



CASEY HOUSE

*Providing exemplary treatment, support and palliative care for people affected by HIV/AIDS, in collaboration with our communities.*

CASEY HOUSE  
NEWSLETTER SPRING 2010

# TOGETHER WE CAN

[www.caseyhouse.com](http://www.caseyhouse.com)

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:** Now, more than ever \* Education \* SnowBall \* Art of the Barrel \* A client's words \* The Casey Awards World AIDS Day \* A physiotherapist's perspective \* Upcoming events

## Now, more than ever

**Programs like Social Drop-In night bring hope and friendship to isolated clients. But we can't do it without you.**

A diverse group of clients, residents and volunteers is gathering in the piano room for Social Drop-In night. Dean has brought his boyfriend, David pats Amber's dog, and everyone wants to hear about Katie's recent wedding. New to the group is Jason, a young resident who is terribly weak and thin, and clearly nervous. Everybody welcomes him warmly, and soon his face is lit with a shy grin. "Where's Brian?" everyone is asking, and Ashley reports that Erin, another volunteer, is bringing him in his wheelchair from Fudger House, a long term care facility around the corner. They arrive to a friendly welcome.

Until last month, Brian was a resident at Casey House. When admitted, he'd been weak, bitterly alone and angry, thwarted by recent deafness—yet one more frustration in an already challenging and isolated life. "When Brian first got to Casey House he was frustrated and difficult to communicate with, and some people were probably a little afraid of him, including me," recalls Ashley, a volunteer who is completing her Masters of Social Work at the University of Toronto. Staff and volunteers worked with Brian to find a way to communicate, using the Resident Care and Comfort Fund to purchase a

lap-sized white board and markers. Before long, everyone at Casey House had grown accustomed to saying hello to Brian on his white board, and receiving a friendly response.

"Brian's completely transformed now—he's outgoing and friendly," reports Ashley. "Everybody loves him and looks forward to seeing him." With his medical crisis in check and his ability to communicate somewhat restored, Brian was last month discharged to Fudger House. But he remains part of the Casey House community, returning weekly for Drop-In, and attending church with a Casey House volunteer.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP:

**Casey House community programs are funded almost entirely through donor support. In this difficult economic year, we need your financial help more than ever in order to continue offering vital programs such as the Social Drop-In. To discuss how you can make a difference, please call Tracy Hatten at 416.962.4040 x233.**

"When you hear that Casey House is a hospice for people living with HIV/AIDS, you expect it to be a place where people only come to die. But it's not that at all," explains Ashley. "To me, it's a place where people come to get better, to regain a sense of dignity and hope that they don't have when they come in here. It's really amazing to see that transformation, people coming in literally on their death beds and then leaving with new friendships, and in better health. I find it inspiring."

Donor-funded recreational programs (which include the drop-in, movie night, writing circle and arts and crafts) enable community clients to remain connected to the supportive community



**Brian, Ashley and Amber with Amber's dog**

at Casey House, and give current residents reassurance and hope. Young and old, gay and straight, male, female, transgendered, poor and prosperous—all are welcomed into the special community of Casey House.

Thanks to the support of our donors and volunteers, Casey House programs like the Social Drop-In make a world of difference to the people we serve.

"Tuesday nights are like the sunshine in the middle of the week," says Dean. "It's like coming home. There's total compassion here, and we know that our trust will be honoured. I've met some wonderful people at Casey House. For me, it's like family."

