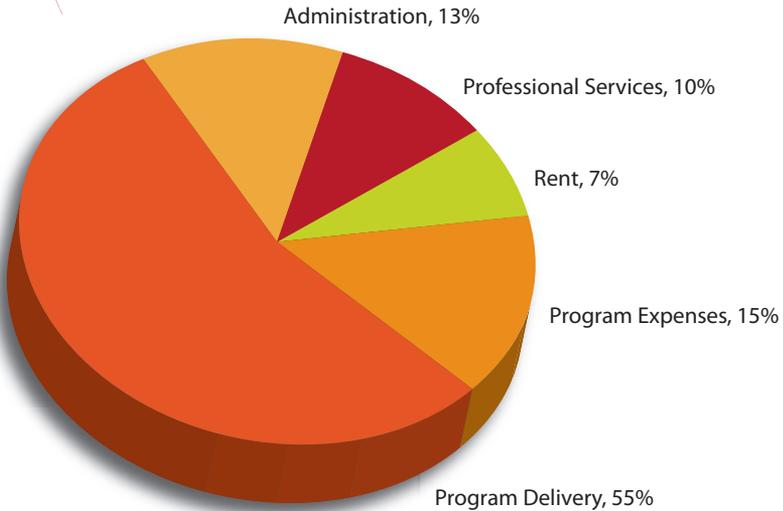




ACYR Chart of Revenues



ACYR Chart of Expenses



Statement of Financial Position

As at March 31, 2012

	2012	2011
	\$	\$
Current Assets		
Cash	38,672	78,604
Cash - restricted	3,349	4,846
Term deposits	58,202	57,391
Grants receivable	33,915	2,043
Prepaid expenses and sundry receivables	10,561	11,813
	144,699	154,697

LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES

Current Liabilities

Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	26,006	37,071
	26,006	37,071

Fund Balances

General Fund	114,401	112,319
Restricted Program Fund	4,292	5,307
	118,693	117,626
	144,699	154,697

Approved on behalf of the Board:

 Director

 Director

Statement of Operations and Fund Balances

As at March 31, 2012

	General	Restricted Program	2012 Total	2011 Total
	\$	\$	\$	\$
Revenues				
Foundation grants	40,000	-	40,000	42,190
Government grants	390,509	-	390,509	401,674
Government grant - PHAC Hep C	-	-	-	26,425
Donations	7,528	-	7,528	4,846
Fundraising - Bingo, net revenues	-	19,082	19,082	18,265
Fundraising - Other	29,390	-	29,390	24,421
Interest income	1,337	-	1,337	1,336
	468,764	19,082	487,846	519,157
Expenditures				
Program costs				
Salaries and benefits	337,175	-	337,175	309,289
Ministry of Health one-time	-	-	-	15,400
PHAC program - ACYR	3,378	-	3,378	14,581
PHAC program - Hep C	1,091	-	1,091	25,877
Drive program	5,435	17,836	23,271	21,096
Winter needs program	13,042	-	13,042	6,616
Compassion fund	2,162	2,200	4,362	6,401
Awareness program	816	-	816	8,382
United Way program	66	-	66	1,741
Client retreat	6,185	-	6,185	1,196
Travel	5,188	-	5,188	6,639
Resource development	20,264	-	20,264	18,269
	394,802	20,036	414,838	435,487
Administrative				
Office and general	24,556	61	24,617	23,710
Building occupancy	22,378	-	22,378	20,805
Technology enhancement	-	-	-	643
Professional fees	17,609	-	17,609	18,610
Staff training and development	2,884	-	2,884	2,583
Fundraising	4,453	-	4,453	3,547
	71,880	61	71,941	69,898
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues over Expenses for the Year				
	2,082	(1,015)	1,067	13,772
Fund Balances - Beginning of the Year				
	112,319	5,307	117,626	103,854
Fund Balances - End of the Year				
	114,401	4,292	118,693	117,626

Board of Directors

Marnie Sigmar
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Joanne Anderson
Vice Chair

Denis Heng
Secretary (Outgoing)

Ruth Corpuz
Treasurer

Precious Maseko
Director

Brent MacKinnon
Director

Anita Balakrishna
Director

Glenor Pitters
Advisor

Devan Nambiar
Advisor



Newmarket Head Office
The AIDS Committee of York Region
194 Eagle St. E Newmarket, ON L3Y 1J6

Richmond Hill Outreach Office
The AIDS Committee of York Region
c/o The Community Support Centre
10155 Yonge St Richmond Hill, ON L4C 1T5

(905) 953-0248

Toll Free 1-800-243-7717

All calls are completely confidential.

www.acyr.org

Staff Team & Support

Haran Vijayanathan
Program Manager for Support Services

Lisa Di Pietro
Administrative Support

Emily Dolan
Support Services Coordinator

Camille Griffith
*Women's Health Promotion and
Community Development Coordinator*

Mark Kovats
Finance

Birgit Damstra
Bookkeeper

Amy Mackay
Community HIV Engagement Coordinator

Tackese Kinglock
Community HIV Engagement Coordinator

Trinette Klein
Public Awareness & Campaign Coordinator

Glenn Blake
Gay/MSM Outreach Coordinator

Radha Bhardwaj
Executive Director

ACYR acknowledges the support of:

AIDS Bureau, Ontario Ministry of
Health and Long Term Care

AIDS Community Action Program,
Public Health Agency of Canada

United Way of York Region

The Ontario Trillium Foundation

Regional Municipality of York