

Red Scarf Project

History

WHAT: In 2012 its first year, the Red Scarf Project was a public installation of hundreds of red scarves on the streets of downtown London and Stratford, by staff and volunteers of the Regional HIV/AIDS Connection. This was the focus for the agency of AIDS Awareness Week and leading up to World AIDS Day on December 1st. Scarves were knitted or crocheted by talented community members and donated to Regional HIV/AIDS Connection for this key awareness raising event. People who found the scarves were encouraged to wear them, take them home, read the attached information tag and spread the important message of awareness.

What's New for 2013? This year we have, thanks to the input from some UWO Public Relations students who are assisting with the project, built in the idea of amplifying the message by handing out red ribbons with some of the scarves, and inviting recipients to pass along the ribbon to someone else and keep the conversation, education and awareness going.

Regional HIV/Connection also has a new **“Big Red Scarf”**, measuring 2 ft. by 15 ft. At our request, it was lovingly knit by the “Knitwits”, of First- St. Andrew’s Church. This scarf will appear in social media campaigns and public events for the Red Scarf Project, to help create HIV/AIDS awareness for years to come.

WHY: To spread awareness about the local significance of HIV/AIDS, the significance of the red ribbon as an international symbol of AIDS awareness and to highlight the UNAIDS vision “Getting Zero” – Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths.

“The red scarves are enlarged versions of the red ribbon, the international symbol of AIDS awareness, says Brian Lester, executive director of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection. With this innovative idea we have hit upon something that seems to be resonating with the community and that will help us raise awareness about the work we do. It also provides an interesting entry point for helping educate the broader community about HIV/AIDS as ongoing issues of importance locally, since we know that approximately 65,000-68,000 Canadians are currently living with the illness and approximately 30% of those individuals do not know their HIV status.”

HOW: Approximately 400 red scarves have been knitted or crocheted by talented community members and donated to Regional HIV/AIDS Connection for this awareness raising event. There will also be a similar installation happening in Stratford and Woodstock in 2013. Scarves will be distributed on the morning of November 25th, in both London and Stratford, at lunch time at the Covent Garden Market on the same day and at the Lighting of the Lights in Victoria Park on Friday, November 29th, while supplies last.