**Brian passed away this month, after a sudden illness. His broad smile and gentle humour are missed by all of us at Casey House.**

**Stephen, client**

**Christine, community partner**



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## Casey House Educational Events

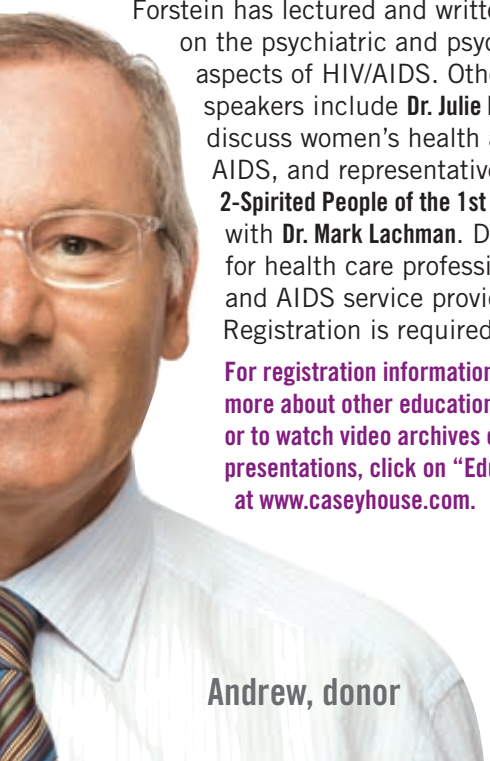
Casey House plays a leading role in the Toronto community of AIDS service organizations by offering conferences, workshops and symposia in order to further our collective understanding of HIV/AIDS.

### Next Full-Day Symposium: March 26

"Maintaining Excellence in Health Care for People Living with HIV/AIDS," with keynote speaker **Dr. Marshall Forstein**, Director of Training, Division of Adult Psychiatry, The Cambridge Hospital; Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School. Dr.

Forstein has lectured and written widely on the psychiatric and psychosocial aspects of HIV/AIDS. Other speakers include **Dr. Julie Maggi**, to discuss women's health and HIV/AIDS, and representatives from **2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations** with **Dr. Mark Lachman**. Designed for health care professionals and AIDS service providers. Registration is required.

For registration information, to find out more about other education events, or to watch video archives of past presentations, click on "Education" at [www.caseyhouse.com](http://www.caseyhouse.com).



Andrew, donor

# Finding the words

## Pursuing a creative life with HIV/AIDS, thanks to support from Casey House

"It hit me out of nowhere," says Kevin Nelson of the day two years ago when HIV/AIDS triggered a medical crisis, more than a decade after his diagnosis. The international award-winning singer-songwriter and playwright had been walking down the street with a friend when he realized he couldn't breathe. "I had felt a little unwell, but nothing too intense, and suddenly I was being rushed to hospital with pneumonia." He remained in hospital for two weeks before his transfer to Casey House. "I couldn't have gone straight home from the hospital, I was too weak and there wasn't anyone to take care of me," says Kevin now. Although he was nervous about coming to Casey House, he knew it was his best option until he was stronger.

Since that time Kevin has come to rely on Casey House not only as a place for superb clinical health care, to which he can turn when his symptoms worsen (he was again admitted last year when his pneumonia returned), but also as a refuge for friendship and the psychosocial benefits of community programs including art therapy and the writing workshop. He's working on a book, "Surrender to the River," about his journey with HIV/AIDS. "Michelle has been amazingly supportive," says Kevin of Casey House's writer-in-residence, Michelle Tocher. "Sometimes it's been difficult to get my emotions onto the page, but it's such a release and I know that it has to happen to be truthful to myself and to my story. It's very healing."



Kevin singing with Forte on World AIDS Day

Today, Kevin manages the episodic nature of life with HIV/AIDS day-by-day, pacing himself and being mindful of changes in his body. The team at Casey House supports him in determining his own plan of care, combining traditional and complementary therapies, and he trusts that his wishes are respected. Aside from work on the novel, he's recording his album "Songs for a New Direction" for release this year, and is planning a musical, "The Divine Heretic," (Sir Tim Rice Award) that he hopes to stage during Pride Week. He also continues to sing with a close network of friends in Forte - The Toronto Men's Chorus, which performed at Casey House's World AIDS Day benefit concert on December 1. At that concert, Kevin stepped forward to read a poem he'd written about life with HIV/AIDS, entitled "I AM" (excerpted below).

"I have so much to do," says Kevin. "You can have this disease and still lead a vibrant life, still create works of art and music and poetry and drama. I'm so lucky to have these creative outlets to carry me through the healing process. It's how I find joy."

### From "I AM" by Kevin Nelson

I am strong in my thoughts of love that release and dispel all thoughts of doubt or fear.

I am fearless, without fear. I am loving myself back to perfect health.

I am healing the negative energies that permeated my thoughts and the thoughts of my ancestors for far too long.

I am creating love in all directions from within and without.

I am a BEING of pure love and light. I am joy. I am bliss.

I am that I AM. And so it is and so it shall always be, for all eternity.

And for this I AM truly grateful. Always.



# ANNOUNCING: THE CASEY AWARDS 2010

Awards launched in memory of June Callwood to be presented at SnowBall 2010 on March 6.

## TONY DI PEDE

It is for Di Pede's remarkable leadership, volunteerism, advocacy, passion and pioneering vision that he is being celebrated with The Casey Award 2010.



For over 20 years, Tony Di Pede has been an outstanding advocate for people and communities who are marginalized because of HIV/AIDS, age, disability or poverty. Diagnosed with HIV in 1989, Tony helped to build the Toronto People With

AIDS Foundation. He has served in key board roles with the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations, the Canadian AIDS Society, Canadian Treatment Action Council, Ontario AIDS Network, Ontario HIV Treatment Network, Fife House and AIDS Action Now!. He was a strong champion of the voices of people living with HIV when helping to organize the Toronto-hosted 2006 International AIDS Conference.

At the former Wellesley Hospital, Di Pede chaired the HIV Community Advisory Panel. Later joining the fight to save the hospital, he was instrumental in creating The Wellesley Institute. With a strong interest in housing and social justice, Di Pede has served as a commissioner of the Ontario Advocacy Commission, and in key board roles with the Drs. Paul and John Reka Centre, the Out of the Cold Resource Centre, and The Wellesley Central Residence Inc., Toronto's first affordable housing designed for seniors and people living with HIV/AIDS. Recognizing Di Pede's instrumental guidance in creating this innovative housing solution, the building was in 2009 named the "Tony Di Pede Affordable Housing Complex."

## THE AIDS COMMITTEE OF TORONTO (ACT)

Casey House is pleased to present the AIDS Committee of Toronto with The Casey Award 2010 for its pioneering activism, advocacy and leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS.



AIDS Committee of Toronto

The AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) has been a respected leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS for over 25 years. The brainchild of a small group of community activists, ACT was formed in 1983 in response to the hysteria and misinformation surrounding the emergence of AIDS. Little was known about the disease at the time, but a terrible stigma was attached to

those who had it, mainly gay men, and almost nothing was being done to help.

Ever since its humble beginnings above a Kentucky Fried Chicken storefront, ACT has been instrumental in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Canada through its pioneering leadership, strength and innovation. Responding to the increasing diversity of need attached to HIV/AIDS, ACT has also been an important catalyst for the growth of countless other HIV/AIDS service organizations, including Black CAP, Voices of Positive Women, and Casey House.

Today, ACT continues to spread the message of HIV prevention through education, outreach and community action. They also provide free, confidential help to men, women and youth living with HIV/AIDS.

Can't make it to SnowBall? Videos commemorating the extraordinary work of this year's recipients will be available at [www.caseyhouse.com](http://www.caseyhouse.com) following the March 6 awards.

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Avi, volunteer

Ann, physician

## UPCOMING EVENTS

For more about these and other events, visit "What's New" at [www.caseyhouse.com](http://www.caseyhouse.com)

**SnowBall 2010 "Some Like it Haute!" with The Casey Awards - March 6**

**Casey House Mental Health Symposium - March 26**

**Volunteer Information Session - April 12**

**Nursing Week - May 10 - 16**

**Art of the Barrel Event - Visit [www.artofthebarrel.com](http://www.artofthebarrel.com) for date**

**Staff & Volunteer Recognition Event - June 10**

**Casey House Annual General Meeting - June 16**

**AIDS Vigil - June 24**

**Pride Week - June 25 - July 4**

### NEW! JOIN THE CASEY HOUSE ONLINE COMMUNITY

For instant updates, follow us online on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Links at [www.caseyhouse.com](http://www.caseyhouse.com).



Ann, physician

## Casey House marks World AIDS Day

Hundreds of Casey House community members joined together at Metropolitan United Church for "Voices of Hope / Voix d'Espoir," a World AIDS Day national collaboration with the Dr. Peter Centre (Vancouver) and La Maison du Parc (Montreal)

The stellar lineup included Dr. Draw (pictured), Thom Allison, Julie Michels, Muhtadi Drum Ensemble, Forte - The Toronto Men's Chorus, and Candi Barr. Clients of Casey House contributed art based on the International AIDS Campaign's slogan of "I AM," and read poetry and prose workshopped in Casey House's writer-in-residence program.

"Together we show the world that we care, that we share a vision of a future in which our friends, family, lovers and neighbours are not thwarted and isolated by barriers to care," remarked event chair Rev. Dr. John Joseph Mastandrea.

Thanks to all who performed, volunteered and attended, and thanks to national sponsors MAC AIDS Fund, Gilead Sciences Canada Inc., Viiv Healthcare / Shire, The Globe and Mail and Merck.



Photo: Glenn Bell

## A veteran physiotherapist's perspective on the special care at Casey House

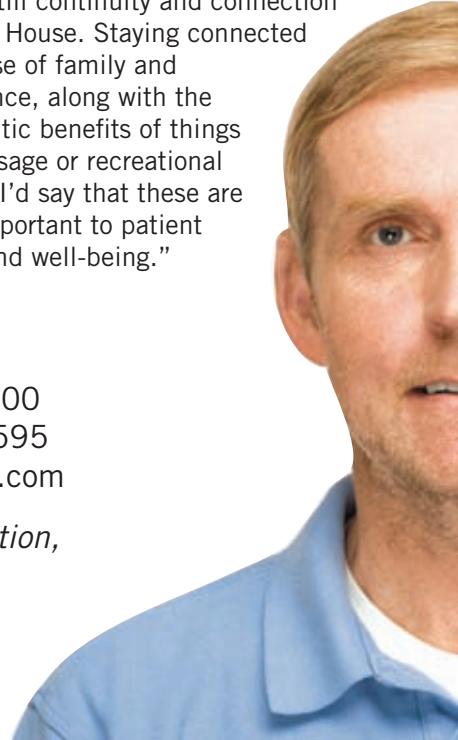
As a physiotherapist who has practiced for 33 years, Rowena Fleming has seen her share of health care settings. But when the CCAC physiotherapist decided to practice at Casey House, she knew she'd be taking on new challenges in caring for people with complex needs. "Before, people tended to think that Casey House was the end of the road," explains Fleming. "But I've learned that for most residents today, Casey House is primarily a stepping stone, a place of respite before going home again."

Discharge planning at Casey House typically begins the moment a resident is admitted, and Fleming works with the interdisciplinary health team to support residents in preparing their bodies and building their stamina for the day they go home.

"I would say that one of the great things about Casey House is that it is all-encompassing in terms of the services it provides to clients," says Fleming. "HIV, and the stigma around it, can be very isolating. I've seen how relieved residents

are to find that they have a community here, that they are accepted for who they are, and that they are safe. For some, I'm sure they haven't felt that way for a long time, if ever. Casey House is a place of peace and compassion, which is just what you really need when you are so sick. The team is very experienced in providing what can be extremely complicated care for people with HIV/AIDS, but they're also caring people, and they work together really well."

Fleming is impressed that Casey House continues to provide care for clients after discharge, through the donor-funded community program. "What a great thing that even after someone is discharged, there's still continuity and connection to Casey House. Staying connected to a sense of family and acceptance, along with the therapeutic benefits of things like massage or recreational therapy—I'd say that these are really important to patient health and well-being."



CASEY HOUSE

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